

Module Code: ECEY4010
Student Number: 2406598
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Task one:

Hyperlink to the 10-minute pre-recorded activity: https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:v/g/personal/2406598_student_uowtsd_ac_uk/EeUjR7J1om9HoyOJYRdOWQ8BKHELrpD8VDEAXy2s-0q7iQ?e=XrpzdB&nav=eyJyZWZlcnJhbEluZm8iOnsicmVmZXJyYWxBcHAiOiJTdHJlYW1XZWJBcHAiLCJyZWZlcnJhbFZpZXciOiJTaGFyZURpYWxvZy1MaW5rliwicmVmZXJyYWxBcHBQbGF0Zm9ybSI6IldlYiIsInJlZmVycmFsTW9kZSI6InZpZXcifX0%3D

Task two:

Bilingualism refers to those individuals who are competent enough to use two languages in their everyday lives. Whereas multilingualism refers to the persons innate ability to meet the communicative requirements of themselves and the wider society when using two or more languages in their social interactions between speakers in their native language (Baker and Wright, 2021). One of the reasons why multilingualism is so unique by its nature is because of its intensity. For example, Bialystok suggested that language, and cognition are two important functions that closely interact one another. Humans exchange information with others in a continuous and reciprocal way, adapting their own understanding of the world and society around them; even in non-verbal situations (Bialystok and Werker, 2017). Similarly, according to Gorrara *et al.* (2020), she proposed that the use of language acquisition must be seen as a conscious process, rather than a subconscious process itself. Learners should develop a better understanding of how to use those transactional skills when having to communicate and share that information with other peers in their environment. However, to gain a wider appreciation of bilingualism and multilingualism, distinctions need to be made between the main holistic views of monolingualism and multilingualism, and the powerful role that communication plays in 'conceptualising language proficiency' (Baker and Wright, 2021). This assignment will focus on the varying aspects of multilingualism; in the context of Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL), brain development, divergent thinking, and its applications towards Early Years Frameworks.

Additional Learning Needs (ALN) is when a person has a difficulty in learning a new language in their school environment or if they have a disability arising from any medical conditions (Swansea Council, 2023). Since the Welsh devolution in 1997, children's rights were slowly adopting; but were seen as emblematic of Welsh

Government's (WG) policy. In 2004, the WG has published the 'Rights to Action' policy document, looking at the seven core principles of children. One of the main objectives was to give children a flying start in life and to give them a range of comprehensive learning opportunities, despite the challenges that they may face or encounter in their own lives (Stewart, MacDonald, and Waters-Davies, 2024). According to the Children's Commissioner of Wales (2023), the language medium of ALN support is crucial to ensure the smooth implementation of the quality and quantity of the provision itself. When the 'Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act' 2018 came into effect, this was a turning point for some institutions; since it has laid the core foundations for ALN systems in Wales to be bilingual and multilingual, just as if it was the same in England. Likewise, within Donaldson's report (2015; WG, 2021), he highlighted for the need of professionals in the Early Years Curriculum to use Welsh language skills when having to work with ALN students, to further diversify this sector. To ensure the consistency with the rollout of the New Curriculum for Wales framework (WG, 2022). The pre-recorded activity shows how the practitioner uses a wide range of Welsh language skills (and others) to pitch and tailor their lesson to the needs of other students. However, a major flaw with ALN is that local authorities find it increasingly difficult to fund money for non-maintained school settings and are facing pressures from the Welsh Government. This causes the sufficiency of the Welsh-medium ALN support to decrease (Stewart, MacDonald and Waters-Davies, 2024; Welsh Language Commissioner, 2023). Whether or not ALN support substantially allows pupils to develop their own bilingual skills will need to be analysed in the future.

Brain development is an integral part of bilingualism and multilingualism. The children's ability to develop themselves cognitively, emotionally and physically is dependent on whether they are bilingual, multilingual, or neither both. The School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences at Reading (Pliastikas *et al.*, 2020), exemplified how bilingualism affects the mere structure of the brain from a relatively young age to adulthood, as seen in the experience-dependent grey, and a white matter in brain mechanisms through reading, writing, and learning. Similarly, Bandura (1977, cited by Simple Psychology, 2025) argued that humans are active learners who like to engage and delve into the subtle details and gradually try to process them. He suggested that people imitate behaviours of others by having to observe them in their outdoor stimulating environments. The brain processes information between different stimuli and responses in the synapses. When the new rollout of the New Curriculum for Wales took place, the WG (2022) started to

implement the 'Five New Developmental Pathways' in the non-maintained nursery settings. This is a child-centred pedagogy that focuses on fostering strong relationships with pupils and to better equip them with the skills and knowledge required to become confident, ambitious citizens in the future for Wales' changing landscapes (Donaldson, 2015; Gorrara *et al.*, 2020). Whilst using bilingual or multilingual languages in the classroom settings. It is interesting to note that the word 'child-centred' was used repeatedly in the report by the WG, since the curriculum focusses on children as interdependent from others; in giving them the space required to develop themselves holistically, as they start to acquire new learning experiences in their own play-led environments (WG, 2022). With a much-strengthened sub-cortical involved in different activities such as movements or noises that is stored from the memory (Bialystok, 2011). Within the pre-recorded video, the practitioner was able to confidently use a wide range of activities to stimulate children's engagement in the activity; and active recalling, as a means of building the foundations of core knowledge of Welsh language skills and other languages being used there. Although, a closer analysis needs to be taken, to see if the effects of bilingualism on brain development are positive for children in quite different age groups through experimental data (Pliastskias *et al.*, 2020).

Central to understanding the multilingual practice in the Early Years Education is divergent thinking (Bai *et al.*, 2021). Divergent thinking is the process of creating ideas, by exploring 'original and alternative' feasible solutions to the problem (Leikin, 2009, cited by Karatas and Aktan-Erciyes, 2022). Divergent thinking is important because of its relevant applications towards cognitive functioning, language switching and bilingualism in the Foundation Stage. In their research, Bialystok and Viswanathan (2009, cited by Storme *et al.*, 2023), proposed that inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility – such as children exploring 2D shapes, space, movement, and rotation in their objects or patterns (WG, 2022) - were more widespread in bilinguals than their monolingual counterparts. They have got an innate ability to use their Language Acquisition Device (LAD) skills to learn some of the new vocabulary, and to further conceptualise their own understanding of the language being used to develop their cognitive and creative thinking skills as they start to mature (Chomsky, 1960, cited by Tutor2u, 2022). Upon completing the prerecorded video, the practitioner sang the days of the week song, alongside with the pupils in school; in either English, Welsh and Polish to create purposeful and authentic teaching and learning experiences for them. Igniting creativity, inspiring curiosity and intellectual interest in their studies and for their use of divergent

thinking. Similarly, in the report, the WG (2022) has consistently coined the term 'schemas' when referring to the child's holistic development in their creative environments. Essentially, some children in the Early Years Foundation Stage may have a biological drive to repeat actions – such as tipping over containers and navigating through sequences of objects in patterns or rows – in the confines of the outdoor and indoor space. Schema dominance is greater for multilingual pupils, enabling them to think, and act more carefully; showing a greater flair, and knowledge of concepts and language being previously taught. Children should be unconstrained from using their spoken native language to engage in classroom activities – even if these views are not aligned with the professionals in the country of where they live (Article 30 of United Nations) - so that they are safe and ready to thrive in the new curriculum progression for Wales; which is consistently evolving in the landmarks of our society (UNCIEF UK, 2017; Maslow, 1943, cited by Knowles, 2017; Donaldson, 2015). However, a wider discussion of the role that divergent thinking plays for different types of creativity should be seen; whether it is verbal or non-verbal, just to see if the implications of bilingualism are similar or different to those children with different aged groups (Karatas and Aktan-Erciyes, 2022).

Lastly, many professional in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are well equipped with the knowledge of language acquisition, by means of understanding multilingualism and bilingualism in the classroom curriculum. According to Lenneberg (1960, cited by StudySmarter, 2025), he believes that language is a biological process, something that is developed naturally over the years as part of human growth and maturation. All humans have an innate sense of desire, to learn languages in our learning environments and through positive reinforcements. His proposals have played a significant part in learning more about the brain development, since it is the left hemisphere of the brain that allows us to form fundamental linguistic and cognitive capabilities. The pre-recorded video, in the previous task, confirms how the practitioner uses a wide range of languages repeatedly – such as “Pa lliw ydy colour?” or singing “Sut mae'r tywydd heddiw?” - to help strengthen children's neural pathways to the brain and to better retain information in the long-term and in their future learning and/or curriculum progression (WG, 2022).

This essay has critically analysed the concept of multilingual practice in the Early Years of Education. There was a specific focus on divergent thinking, brain development, and language acquisition; and how this was relevant to some non-maintained nursery settings. With reference to the new rollout of the Welsh

curriculum. Further recommendations include local authorities having to allocate more funds to pupils with ALN; to ensure that the education system in Wales is equitable, and for students to receive bilingual support.

Confirmation Statement:

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm that I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide as evidence.

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