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Module: Multilingual Practice in the Early Years (ECEY4010)

Part 1: A recording of yourself undertaking a 10-minute activity which promotes and supports bilingualism.

Part 2: A 1,500-word paper on Multilingual practise. (1,591 words)

AI Statement

**I acknowledge the use of AI such as:
Copilot to help with research and
correct my grammar.**

I used prompts

***Find me an article on the benefits of
Multilingualism**

***Find me information to use in an
essay on divergent thinking**

***Find me things I can use to find out
about WAL and EAL**

**Used on various dates ranging from 7th
of March until 9th of April.**

Part 1.

Here is the link to the recording:

[20250312_155650.mp4](#)

Part 2.

According to Cambridge dictionary (n.d.) bilingualism is using or being able to speak two languages. However, according to Naldic (2011) defining bilingualism can be challenging, as individuals with diverse bilingual abilities may fall under this classification. Definitions can vary widely, from possessing basic skills in two languages to achieving a high level of fluency, resembling a native speaker in both. Some individuals self-identify as bilingual but may only refer to their ability to engage in spoken communication. Others may excel in reading in multiple languages, a trait referred to as biliteracy. Bilingualism can stem from growing up using two languages concurrently, known as simultaneous bilingualism, or from acquiring a second language later in life, termed sequential bilingualism. Ultimately, the concept of being bilingual holds different meanings for different people. LaMarr (n.d.) states that multilingual refers to children who are learning two or more languages at the same time or picking up another language while continuing to develop their first language. The term often overlaps with other labels, such as bilingual, dual language learner, or English language learner. Soler-Carbonell (2014) believes that multilingualism, often synonymous with plurilingualism, describes the ability of humans to use multiple languages for communication, either as individuals or within groups. A person's linguistic background can enable proficiency in more than one language. Likewise, societies often consist of communities that speak different languages.

Ellen Bialystok, a psycholinguist at York University, states (n.d. cited in Vince, 2016) found that bilinguals experienced Alzheimer's symptoms four to five years later than monolinguals with similar disease progression. While bilingualism does not prevent dementia, it delays its effects due to enhanced brain "cognitive reserve" and

executive function. Bilinguals benefit from extra grey matter and alternative neural pathways, allowing them to better compensate for brain damage.

Regoli (2019) believe there are many benefits to being multilingual, explaining that being multilingual significantly boosts your employability, as each new language you learn increases your value to employers. They also say multilingual education fosters early exposure to diversity, allowing children to celebrate cultural differences. While children focus on fun and friendships, learning multiple languages helps them embrace and understand other cultures. This experience builds confidence, strength and a clearer sense of belonging in society. Regoli (2019) continues, being multilingual improves working memory, it can be easier to learn other languages and speaking multiple languages makes traveling easier, as it allows you to understand and communicate with locals effectively. Speaking multiple languages improves working memory and attention span compared to monolingual individuals. It also reduces the risk of strokes and slows cognitive decline as you age. Pacey (n.d.) supports this by stating research strongly supports the significant benefits of learning multiple languages from an early age, including enhanced working memory, better self-control and increased mental flexibility. It also leads to a reduced likelihood of being diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease and improved career prospects.

Along with many advantages to being multilingual, there are also disadvantages as according to Güneç (2022), multilingual individuals often face challenges reconnecting with family members after a long separation, as they may lose touch with their native language. Learning new languages is also expensive, requiring investments in travel, educational materials and cultural understanding, which are not affordable for everyone (Regoli, 2019). This process can be challenging, as seen in differences such as "potato chips" in the U.S. referring to French fries and "footpath" in the U.K. meaning a pathway. Moreover, multilingualism might impact academic performance, as focusing on language learning often diverts attention from other subjects (Sasidharan, 2015). Educators sometimes suggest shifting focus to other disciplines, which can create difficulties for students trying to grasp cultural interactions without global exposure (Acharya, 2021).

Department for Education (2019, cited in The Bell Foundation, n.d.) state that English as an Additional Language (EAL) encompasses a varied and multifaceted group of learners who communicate in English alongside another language. In the context of England, EAL learners are identified as individuals who have encountered a language at home that is either confirmed or presumed to be different from English.

Strand (2021) explains that EAL learners are a broad and varied group, differing in their English language abilities and educational experiences. Studies have demonstrated that proficiency in English plays a crucial role in academic success, with higher proficiency correlating with improved performance in national assessments. To support EAL learners effectively, it is essential to adopt personalized instructional methods and prioritize the development of both language skills and subject knowledge.

According to Welsh Government (2014), Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL) describes a scenario in which a student's first language is neither Welsh nor English, yet they are enrolled in Welsh-medium education and need assistance to fully engage with the curriculum delivered in Welsh.

Welsh Government (2017) state the main challenges in Welsh as an Additional Language (WAL) are the lack of Welsh-speaking educators and adequate resources, which limit the success of these programmes. However, the Welsh Government's ambition to grow the number of Welsh speakers to one million by 2050 presents opportunities to strengthen WAL initiatives. Aligning WAL frameworks with English as an Additional Language (EAL) models, is also a key focus to ensure consistent and effective support.

Early years theorists emphasize the significant impact of bilingualism on brain development during childhood. For instance, Houwer (2021) highlights that bilingual children often develop enhanced cognitive flexibility and executive functions due to their ability to switch between languages. Similarly, Berken, Gracco and Klein (2016) discuss how early bilingualism fosters neuroplasticity, leading to structural and functional changes in the brain, particularly in areas associated with language processing. These insights underscore the importance of early exposure to multiple languages in shaping cognitive and neural development.

National Literacy Trust (2022) believe that multilingualism is more common than monolingualism and should be celebrated and supported as it aids brain development and learning. Babies are naturally wired for multiple languages. Using a home language helps children develop better English skills, while abandoning it can hinder progress in both languages. Maintaining the home language is essential for a child's communication, social, emotional development and sense of identity. Families should use their home language from a young age, as language connects children to their family and community. Professionals working with multilingual children should understand their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and collaborate with families to support their development.

According to Productivity Guy (2020) Divergent thinking is a cognitive approach focused on producing exceptional ideas by exploring numerous potential solutions. It is often described as "thinking outside the box" and is strongly linked to creativity and innovation. Bialystok (2011) states that the ability to speak multiple languages strengthens cognitive functions and significantly supports divergent thinking. Studies emphasize that bilingual individuals exhibit enhanced problem-solving skills, developed through their daily management of intricate linguistic frameworks.

According to Kaushanskaya & Marian (2009) multilingualism has a beneficial influence on mathematical skills, attributed to enhanced analytical thinking and the development of pattern recognition in multilingual individuals. Furthermore, it boosts verbal intelligence and heightens communication sensitivity, as bilinguals continuously adjust their language usage to align with varying social contexts.

Booton *et al.*, (2021) found that there were no significant differences between monolingual and bilingual children in divergent thinking tasks or measures, even after accounting for potential confounding factors. Effect sizes were minimal, indicating little to no impact. This robust, pre-registered research provides no support for a bilingual advantage in the divergent thinking aspect of creativity among children, suggesting that earlier mixed findings may have been influenced by false positives. While bilingualism offers numerous benefits for children, enhanced divergent thinking does not appear to be one of them.

Welsh Government (2021) states that the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience Curriculum for Wales focuses on teaching Welsh,

English and international languages, along with literature, to help learners communicate effectively. It encourages exploring connections between different languages and language skills (such as listening and writing) to spark curiosity and a lifelong interest in learning languages. Learning languages supports social understanding, cultural awareness and identity, encouraging empathy and positive relationships. These skills prepare learners to contribute to society and grow as informed, confident individuals.

Welsh Government are keen to develop the Welsh language, Welsh Government (2017) envisions that by 2050, the Welsh language flourishes with a million speakers, seamlessly integrated into all areas of daily life. Even those who do not speak Welsh embrace it with goodwill, fostering a shared sense of pride and appreciation for its vital role in shaping Wales' cultural, social and economic fabric. They continue to say The Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy aims to reach one million Welsh speakers by 2050 through increasing the number of speakers, promoting daily use of Welsh and creating favourable conditions for bilingualism. Key initiatives include expanding Welsh-medium education, transforming teaching methods, supporting bilingual workplaces and services, developing digital technology and fostering community engagement. Collaboration, legislative reforms and public involvement are emphasized to integrate Welsh into all aspects of life and build a thriving bilingual nation.

In conclusion, bilingualism and multilingualism offer profound cognitive, social and cultural benefits, promoting brain development, improving career prospects and enhancing global communication. Early exposure to multiple languages fosters cognitive flexibility and executive functions, while maintaining a home language preserves identity and supports linguistic growth. Although challenges like academic focus shifts and resource demands exist, initiatives like the Welsh Government's *Cymraeg 2050* strategy demonstrate the potential for transformative efforts. Embracing multilingualism enriches individuals and communities, creating opportunities for cultural preservation and greater understanding in an increasingly interconnected world. Through collaboration and innovative policies, the vision of thriving bilingual nations becomes attainable.

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