

Multilingual Practice in the Early Years

Module: ECEY4010

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I can confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I can confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

Section 1

Link to video of activity:

[MDKFE3270\[1\].mkv](#)

Section 2

Multilingualism and bilingualism refer to the ability to communicate with others using more than one language in daily life, and it plays an important role in children's early development. Using more than one language supports communication, cultural understanding and cognitive growth, helping children become confident and flexible learners (King, 2018).

Multilingualism and bilingualism offer strong developmental advantages across communication, culture and cognition. Gnaoré, K. (2024) research suggests children who use more than one language can interact more confidently with family, peers and their wider community, which strengthens relationships and supports future opportunities. Exposure to multiple languages also promotes cultural awareness, social flexibility and inclusive attitudes, as children learn to understand and value different perspectives. These advantages reflect Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasises that language is essential for children to grow, learn, think and make sense of things and the world around them (Vygotsky, Hanfmann and Vakar, 1962).

Cognitively, multilingual learners benefit from enhanced creative thinking, stronger word-concept understanding and improved academic performance. Managing two linguistic systems develops mental flexibility, abstract reasoning, verbal intelligence and problem-solving (Baker and Wright, 2025). Early exposure to more than one language helps the brain organise and process complex information efficiently, and research links multilingualism to a delayed onset of Alzheimer's symptoms, suggesting long-term cognitive protection (Chumbow, 2018).

In multilingual settings, children engage in richer communication that strengthens metalinguistic awareness and identity. Code switching is the movement between languages within a conversation which further supports cognitive development. I used code switching throughout my activity to help children understand simple Welsh phrases, as shifting between languages helps them recognise sounds, patterns and

meanings, building strong foundations for early literacy (Ruiz and Garcia, 2026).

Overall, multilingualism supports confident, capable and adaptable learners.

These benefits are why multilingualism is incorporated in the Curriculum for Wales.

The new curriculum promotes Welsh and views bilingualism and multilingualism as a strength that benefits all learners as it is seen to improve brain function, including attention, memory, and divergent thinking. Learning the Welsh language further enhances communication and literacy by supporting phonological awareness and vocabulary development (Welsh Government, 2019). Cummins' (1979)

interdependence hypothesis theory reinforces the importance of Welsh as an additional language, as he proposed that when children learn another language such as Welsh, it strengthens their whole language system, meaning that their home language is being supported further through learning that additional language, rather than being competed with. Supporting Welsh as an additional language ensures that every child has the opportunity to thrive linguistically, culturally, and cognitively, while developing positive attitudes towards learning Welsh and other additional languages (Welsh Government, 2019).

Bateman and Kern (2025) highlight the importance of learning Welsh as an additional language. They suggest that learning Welsh strengthens a child's sense of identity and belonging by helping them connect with the language and culture around them. In my activity I have used basic Welsh phrases that children are able to use in everyday life such as good morning, counting to three and how to talk about the weather. Using these simple Welsh phrases with the use of visual cards, Makaton and props in my activity promotes bilingualism and helps children make those connections between the two languages in a fun and engaging way. Promoting Welsh in daily routine, songs, and play, builds children's confidence and social connection, creating shared experiences that create a sense of belonging and support children's wellbeing. It also promotes inclusion and ensures that all children have the same opportunities to learn Welsh and further their learning and development (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017).

The advantages of learning Welsh also play an important role in strengthening early brain development, as switching between languages builds strong attention, memory, and flexible thinking skills. Brain development is supported within my

activity through the use of simple and repetitive songs, which help children stay engaged and learn more effectively. Research by Fong (2024) shows that music and repetition strengthen neural connections as familiar routines and repeated patterns allow the brain to process information more efficiently. In my activity I used the same song of 'I've got something in my bucket' repeatedly to keep them engaged and understand that we were moving onto the next topic of weather. Mullen (2017) supports the importance of this further as she suggests hearing the same rhythms, tunes, and sounds repeatedly supports memory, attention, early language and overall cognitive development.

For my activity I did a bucket session this is because bucket is known to encourage children with additional learning needs to develop natural communication and through fun engaging activities. Marsh (2019) highlights that learning through bucket allows children to make those neural connections at their own pace as well as help the children develop key skills such as attention, language and communication, and social understanding. As you can see throughout my activity, I have used the same repetitive pattern of English then Welsh and used the Makaton signs and visual symbols for both languages to show the weather. Using these multiple languages and forms of communication ensures that all children can participate, learn, understand and make those connections about what we are learning and help them develop their cognitive skills in a more unique way that is catered to their individual learning needs, supporting children's rights such as article 28 the right to have an education and article 29, children have a right learn about their language and culture (UNICEF, n.d.).

Alongside supporting brain development multilingualism also supports divergent thinking. Multilingualism and bilingualism used in early years settings support's children's thinking, learning, and creativity. Fürst and Grin (2023) research shows that when children learn and use more than one language, their brains become more flexible and better at switching between different ideas and tasks. This mental flexibility is also known as divergent thinking, which is the ability to come up with many ideas, think creatively, and solve problems in different and unique ways.

Booton, et al (2021) suggest that multilingual children often perform better on tasks that require imagination, originality, and flexible thinking. This is because moving

between languages helps children notice patterns, understand different meanings, and see things from more than one perspective. Hofer (2025) also highlights that children who are brought up in multicultural or bilingual homes are more exposed to different cultural viewpoints, which encourages open-mindedness and creative thinking.

Bilingualism and multilingualism enhance divergent thinking, this is important in the early years because it supports problem-solving, curiosity, and the ability to adapt to new situations. Children who develop strong divergent thinking skills are more confident when exploring new ideas and more capable of approaching challenges in creative ways (Cankaya, Mackenzie and Haugen, 2025). Throughout my activity I have asked questions about the weather however I feel I did not encourage a divergent way of thinking. In the future if I was to do this activity again, I would ask more open-ended questions for example, what do think will happen? What can you see? How does this work or how would you use this? To give children the opportunities to find those new ideas, be imaginative and become more confident in themselves and ideas.

These cognitive and creative benefits align with the framework of Wales which promotes multilingualism, identity and inclusion within early years practice. The Curriculum for Wales puts multilingualism and Welsh language at the centre of early years practice, encouraging immersion, daily exposure, and the celebration of identity, culture and languages. It acknowledges multilingualism and bilingualism as a strength and encourages practitioners to create rich learning environments that integrate Welsh and other languages through play, in daily routines and interactions (Welsh Government, 2022). However, Durden-Myers, *et al.* (2025) highlights a challenge that having limited number of practitioners that are bilingual will make it harder to implement the new curriculum as the children will not consistently have the language modelled to them or always have the opportunity to communicate with staff in the Welsh language.

Children's Commissioner for Wales & Welsh Language Commissioner (2023) support the new curriculum and the importance of multilingualism further. They ensure equality, that all children, including those with additional learning needs have fair access to Welsh-medium and bilingual provisions as it is in their right to have an

education and learn about their culture and language. Even if some children are facing literacy and communication challenges, they highlight the importance of all children having the same learning opportunities and gain a sense of belonging and community. I feel like multilingualism, the curriculum and equality is shown throughout my activity as I ensured that the activity was holistic by looking at different weathers they may experience around the world and through different seasons, I switched between Welsh and English and other communication styles, and I encouraged unique learning through sensory exploration, props, songs and repetition in a fun, engaging way that suited the needs of all children and supported their learning and development.

In conclusion multilingualism and bilingualism supports children's communication, cultural understanding and cognitive development, giving them strong foundations for learning. Using more than one language, including Welsh, strengthens attention, memory and flexible thinking while helping children build confidence and a sense of belonging. By promoting multilingualism through everyday interactions, play and meaningful communication, practitioners create inclusive environments that support every child's growth and wellbeing (Gonzales, 2024).

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