

ECES5010 – Bilingualism

ACADEMIC

Video presentation link: <https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/04d22b51-c0b8-47a0-9975-5679f7aadf4c>

What is bilingualism?

There is yet to be an agreed definition of bilingualism among researchers.

One of the shortest definitions of bilingualism was offered by Weinreich (1968) where he states, 'the practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism, and the person involved, bilingual'.

Although this seems like a straightforward concept, many would argue what level of competency distinguishes whether you are bilingual, with many whom specialists would consider to be bilingual, not believing themselves to be (Hoffmann, 1991).

Another definition from Haugen (1953) suggests bilinguals are individuals who are fluent in one language but can also produce meaningful remarks in another.

Again, offering very little explanation to the level of knowledge associated with their second language.

Advantages and Disadvantages of bilingualism

Bilingualism comes with both advantages and disadvantages.

There are numerous advantages bilingualism offers, in both early childhood and old age. These can include; cognitive, neurological and social aspects. According to Marian and Shook (2012) being bilingual enhances learning, with research suggesting higher attention span and improved conflict management in infants as young as 7 months. Also, they suggest that it offers neurological benefits to the elderly, stating "If the brain is an engine, bilingualism may help to improve its mileage, allowing it to go farther on the same amount of fuel" (Marian, Shook, 2012). The social benefits of bilingualism can include the strong connections with family, culture and ethnical

identity (Tse, 2000). Although these are only a few examples of the advantages of bilingualism, there is extensive research into this topic with many other advantages not yet discussed.

When conducting research, the most evident disadvantage of bilingualism is the lack of control over selected language (Bialystok, 2009). Research suggests that the cause of this is because bilinguals are developing two separate lexical systems, so their vocabulary is significantly less in each language. Another suggested disadvantage of bilingualism is the difficulties bilinguals may face when processing information, Sorace (2011) suggests the retrieval of words has been reported to be slower in bilinguals of all ages, in comparison to those who only speak one language.

The history of the Welsh language

The introduction of the Welsh language dates back over 1400 years, with many believing it to be the essence of Welsh identity. Throughout this time it has experienced many difficulties. An example of when the Welsh language took a setback was the introduction of the Laws in Wales Act 1535-1542, where Henry VIII of England integrated Wales and England in legal terms. This saw the Welsh language lose its rights as it banned the Welsh Language from any official role (Quaino, 2008).

Another setback for the Welsh language was believed to be during industrialization in the 18th and 19th century, as the population grew dramatically by English-speaking migrants (Jenkins, 2001). However, Brindley (1993) would argue that industrialisation saved the Welsh language, as it meant local Welsh speakers could find employment in their own country instead of having to emigrate elsewhere for work.

Policy

These are a few examples of how or why the Welsh language has seen a decline throughout history. However, there are also numerous policies and campaigns which have been introduced to promote and encourage the re-growth of the Welsh language. Which is evidently working, as statistics from 2020 show an increase of Welsh speakers, in comparison to the Census in 2011, as you can see in the graph (Welsh Government, 2020).

Plaid Cymru are a political party founded in 1925, mainly campaigning to protect the Welsh language and culture (Cannon and Crowcroft, 2015). Since then, they have

continued to take steps in order to strengthen and increase the number of welsh speakers in Wales (Plaid Cymru, 2021).

They are great advocates for promoting the Welsh language and backing government policies to increase welsh. One of the most significant welsh policies in question include a 'Cymraeg 2050, A million welsh-speakers', which was introduced by the Welsh Government with the ambition to see the number of welsh speakers not only increase to a million by 2050, but also encourage individuals to enjoy speaking welsh in every aspect of their lives, taking full ownership towards the language and its importance for welsh culture, society and economy. One of the principal strategies for them to achieve this is targeting the education system, examples of how this can be achieve include expanding the use of welsh in the early years, creating a statutory education system which encourages welsh speakers and increasing the number of welsh speakers within the workforce (Welsh Government, 2017).

Another policy which works alongside the 'Cymraeg 2050' is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (Welsh Government, 2015) which focuses on seven key well-being goals, one being the 'A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language. This area emphasis the importance of promoting and protecting welsh culture, heritage, and language. A main aim to achieve this is to "develop skills, increase opportunities and respect our statues as a bilingual nation'. Both of these policies have been introduced by the Welsh government to change individual's attitudes towards the Welsh language, with the hope to increase the number of people using the language in their everyday lives and protect it fro losing its value.

Conclude

To conclude, bilingualism has many advantages and disadvantages, including cognitive and neurological functions, but also social aspects which have been discussed. Regarding the Welsh language, throughout history it has experienced many difficulties with only a few of the possible causes discussed. There are many policies and campaigns which have been introduced to work towards increasing the number of Welsh speaker in Wales.

THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

Video presentation link: <https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/e4ed4f39-1c6e-4309-baa4-a465cc9f43f5>

In this presentation we will be exploring Welsh Policy, some examples of best practice relating to teaching Welsh in schools and theory relating to language acquisition and development.

Introduction

Since 1988, when the National Curriculum of Wales was first introduced the Welsh language has been a compulsory topic from The Foundation Phase through to Key Stage 4 (Welsh Government, 2016). With the roll out of the New Curriculum in Wales, the Welsh language is still very much a compulsory part of the curriculum, however it falls under Languages, Literacy and Communications Area of Learning and Experience (Welsh Government, 2020). The New Curriculum aims to encourage individuals to become multilingual by putting emphasis on Welsh, English, and other foreign languages by integrating them into other lessons.

Teaching Welsh in Schools:

We're now going to explore theory, policy and best practice within teaching and learning the Welsh language.

Firstly..

The Cymraeg 2050 strategy emphasis' the importance of embedding language into practices from an early age so that it becomes part of everyday life (Welsh Government, 2017).

Aberporth Bilingual Playgroup have adopted this approach by implementing the Welsh language and phrases into their daily routine activities. The practitioners within the setting use the Welsh language action songs to begin their day within the nursery, this encourages the children to have a positive attitude towards the Welsh language but

also reflects the ethos of the setting. Examples they have provided of how Welsh is used throughout the setting include; registration, daily weather, numbers, shape of the day and colour of the week (Estyn, 2019).

The communicative proficiency model focuses mainly on the level of linguistic challenges within activities (Baker, 2011). The first quadrant the model focuses on is oral language, using visual supports and the child's first language to support the development of their second language. This is usually evident in daily routine tasks, such as greetings, feelings and weather, much like in Aberporth Bilingual Playgroup.

The Welsh in Education Action Plan 2017-21 illustrates the importance of including, supporting and providing information to parents/carers so that they know how to best support and encourage their children when learning Welsh both in school and at home. The Welsh Government (2017) state they want parents/carers to "understand the value of the Welsh language as a means of enhancing a sense of Welsh identity and as a skill".

In Mount Street Primary School, they have adopted this approach by implementing Welsh lessons into their curriculum from as early as their preschoolers. The school ensures that the Welsh language is used throughout the day, in both the classroom and outdoor activities. One of their most significant resources which they use to encourage the Welsh language is the use of a Welsh Mascot, which the pupils take in turn to take home. The importance of the Welsh Mascot is not only to provide children with the opportunity to further their Welsh, but it also aims to promote the importance of the Welsh language to their families so that they also have a positive attitude towards it (Hwb, 2013).

Lambert's (1974) model of second language learning emphasis the important of attitudes towards language, not only for the development of it but the maintenance and restoring. Therefore, a positive attitude is paramount in the acquirement of a second language as it prompts motivation for learners to succeed and without it could lead to lower achievements. Although there is a consistent flow to Lambert's model, many suggest that it does not consider conflicting factors which could disturb the pattern (Buttar, 1997).

The New Curriculum in Wales emphasises the importance of using cross-curricular learning as it encourages the development of competences and capabilities (Welsh Government, 2020).

Treorchy Comprehensive School have reportedly used their heritage and culture to encourage the learning of the Welsh language. They have embedded the culture, economic, environmental, historical and linguistic characteristics of Wales across all parts of the curriculum, this helps pupils to feel pride towards their country and a sense of belonging, but also encourages them to learn the language of their country (Estyn, 2016).

Cummins (2000) 'Think Tank Model of Bilingualism' proposes that it is necessary for individuals to acquire a certain level of cognitive development before becoming successful in a second language, and that continual development in the first language would also be beneficial to the development of proficiency in the second language. This can be seen in Treorchy Comprehensive School, as they continue to develop their learning in their first language but are also encouraged wherever possible to learn a second language, which is Welsh.

Conclude –

To conclude, there are many policies relating to the teaching of the Welsh language which have been briefly discussed. Much research has been completed in reviewing best practices relating to the teaching of Welsh in schools, supported by theoretical examples of language acquisition and development, and the importance of a positive attitude towards language development.