

For this assignment I will be submitting the following:

- A recording of myself carrying out a 10-minute activity that promotes and supports bilingualism/multilingualism.

[IMG_3720 \(1\).MOV](#)

- A 1500-word paper
Including:
 - The benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism
 - Welsh/ English as an additional language
 - Brain development
 - Divergent thinking
 - Links with early years frameworks and programmes

I have used AI (Gemini) to help put my reference list into alphabetical order. I have previous copies of this.

Introduction:

Firstly, this paper will explore both bilingualism and multilingualism in children and the early years. Moving onto exploring factors such as English and Welsh as an additional language and whether multilingualism has an impact on neurological development and divergent thinking. Further on we will discuss links to the curriculum within the early years, before concluding any findings.

When it comes to bilingualism/multilingualism it is often believed that two or more languages need to be spoken perfectly. However, Grosjean (2013) argues that it is more about how often a person uses these languages during their day to day.

Explaining that at home people may use one language but once they enter their working environment another language is used. Similarly (NALDIC, 2011) describe bilingualism as the ability to use both languages, however it is also recognised that it is complex and depends on proficiency.

a) Benefits of bilingualism and/or multilingualism

This links to Speech and Language UK (2024) as it explains that in the United Kingdom around 20% of children and young children in the education system are considered to be bilingual as they can speak or understand two or more languages rather than being fluent in both, it also refers to the term “code switching” using both languages in the same sentence when communicating. This is recognised as being a positive sign of bilingual communication and shows a good level of understanding of both languages. University of Reading (2018) recognises the importance of children using mother tongue at home to support the use of both languages. This scientific evidence connects with The Curriculum for Wales (2023) under belonging as educators have the ability to support children in recognising who they are, and in feeling loved, respected and valued both at school and at home.

Drobot (2021) interprets multilinguals as having the ability to be good communicators. Explaining that multilingualism has the ability to affect mindset and

values, enabling multilinguals to express empathy and broaden mindsets when it comes to different cultures. This allows opportunity for social skills to strengthen. Within Wales, many provisions that consider themselves to be bilingual settings operate with the support of Mudiad Meithryn (2008), who suggests that a bilingual children have a head start in literacy, explaining how children concentrate more on the meaning of words rather than the sound of the words. It means they have language as a thinking tool and using this tool to separate meaning and sound providing the advantage, linking to metalinguistic awareness.

b) Welsh as an Additional Language/English as an Additional Language;

In Wales it is hopeful that by the year 2050 there will be a million Welsh speakers as explained by (The Welsh Government, 2017.) The use of the early years is ambitious in supporting Wales to reach this target with the promise of around 150 Welsh medium settings to enable a smooth transition into education settings.

Throughout my attached activity, I chose to use the immersion approach when singing and counting with the children. As a practitioner in a Welsh speaking Flying Start playgroup, we follow the guidance and support given by Mudiad Meithryn and have delivered our sessions through this approach. As practitioners we have noticed that a lot of Welsh language is learned through songs and rhymes, as well as repetition. Many children within our setting primarily have English speaking parents and being with us is their first experience of a new language. Therefore, singing and repetition works well for our 2-year-olds.

When children are going through the processes of learning additional languages there will be a period known as 'the silent period' where a child becomes quiet and occasionally this can raise alarm for practitioners. However, Drury (2013) explains how this period is significant and this is the point where a child is internally learning and making connections with the new language that they are learning. Further explaining how the effectiveness of a nurturing environment is significant in helping the child with this, ensuring care and time is given when speaking and expressing a new language.

c) Brain development;

Regarding brain development Bialystok et al. (2009) demonstrates that act of using two languages is a form of brain training for bilinguals. Their research shows that managing two languages at the same time strengthens links in the brain which are responsible for focusing attention on certain activities and ignoring other distractions. This is what is happening to children that use both languages within a bilingual setting in the early years.

Furthermore, research carried out by Craik, Bialystok, and Freedman (2010) suggests that a cognitive reserve is created when a person manages the demand of two languages. They then continue to discuss bilingualism, explaining how evidence suggests that having the skill set of two languages can help delay the onset symptoms of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia. This leads us to believe that bilingualism has a long-lasting effect on the brain.

However, research from the University of Cambridge (Folke and Ouzia, 2016) suggests that bilingualism may also present certain cognitive challenges. A study on metacognition found that monolingual people are more capable of recognising their level of performance, whereas bilingual people are less likely to do this. this could lead to a cognitive trade off where the brain is so good at one thing it could have less energy for other things such as this.

Advantages of bilingualism can be looked at through Lev Vygostkys lens regarding the zone of proximal development. The role of the early year's practitioner is to provide a rich language learning environment for a child of bilingual ability to be able use the benefits of having both languages to support their learning and development. With their knowledge and then the support of the adult a child should reach the zone of proximal development.

d) Divergent thinking;

According to (Guilford, 1967) divergent thinking is having the ability to use varied information to find creative answers. This level of creativity links closely with bilingualism/multilingualism, it is considered that multilinguals are more able to use their creativity for divergent thinking enabling them to find multiple ways to overcome obstacles that come their way. However, Fürst and Grin (2023) argue that the link

between creativity and divergent thinking is unclear and other factors could be considered when looking at creativity, such as personality and experiences. It does however suggest that multilinguals could be well travelled and have the potential to experience more diversity, meaning these experiences help broaden creativity. Therefore, meaning that multilingualism is not as such of a strong connection as originally thought. Whereas Dewaele (2022) agreed and believed that bilingualism/multilingualism is associated closely with personality traits, such as flexibility and open mindedness. Stating that having a broader range of traits could be the link to an advantage in creativity rather than coming directly from multilingualism. Mukhija, J. and Rajan, G. (2025) explain how multilingualism has significant impact on neurological development and hold many benefits throughout a lifetime. Accessing more than one language from an early age provides better opportunity for creativity and explaining how multilingualism challenges the brain in many ways from culturally to divergent thinking. Some may argue that the evidence linking multilingualism/bilingualism to divergent thinking is significant.

e) [Links with early years' frameworks and programmes.](#)

There are many initiatives that support EAL/WAL and multilingualism within the early as well as in the community across the United Kingdom. BookTrust, (n.d.) have started to deliver book start in dual language, supporting children and parents to continue practicing their home language whilst supporting and encouraging the use of a second language through stories and books. This programme nurtures children from young and can encourage the personality traits that link to creativity, flexibility, and divergent thinking. These books have a range of around 30 languages and support development from babies through to preschool.

The latest legislation in Wales to encourage and promote the use of the Welsh language especially including the million Welsh speakers before 2050 is (Welsh Language and Education (Wales) Act 2025). Recognising and reinforcing that building upon the skillset of the child in a bilingual system is desirable is building up children's language skillset.

Within a Welsh speaking Flying Start setting practitioners work closely with the supporting agencies such as Mudiad Meithryn – an organisation that has built its

reputation on encouraging the use of the Welsh language and supporting many early years provisions with providing Welsh opportunities for children. To reach the goal of achieving the number of Welsh speakers by 2050 Mudiad Meithryn (2026) believe immersing children and young people fully into the language is the most beneficial method to use. Ensuring a fun environment where a child can be fully surrounded by the language and could soak it all up whilst playing and participating in activities.

Conclusion:

From the evidence collected, there are many views and opinions on the benefits of multilingualism and the links to neurological development as well as creativity and divergent thinking. Many studies have found that multilingualism has a significant impact on brain development especially when starting from a young age. much of the evidence sourced seems to be in favour of the benefits of multilingualism in children and young people. However, there are some contrasting opinions that should be considered. Some arguments suggest that there is not considerable evidence to back up all the findings presented.

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