

Cover Sheet

For this assignment, I have submitted the following:

A portfolio which consists of 5 different sections, totalling 1631 words.

Link for Bilingual Video

[Welsh Video - Eileen Broder.MOV](#)

AI statement

I acknowledge the use of Chat GTP April 2026 to Harvard Reference my references

I used the prompt(s): Please Harvard Reference

Benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism

Bilingualism and multilingualism refer to the ability to communicate in two or more languages and are increasingly important within early years with diverse backgrounds and experiences. Research suggests that bilingual children often develop cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness sooner and more strongly than children who speak only one language. (Cummins, 2000; Bialystok, 2001; King and Mackey, 2007; Smidt, 2016).

Instead of holding back progress, multilingualism is associated with improved cognitive flexibility, stronger problem solving skills, and a deeper understanding of how language works, allowing children to think more critically about language and switch effectively between different forms of communication. Children brought up with two languages tend to outperform monolingual children in areas such as understanding how language works and in controlling attention and behaviour in nonverbal tasks (Bialystok and Barac, 2012).

Additionally, bilingual and multilingual children frequently show a deeper social understanding and greater cultural awareness, because they communicate with a range of peers and communities. Bilingual children tend to engage more effectively with others, show greater attention to social cues during learning, are often more open to friendships with other bilingual children, and demonstrate a deeper understanding of social groups. (Poulin-Dubois et al., 2019).

This supports inclusive education and helps children develop respect for diversity from an early age. Within early childhood education, multilingualism can further enhance literacy development as children may become more aware of sounds, vocabulary, sentence structures, and meaning across different languages. Learning multiple languages provides children with social and cultural advantages, enabling them to engage fully in the social life and cultural activities of both their home and wider communities. (Zheng, Degotardi and Djonov, 2021).

Recognising and supporting a child's home language can further promote a sense of identity, belonging, and emotional well-being, providing important foundations for learning. Early years practitioners, therefore, play a significant role in encouraging positive perspectives on language diversity and ensuring that multilingualism is viewed as an asset rather than a barrier.

Welsh as an Additional Language

Welsh as an additional language plays a key role in supporting children's communication, identity, and sense of belonging within Wales. Many children initially speak English or another home language while learning Welsh through play, routines, and daily interactions. Introducing Welsh from an early age helps children become familiar with sounds, vocabulary, and simple phrases in a natural way. This will help support confidence and encourage children to use Welsh in daily situations. Early exposure to Welsh, when children's language acquisition abilities are most effective, can provide a strong foundation for later learning of Welsh in school. Children under five should be given opportunities to explore Wales through their local area, traditions, names, stories, legends, people, and significant events. (Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales, 2000)

Learning Welsh as an additional language can provide many of the benefits of bilingualism. Children who develop skills in both Welsh and their home language show enhanced cognitive flexibility, improved problem solving skills, and improved awareness of how language works, as they code switch between languages and develop an understanding of how language functions. Children acquire language naturally and effortlessly, much like they learn to run and jump. They do this subconsciously, without the structured effort of classroom lessons, and without concern for making mistakes or finding the perfect words. Their focus is simply communicating their ideas and understanding the information they need. (Baker, 2014)

Through learning Welsh, children build a connection with Welsh culture and community, promote inclusion for all languages, and support self-esteem and sense of identity. Welsh as an additional language should support children's development, promoting language growth, inclusion, and future opportunities in education and society.

Brain development

Bilingualism and multilingualism play an important role in children's brain development. Learning multiple languages stimulates the brain by challenging it to process, understand, and use different language systems. Children who switch between languages regularly strengthen cognitive skills, including attention, memory, and self-control. This ongoing mental exercise improves cognitive flexibility, helping children adapt to new situations, think creatively, and approach problems from different perspectives. Learning a second language can increase the brain's grey matter density. Research comparing monolinguals with both early and late bilinguals found that bilingual individuals had greater grey matter density, with the highest levels seen in those who learned two languages from an early age. (Baker, 2014). However, some believe that second language learning in early childhood may hinder language development, leading to the view that children should focus on one language. As a result, some professionals have recommended monolingual upbringing, assuming it better supports academic achievement. (Bright and Filippi, 2019)

Using more than one language also enhances children's understanding of how language works. They become more able to recognise sentence structures, sounds, and grammar patterns, which supports literacy and communication. Multilingualism also encourages the brain to develop and reinforce neural pathways through neuroplasticity. Regularly switching between languages, recalling vocabulary, and interpreting different ways of expressing ideas helps the brain process information more efficiently and solve complex problems.

Additionally, bilingual and multilingual children often show increased mental resilience. They can concentrate on important information, filter out distractions, and manage several tasks simultaneously. Regularly using multiple languages exercises the brain, enhancing thinking, memory, and problem-solving skills. Overall, multilingualism and bilingualism contribute to both language development and general cognitive growth, providing children with a solid foundation for learning, social interaction, and lifelong mental agility.

In addition to cognitive benefits, bilingual and multilingual children often show increased mental resilience. They can focus on relevant information, filter out distractions, and manage several tasks at once. Learning and using multiple languages provides regular mental stimulation, effectively exercising the brain and enhancing cognitive skills such as reasoning, memory, and problem solving. Overall, multilingualism and bilingualism contribute to both language development and general cognitive growth, providing children with a strong foundation for learning, social interaction, and lifelong mental agility. Research shows that the language environment children are exposed to shapes the development of their cognitive abilities, making it unsurprising that bilingualism plays a significant role in their overall developmental outcomes. (Bialystok, 2015).

Divergent thinking

Bilingualism and multilingualism may contribute to the development of divergent thinking, which involves generating creative ideas, considering multiple solutions, and approaching problems with flexibility. Multilingual children regularly switch between different vocabularies, grammatical rules, and expressions. This cognitive flexibility encourages them to think in more varied and innovative ways, as they learn the same idea can be expressed in multiple ways depending on the language or context.

Using more than one language may improve the capacity to link ideas that might initially seem unrelated. Multilingual children often notice subtle differences in meaning, tone, and perspective across languages, which allows them to consider ideas from multiple angles. This ability to see alternatives and think beyond a single solution is a key aspect of divergent thinking. While often equated with creativity, divergent thinking is better understood as a contributor to creative outcomes, a measure of creative potential, or a stage within the creative process. It also serves as a common link between creativity and pretend play, as both involve the flexible exploration of multiple possibilities. (Vaisarova and Carlson, 2021: 2) The mental exercise of managing two or more languages strengthens cognitive flexibility, problem-solving, and abstract thinking, all of which support creative thought.

Additionally, children who are bilingual or multilingual gain greater confidence in experimenting with language and ideas. They are more inclined to explore new ways

to communicate and to merge concepts creatively. This willingness to experiment further promotes divergent thinking, as they come to understand that multiple approaches can produce valuable results.

Bilingualism and multilingualism not only support communication but also provide a framework for creative and flexible thinking. By navigating multiple languages, children practice generating diverse ideas, solving problems in innovative ways, and developing the mental agility needed for lifelong learning and creativity. Several, though not all, studies suggest that bilingual children demonstrate stronger divergent thinking skills than monolingual children. (Zheng, Denervaud and Durrleman, 2023).

Frameworks and programmes

Frameworks and programmes that support bilingualism and multilingualism provide clear, structured approaches to help children develop skills in more than one language while enhancing their cognitive, social, and cultural development. For children whose home language is not English or Welsh, schools and settings should take targeted steps to support them in developing both languages through the curriculum. They should offer resources and learning materials that match the child's ability, prior educational background, and previous experiences, while also helping to build further language skills. In addition, schools should value and promote the use of children's home languages as part of the learning process, recognising these languages as important tools for understanding and development. (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008).

In educational settings, frameworks such as the Curriculum for Wales often include strategies such as language immersion, dual language learning, and translanguaging, allowing children to use all their language resources to understand, communicate, and learn effectively. Languages connect us with people, places and communities. This Area is designed to equip learners, as citizens of a bilingual Wales in a multilingual world, with the ability to use Welsh, English and other languages in a plurilingual context. Meaningful language learning experiences go hand in hand with learning about one's own cultural identity as well as the cultural identities of others. (Welsh Government, 2022)

Children may be encouraged to move naturally between languages when discussing ideas, solving problems, or expressing themselves. These programmes view

multilingualism as a strength, promoting inclusion by valuing diverse linguistic backgrounds. Through activities such as storytelling, group work, songs, and play-based learning, children have meaningful opportunities to practise each language in authentic contexts. Frameworks also support progression with clear goals in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Overall, bilingual and multilingual programmes help children become confident communicators, flexible thinkers, and culturally aware individuals, providing a strong foundation for future language learning and academic success.

References

- Baker, C. (2014) *A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism*. Fourth edition. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF_UWTSD/1gapa6h/alma99100289559602421 (Accessed: 4 April 2026).
- Bialystok, E. and Barac, R. (2012) "Emerging bilingualism: Dissociating advantages for metalinguistic awareness and executive control," *Cognition*, 122(1), pp. 67–73. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2011.08.003> (Accessed: 1 April 2026).
- Bialystok, E. (2015) '*Bilingualism and the Development of Executive Function: The Role of Attention*', *Child Development Perspectives*, 9(2), pp. 117–121. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4442091/> (Accessed: 4 April 2026).
- Bright, P. and Filippi, R. (2019) 'Editorial: Perspectives on the "Bilingual Advantage": Challenges and Opportunities', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, p. 1346. Available at: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6562894/> (Accessed: 4 April 2026).
- Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales (2000) *Desirable outcomes for children's learning before compulsory school age*. Cardiff: ACCAC. Available at: <https://clil.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/d-l-o.pdf> (Accessed: 4 April 2026).
- Smidt, S. (2016) *Multilingualism in the early years: Extending the limits of our world*. 1st edn. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.
https://librarysearch.uwtsd.ac.uk/permalink/44WHELF_UWTSD/1vbe9ev/alma99100115757002421 (Accessed: 5 April 2026).
- Vaisarova, J. and Carlson, S.M. (2021) 'When a spoon is not a spoon: Examining the role of executive function in young children's divergent thinking,' *Trends in Neuroscience and Education*, 25, p.100161.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tine.2021.100161> (Accessed: 5 April 2026).

Welsh Assembly Government (2008) *Framework for Children's Learning for 3 to 7-year-olds in Wales*. Available at: http://www.wasacre.org.uk/publications/wag/E-framework3-7yr_Wales.pdf (Accessed: 5 April 2026).

Welsh Government (2022) *Languages, literacy and communication: Statements of what matters*. Curriculum for Wales. Available at: https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/languages-literacy-and-communication/statements-of-what-matters/?utm_source (Accessed: 5 April 2026).

Zheng, Y., Denervaud, S. and Durrleman, S. (2023) *Bilingualism and creativity across development: Evidence from divergent thinking and convergent thinking*. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2022.1058803> (Accessed: 10 April 2026).

Zheng, Z., Degotardi, S. and Djonov, E. (2021) "Supporting multilingual development in early childhood education: A scoping review," *International journal of educational research*, 110. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101894> (Accessed: 5 April 2026).