

Multilingualism talks notes

Croeso and welcome to my multilingualism discussion

Across the world many children grow up multilingual rather than monolingual. Being able to speak several languages should be acknowledged, encouraged, and supported. Brain development can be stimulated by learning two languages and helps children learn because they can think about their ideas in two or more languages (National Literacy Trust 2022)

There are up to 7000 different languages spoken around the world (BBC 2014)

in 2020 it was found that 56% of the world can speak more than one language and 13% are fluent in 3 languages (Moungin 2020)

There are benefits of speaking multiple languages the speaker has more worldwide job opportunities, they are knowledgeable and understand more cultures and can confidently explore the world around them without any language barrier.

Bilingualism Influences cognitive skills and abilities and bilingual speakers are more likely to be more creative and flexible, open-minded, and able to think more flexibly and find it easier to multi-task. In education children that speak two languages are more likely to succeed better in school. Have more career opportunities in Wales if they speak Welsh and will earn an average 11% more.

Being bilingual has mental health benefits and research has shown that it can improve people's cognitive processes and slow down the progression of age-related dementia and Alzheimer's (Carmarthenshire county council 2024)

On the other hand, research has been collected and carried out on the cognitive development advances that multilingualism speakers gain and found that there was little advance to show that multilingualism speakers are more advanced than monolingual speakers

(Bright and Flippi.2019) [*fpsyg-10-01346.pdf](#) .

However, the Peal and Lambert study cited in Bialystok and Werker 2018 showed that children that are bilingual perform better in a wide range of skills than a child who is not (Bialystok and Werker 2018)

Many people believe that children learning a second language in their early years may cause delayed language development and linguistic confusion. Making it hard for children to change between two languages.

Children with learning difficulties may find learning two languages difficult to grasp and take longer to learn the language than their Peers. But that does not mean that it is not possible for children with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) to learn a second language. There is no research that being bilingual harms their literacy development (Kovelman and co 2016)

Currently 40% of children in the world have no access to education in their home language evidence has shown the benefits of using the child's home language in education gives the child better learning outcomes in their holistic development. Multilingual education policy says by starting education in the child's mother tongue and slowly introducing the second language and breaking down the barriers between home and early years settings helps keep the child's first language alive (United nation no date) Supporting this, Bruner believed that children are born with a need to develop language, but children need regular interplay with their care giver or early years practitioners to learn and understand it to a full fluency level. This is known as the language acquisition support systems (LASS) (American psychological association 2018)

Parents and early years practitioners need an understanding of the possible effects of learning two languages on children's development and support and resources need providing to assist children to find their way and overcome any difficulties they encounter. Through the creation of an encouraging, supportive learning setting children can realise the advantages of being bilingual and holistically develop (world humanitarian movement 2023)

Article 30 of the UNCRC clearly states that children from a minority group have the right to share their culture, language, and religion with others. They have the right to learn their mother tongue and family religion regardless of these being used by most people in the area in which they are living. This means that regardless of where a child is living and being educated, they

have the right to use their family's language and cultural background and learn the country's language, so both are equally valued (Unicef no date)

Falke (2016) has shown evidence that being bilingual can have setbacks. The research has shown that bilingual speakers have less of an understanding of their actions than monolinguals for example monolinguals were better able to recognize when they were right and when they were wrong.

There have been studies by scientists to understand what happens to the brain when children learn two languages side by side in childhood and how being bilingual affects people on a cognitive level. The researchers showed that bilingual speakers have more neurons, dendrites, and white matter integrity than monolingual speakers (Cambridge 2022) They found no evidence that there is a difference between monolingual and bilingual children's divergent thinking ability. There are many benefits for children of bilingualism, but it appears divergent thinking is not one of them (Booton, S 2021)

Wales is a bilingual nation around half a million people in Wales speak both Welsh and English in 2017 the Welsh Government (WG) set to increase the number of people able to speak and using the Welsh language to a million by 2050. This will keep the language alive for future generations to come and make Wales a truly bilingual nation. Welsh in education strategic plans (WESP) have been put in place to support all education and early years settings to be able to develop and grow the Welsh language. Highlighting the fact that people in Wales should be able to live their lives through the Welsh language if they choose to do so (Education Wales 2021) Furthermore, this is given a high priority in the Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 which has seven well-being goals including 'Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language'

In many early years' settings, there will be both bilingual and multilingual children learning an additional language. For example, children with Welsh as an additional language (WAL) and English as an additional language (EAL). Early years Practitioners need to support these children in communicating effectively with their peers and adults and making sure that they are progressing within their holistic development. Data shows that children learning additional language underperform in early years settings compared to a child that is not. (Education Quality Early Years 2017)

There are frameworks and strategies to support these children for early years practitioners to ensure that children can learn and progress through the whole curriculum. Using good practice of developing speech and communication skills in both languages early years practitioners should promote the language equally throughout the whole curriculum (Education Quality Early Years 2017)

Learning language is best supported in a play-based language rich environment. Play is highly beneficial to children's language skills and supports different areas of language development (Welsberg 2013)

Supporting this as it is stated in the Curriculum for Wales that Welsh language and communication skills should be developed holistically through real-life genuine experiences and play opportunities. All children should develop an awareness that Wales is a bilingual nation and that many other languages are spoken in our community. Also, given experience that reflects and values bilingualism and the diversity of culture and languages in Wales. Early years practitioners have a responsibility to ensure children have a positive view towards different languages that are spoken around them. Children who are learning an additional language need language skill that are learned in one language supported with the knowledge and understanding of another language (Education 2022) As is shown in the video of my play activity using a sandwich method supporting the children learning the Welsh language and the Welsh language speaker with the English and by using a story sack making the story fun and enjoyable for the children. supporting this Skinner theory on language development he believed that Children learn language though positive reinforcement and by imitating the language that has been spoken and by associating the word with the meaning (Simply psychology 2023)

In conclusion bilingualism can have both a positive and negative impact. Being bilingual can develop thinking skills, including problem-solving, multi-tasking, and thinking critically. It provides new opportunities to learn about culture and enjoy social experiences and can improve career chances locally in Wales and globally. On the other hand, learning two languages can be confusing, delaying language development, creating difficulties in learning, reducing cognitive skills and creating social and emotional problems if not effectively supported.

In my day to day setting i am to use as much Welsh as possible especially when speaking children whose first language is Welsh this enables Welsh Additional Language learners to hear the Welsh language. I encourage WAL learners to learn Welsh words both through planned activities, daily routines, nursery rhymes and stories and the use of incidental Welsh

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Thank you for listening

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