

My Script

Hello, my name is Abby. My Student Number is 2314285. Module code ECEY4004/C. My first section is:

Benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism

Bilingualism and Multilingualism have many benefits for children in the early years. It allows children to gain a wider understanding of different cultures which evidently supports an appreciation for diversity. It can also be supported that children are likely to be more open minded and accepting of their peers when they can speak more than one language. This is because they have more knowledge on other cultures and languages compared to someone who only speaks one language. This will ultimately lead to greater empathy according to Little Cedars Nursery (2023). There are a couple of different factors which are important for effective bilingual education such as, teachers involving parents in the learning process and good relationships between the school and its local community as stated by Baker and Right (2021). Social Interactions between children in the early years are expanded by multilingualism. This is because children who can speak more than one language can connect and build relationships with a broader range of people. There are able to participate in conversations with multiple different groups and people from different backgrounds which ultimately enriches the child's social life and help continued development of their social skills as Oller and Pearson (2002) state.

English as an Additional Language and Welsh as an Additional Language

In this section I will be discussing Welsh as an additional language and English as an additional language. There are many benefits for Welsh as an additional language such as, improved language skills. Being exposed to Welsh in the early years helps children develop stronger language skills than if they don't have any exposure to the language until they are older. The first step for children to learn Welsh as an additional language is incorporating Welsh songs, praises, rhymes, and greetings as Welsh Assembly Government (2008) suggests. During my activity I went over some Welsh phrases at the start and then continued to repeat them throughout the activity. This gives the children time to hear the words a couple of time and take it in before moving on. If I had just said the Welsh words and phrases once, then the children would forget what I had said straight away. Repetition is an important factor to incorporate when learning an additional language as it allows the children to form an understanding of the new words and will help them learn and remember what the practitioner is teaching as Queensland Government (2023) agrees. Another benefit to children learning Welsh as an additional language in the early years is academic achievement. Early Years Wales (2020) states that children who have learnt an additional

language often perform better academically as they have gained problem solving skills and adaptability due to being bilingual. It is also said that incorporating Welsh stories and songs while learning the language will help the children focus while learning and promote healthy brain development.

While children are learning English as an additional language in settings it is important for practitioners and educators to speak different words and phrases in as many different contexts as they can because when learning English as second language it makes it easier for the child when the context of what is being learnt has meaning for the children. Another way to support children learning English is to provide them with someone who can speak their home language. The children can then talk to educators who are able to understand and speak the same language as them, if there is anyone in the setting able to. This will give the child further support while they are learning English as a second language as GOV.UK (2024) suggests. Another thing educators can do to help children who are learning English as an additional language is to work with the parents to find out about the language that the child speaks at home. Having a good relationship with the parents will be very useful for the child's learning as they can provide an insight into the key words the child is using at home in their first language as Pacey (2024) agrees.

Brain development

Bilingualism and multilingualism have many proven benefits towards early brain development. Firstly, learning two languages in early years stimulates a child's brain development and can often lead to better cognitive function according to Hansel (2019). Multiple studies show that bilingual children have an increased development in the brain and have more advanced cognitive skills such as, attention and inhibition as University of Groningen (2024) agrees. Incorporating Bilingualism in early years also has an impact on brain structure. This is comparable to long term experiences that ultimately lead to a change in the brain according to University of Reading (2020). It is thought that bilingualism and multilingualism in the early years enhances the development of the brain and matures fast and consistently during the first couple years of a child's life as Berken *et al* (2017) agrees.

Divergent thinking

I will now move on to speaking about divergent thinking and the effects that bilingualism and multilingualism can have on it. Divergent thinking is the ability to make creative solutions to problems we may be faced with. Learning an additional language in the early years plays an important part in increasing divergent thinking. Many studies show that bilingual children tend to outperform peers who only speak one language in divergent thinking skills. As divergent thinking involves generating many solutions and exploring multiple possibilities bilingualism in early years children is thought to enhance this cognitive ability as supported by Zheng *et al* (2023). Being able to engage in divergent thinking

facilitates performance and allows a more focused style to succeed in the tasks. It is claimed that bilingualism can have a positive effect on divergent thinking and excel in terms of fluency score as Hommel *et al* (2011) encourages.

Role of play

Play has a significant role when learning an additional language in the early years. One way that play contributes to language learning with children is by taking part in activities. Children are much more focused while playing a game rather than sat learning in a classroom setting. Giving children time to play an activity with a practitioner will help the children learn language one step at a time in a fun setting as stated by GOV.UK (2024). During my activity I made learning the Welsh words fun by turning it into a game which their children can join in with and take their time to watch what is going on. Learning language through play also creates a nurturing environment for the children. This is because singing, storytelling or engaging in games creates a warm interaction for learning and encourages the children to want to learn and join in as stated by Early Years Matter (2023).

Conclusion

In Conclusion Bilingualism and multilingualism offer many advantages for children in the early years as stated above. Exposure to different languages from an early age creates an understanding of different cultures allowing the children to become more open minded and accepting of everyone around them, such as their educators and peers. It is also key to involve the parents in the learning process as they can help provide practitioners with the information, they need to fully help the child learn an additional language. Another benefit for bilingualism is it enriches the children's social lives as they can connect with a wider range of people and form relationships. Having Welsh or English as an additional language comes with many advantages. Some of these are, enhancing language skills and having greater academic achievement than someone who only speaks one language. Finally, Bilingualism and multilingualism have advantages towards early brain development. Speaking more than one language stimulates cognitive function, divergent thinking and is also a key tool for shaping young minds.

Thank you for listening.

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