Assignment 2

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Benefits of bilingualism and/or multilingualism

Children's learning and development are greatly improved by multilingual practice in the early years. In Wales, early exposure to both Welsh and English promotes improved communication abilities, increased cognitive flexibility, and greater understanding of language structure, which all contribute to “a 6.5% higher efficiency in thinking skills” (ScienceDirect, 2026).
Early multilingualism improves cognitive flexibility, increases brain capacity, and strengthens brain functions like multitasking and remembering. It develops empathy, understanding of culture, and self-confidence. Children are more able to communicate in a variety of settings because they were exposed to another language in early years (St Peters, 2024). Children that are bilingual or multilingual show an increased cognitive flexibility, which enables them to move between ideas, adjust to new situations, and come up with creative solutions to problems. This benefits from the brain's need to manage and transition between languages (Zenedo, 2025). Children who are bilingual or multilingual can connect with a variety of communities, build bonds, and develop empathy, which are all important social and cultural benefits. According to research, this improves children's language skills, cultural identity, and cognitive flexibility, helping them to interact with a wider variety of people (EarlyEducation, 2022).

Welsh as an Additional Language/English as an Additional Language

Welsh as an Additional Language gradually being introduced to non welsh speakers through immersive, play-based techniques, improves cognitive abilities and develops a sense of cultural connection. Supported by Early Years Wales and the Welsh Government, early years settings use books, songs, and daily routine immersion to help staff and children gain confidence with the Welsh language (earlyyearswales, 2020). ‘In 2017 Welsh Government set out its vision to increase the number of people able to enjoy speaking and using Welsh to a million by 2050’ (Earlyyearswales,2020). The Welsh Government states that it "cannot insist that someone uses Welsh socially, that children play together in Welsh, or that parents and carers use the Welsh language with their children." But it may "work to provide the conditions to facilitate an increase in the use of Welsh”. (earlyyearswales,2020). Children learn Welsh or English as an additional language through their whole education. It is mostly learnt through playing, interacting with others, natural immersion and constant interaction. These are the most effective ways for learning a language, according to research. Children should be encouraged to use their "home language" because bilingualism improves performance. Becoming fluent in a second language might take up to ten years. Academic language takes longer to pick up, and children learn social language first. (Carmarthenshire county council,2025). It is essential to support and encourage

children learning Welsh or English as an additional language as it helps be able to maintain social and academic involvement, promote confidence, and ensure full inclusion. Using images to create a friendly, language-rich environment, using props, promoting peer engagement, singing songs and telling stories are all important methods (Gov.uk, 2021).

Brain development

UWTSD (2025) suggests that children who are bilingual commonly use a multifaceted approach to problem-solving. They demonstrate perseverance and creativity. Which can be related to how muscles grow with exercise, their brains adjust to constant language usage. Research indicates that bilinguals have higher grey matter density, particularly in regions related to learning a language and cognitive function. Children who are bilingual can quickly adjust to new rules or routines and change between play narratives with ease. They can wait their turn, resist distractions, and follow multi-step instructions as they have a stronger cognitive ability (UWTSD,2025). Children's ability to use language to talk and think is improved by early exposure to different languages, which helps them understand language structures, identify patterns, and improve cognitive flexibility. Children who use multiple languages on a daily basis improve their ability to organize, carry out tasks, and communicate. Early years are a crucial time for brain development, and learning multiple languages becomes a type of "exercise" that improves attention, memory, and cognitive flexibility. As children learn to differentiate between different phonetic, vocabulary, and grammar structures, hearing and using many languages activates different parts of the brain, especially areas that are involved in cognitive function (GreenGrassNursery, 2025).

Divergent thinking

Divergent thinking is improved by multilingualism, especially introducing the Welsh language to early years, which increases flexibility in thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Children who are multilingual have bigger conceptual networks and the capacity to see ideas from multiple perspectives, which promotes original, unstructured thought. Children who are bilingual in Welsh and English often show increased imaginative play and improved cognitive abilities. (UWTSD,2025). According to evidence-based research, being bilingual has many benefits. For example, early exposure to a second language helps children gain an ear for languages as they get older. Children can maintain the health and effectiveness of their brain by boosting cognitive capacity. It can improve the child's ability to multitask, focus, solve problems, and be creative (Blaenau Gwent, nd). There are significant cognitive, educational, and social benefits to learning Welsh in addition to English. Studies show that bilingualism improves mental flexibility, memory, and attention management. Managing two languages requires "mental gymnastics" that improve the brain's decision-making, making it easier for children to switch between tasks and viewpoints (BlaenauGwent, nd).

Links with early years' frameworks and programmes

Important early childhood frameworks and educational initiatives strongly benefit multilingual practice in the early years. The Curriculum for Wales and the Foundation Phase in Wales are largely dependent on multilingual approaches, which integrate Welsh, English, and other languages through play-based and immersive experiences to develop self-assured, creative learners. These methods are intended to help children become educated people by promoting emotional health, cultural awareness, and skills in communication (UCL discovery, 2024)."Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers is the Welsh Government's strategic plan to

reach one million speakers and double the daily use of Welsh to 20% by 2050" (Gov.Wales, 2026). To be able to promote learning a language and long-term language development, it puts importance on the early years, growing Welsh-medium childcare, and employing more teachers. For children to achieve the objectives of national early years frameworks and programs, practitioners support children's cognitive development, cultural awareness, and communication skills by incorporating several languages into daily routines, storytelling, songs, and play (Gov.Wales, 2026).

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