

- Hello, my name is Kelly Watkinson, thank you for joining me today. During this presentation I shall be discussing multilingualism, the benefits of it and how it can affect other areas of development such as Brain Development and Divergent thinking.
- When examining multilingualism and bilingualism there are many benefits to consider as a result of a child being multilingual or bilingual. Zero to Three (2017) states that a positive benefit of a child being multilingual, or bilingual is that the child may develop a better memory. This will benefit them in continuing to learn the languages they are learning and in other aspects of their lives, throughout their lives. Another benefit of being multilingual or bilingual is having the ability to communicate with a wider scale of other people. This will allow the child to communicate effectively with a variety of people which can assist them in areas such as developing relationships and employability in the future. An additional benefit of multilingual, provided by the Multilingual Children's Association (No Date) is that they may have a better Metalinguistic knowledge. This will aid the child in having a deeper understanding of the languages they are learning currently, or they choose to learn in the future. However, the Multilingual Children's Association (No Date) brings to attention that although there are many useful benefits of a child being multilingual, there may also be some disadvantages to accompany the advantages. A negative impact, a child may face with multilingual is the speech development may happen at a slower pace when compared to a monolingual child. This could result in the child being unable to express themselves and their needs, which may be frustrating for the child.
- When working in Early Years Settings, it is important for Early Years Practitioners to support the development of Welsh as an additional language. The British Council (2015) expresses the concern in the Welsh language is not being used in learning to its full advantage. In Early Years Settings it is vital that early year's practitioners lay a good foundation to the learning of additional languages. Early Years Practitioners can support the learning of Welsh as an additional language by appropriate planning of activities and resources. As seen in the video, the practitioner selected a relaxed activity for the children to engage in. The practitioner also allowed the children to express themselves in the language of their choice by using a "sandwiching" technique of saying it in one language and repeating it in the first language again. It is important to consider the child's needs and any ALN needs they

may have or any other barriers to learning such as having an additional mother tongue and limited knowledge of the Welsh and English Language.

- Another interesting aspect to consider in this topic is Brain Development. According to Early Education (2022) Multilingualism or Bilingualism can assist brain development in young children. By having the ability to be multilingual it may improve brain flexibility and allow them to develop the ability to be able to switch from one language to another with ease. In the activity seen previously in the first video, the practitioner asks the group if they know what sheep is in Welsh. This allows the children to practice the skill of switching and supports their language development if they did not previously know. By supporting the development of the language within a fun and engaging activity the children will become more engaged in the activity and may learn more as a result of this. Early Education (2022) suggests that keeping activities to appropriate lengths based on the child's age and understanding will help support the development of the language further. It is important for practitioners to model effective use and practice of the languages they are hoping to support the development in. The children may be encouraged to practice and use the language appropriately also.
- Another interesting aspect on the topic of Multilingualism to consider is the impact it may have on divergent thinking. Thinking Skills and Creativity (2021) acknowledges although there may not be a direct link between multilingualism and divergent thinking, multilingualism encourages resilience in the brain which benefits the children when developing other skills such as problem solving.
- Supporting the development of the Welsh language within Wales is not only important but required by the government to do so. Hwb (No Date) reminds practitioners that Welsh is a part of the Welsh National Curriculum, by supporting the teaching and learning of this within Early Years Settings, practitioners are assisting in keep their practice and the practice of their setting within accordance to the National Curriculum of Wales. Another way the Welsh Language Development is a part of Early Years Settings, through the policies and procedures of the setting. A vast majority of Settings within Wales have made the Welsh Language an important influencing factor of the setting and the practice within it. By promoting the teaching and learning of the Welsh Language alongside English it will provide an

enabling environment for children in the setting to communicate through the language of their choice or of the language used within their home. This allows the children to learn and use their country's language and may give them a sense of connection to their Heritage. Early Years Wales (No Date) explains that Welsh Language Act 1993 is another key factor when encouraging the supporting of the Welsh Language within the Early Years Settings. It states that Welsh should be equal to English within the settings, and it is the right of the child and their families to be able to choose what language they wish to communicate in. By supporting the Welsh Language development, practitioners are not only saving a dying part of the Welsh Heritage, but they are allowing and encouraging the child to make their own decisions on their learning and the language they wish to learn through, which helps provide enabling and inclusive environments within the Early Years Settings to support all children's learning and development, laying a good foundation for their future.

- That concludes my discussion of multilingualism and how important and beneficial it is to child development. Thank you for your time.

Reference List

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