

ECEY4004 2306796

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Hello, my name is Elizabeth Llewellyn-Jones. My student number is 2306796.

This is assignment ECEY4004, Multilingualism, multi-thinking.

I'm going to be discussing bilingualism and multilingualism, defining the meanings, and discussing some of the benefits of being bilingual or multilingual. I will also discuss the ramifications on brain development and divergent thinking, and finally I will be discussing how the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, as well as the non-statutory guidance documents; Development Matters and Birth to Five Matters support children who are bilingual or multilingual, and how practitioners can support multilingual or bilingual learners. I will be referring to my activity to promote bilingualism or multilingualism throughout my presentation.

I will begin by defining multilingualism and bilingualism. The term bilingualism refers to two languages, whereas multilingualism refers to three or more languages. According to Aronin and Singleton (2012) the definitions of multilingualism and bilingualism are many and wide-ranging. This is because they are influenced by diverse perspectives, which each emphasise different aspects of using and learning languages. NALDIC (2012) agree with Aronin and Singleton that defining bilingualism is problematic, and to be bilingual means different things to different people.

A leading academic on bilingualism is Professor Colin Baker, who has published 15 books on the subject, in addition to one hundred other publications. Baker categorised bilingualism into simultaneous bilingualism or sequential bilingualism. Simultaneous bilingualism is described by Baker as occurring in the early years, when two languages are acquired simultaneously. Sequential bilingualism is when a child acquires one language first, then acquires a second language later, either through informal or formal acquisition. During my activity, I was supporting the children to acquire a second language, French on this occasion, through formal acquisition.

Chen and Padilla (2019) discuss the classification of different types of bilingualism, by the sequence of language acquisition, and through other factors such as the degree of bilingualism, mastery skills, the balance level and the cognitive processing mechanism.

Development Matters (2023) states that speaking more than one language has lots of advantages for children.

Bilingualism promotes multiculturalism, as learning another language, allows for communication and can lead to an increased understanding and affinity with others. Birth to Five Matters (2021) talks about the need to promote feelings of belonging and creating a culture of "we rather than us" (p.27). During my activity, I gave the children the opportunity to talk about the other languages they may speak and I used fun songs and games to promote the acquisition of French, ensuring that this difference was explored positively.

Bilingualism has been shown to aid brain development. Kuipers and Thierry (2015) discuss how bilingual children have better developed areas in their brains. The auditory cortex processes auditory information and carries messages to Wernicke's area of the brain. Language acquisition has been linked to maturation of the auditory cortex and increased activity in the motor cortex.

Another advantage of being bilingual or multilingual is developing an increased understanding of the structure of language as well as the meaning, which is important for early reading.

Divergent thinking is another benefit of bilingualism or multilingualism. Guilford (1967) identified the four main characteristics of divergent thinking, as fluency, flexibility, elaboration, and originality. Divergent thinking is important to enable children to solve problems and think creatively.

A further advantage of bilingualism or multilingualism is having the option to switch language. Baker described this as "codeswitching" and viewed this as a valuable linguistic tool.

The role of practitioners to support multilingual and bilingual children is essential.

According to the School Census (2023) 22% of children in state funded primary schools, have a first language other than English, and 30.4 % of nursery children in state funded nurseries have a first language that is not English.

The Five Stage Model of EAL acquisition begins with the child being new to English. This is sometimes referred to as the silent stage, because the child will be listening to English, but not yet be starting to speak English. The second stage is where early acquisition takes place. The third stage is where competence is developing. The fourth stage is where the child is now competent in English, and the fifth stage is when the child is said to be fluent. Progression can take up to ten years and is dependent on the individual child and circumstances. EAL learners will have different starting points, and move through the stages at different rates.

Development Matters (2023) advises practitioners to encourage families to use their home language. It is important that children's home language is as valued as English, and a secure foundation in their home language is important to aid their acquisition of English. Practitioners can make dual language books available to families.

Birth to Five Matters (2021) advises practitioners that children should see themselves and their families in the environment, and there should be various multicultural resources. During my activity I used a book with some French words and pictures of life in France. If any child was French or spoke French, it would be important for them to have opportunities to see French print and familiar places or objects.

Children who are learning English as an additional language should be made to feel welcome by practitioners and children learning greetings and some basic vocabulary in their home language. Visual timetables, visual menus, cards to request things such as the toilet or drinking water should be used to support children who are just starting to learn English. Schools can make use of the WellComm Assessment to screen children's understanding and use of English, to identify areas to offer additional support. It is important to also find out about a child's understanding and use of their home language, to identify any potential Special Education Need or Disability. The Bell Foundation has developed an EAL assessment framework to support schools to support EAL children.

The Montessori sandwich method, conveys meaning quickly, and can be used to help children to integrate new vocabulary. Practitioners 'sandwich' a new word between familiar words. I used this method when teaching the French animal names in my activity. I also repeated the target phrases; bonjour, le cheval, le mouton, le cochon, la vache, and le canard many times, including singing them in familiar songs.

To conclude, being bilingual or multilingual has many advantages; increased awareness and understanding of others, enhanced brain development, enhanced metalinguistic knowledge, divergent thinking, and the ability to switch language. Practitioners must ensure that all children are valued and belong, and to support their speech and language development is of vital importance, to ensure that bilingual or multilingual children thrive. Every child is unique and their uniqueness must be valued and celebrated

Thank you for listening to my presentation.

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