

Cover Sheet

For this assessment I have submitted the following:

Part 1 - A 10-minute activity which promotes and supports bilingualism and/or multilingualism.

Part 2 - A 1,500-word supporting paper that includes:

- Benefits of bilingualism and/or multilingualism;
- Welsh/English as an Additional Language;
- Brain development;
- Divergent thinking;
- Frameworks and Programs

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.

Part 2

Introduction

Baker and Wright (2026) define bilingualism as a person who can speak more than one language. However, it is considered how the definition of multilingualism can be open to more than one interpretation. A person may be able to speak both languages in conversation, another may use one language more confidently or It could be that written language may be easier to use and understand than spoken. Smidt (2016) shares how multilingualism is common around the world with countries such as India having nineteen official languages and Africa having eleven. Smidt (2016) questions how children should be introduced to English in education settings, whether children should be encouraged to only learn to speak and read English or to learn English whilst still maintaining the languages they have already developed. This paper will look at the benefits of multilingualism and how it can effect brain development and divergent thinking.

Benefits of Multilingualism

Throughout the twentieth century, it was believed that multilingualism could have a negative effect on cognitive development, with beliefs it could cause mental confusion (Issa and Hatt, 2013). Huang, quoted in Baker and Wright (2026) share the effect these ideas had in education settings in Wales, where children's mouths were washed out with soap or beaten for speaking two languages.

Theory and research has since found benefits to multilingualism. Bialystok and Werker (2017) stated that a study by Pearl and Lambert (1962) found multilingual children out performed monolinguals through a range of verbal and non-verbal intelligence tasks. Dijk, *et al.* (2019) also found research showing, those who were bilingual had higher cognitive thinking than monolinguals. Kharkhurin (2017) and Adi-Japha *et al.* (2010) suggest, because bilinguals are surrounded by two or more cultures with different ideas and values, they may think from a more open-minded and creative perspective compared to monolinguals. Dijk, *et al.* (2019) goes on to reflect research and how it can be improved, suggesting research in the future could be more diverse in looking at differences in backgrounds and experiences.

Baker (2014) agrees with the evidence mentioned, sharing that, when speaking a language the brain keeps the two languages separate, however in the operating part of the brain the two languages are joined together. This means there is no interference from learning a new language, and suggests it can give social and cultural advantages, to a child.

Within my activity I have supported multilingualism by using Welsh and English language to present and read my story. This could help monolingual children to develop a second language, which, as the research has suggested, can potentially have a positive impact on their future development.

English/Welsh as an Additional Language

Welsh Government (2017) set out a plan to have 50 million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050, believing Welsh language and culture are important in defining Welsh people and want to ensure the language is continued through future generations. For this reason, I chose to conduct my activity in English with Welsh as an additional language.

Welsh Government (2025) plan to continue expanding on their Welsh medium Flying Start playgroups through 2025/2026 to enable increased access to Welsh medium education in the Early Years. In Newport based Welsh-medium schools and nurseries, 95% of parents are not Welsh speakers. Children are supported by staff to develop their English whilst learning Welsh as an additional language (Cymraeg i Bawb, 2025). By using both English and Welsh within my activity, I am providing the children with their familiar home language, whilst introducing them to simple Welsh words and phrases, such as, “da iawn!” followed by “Well done!”.

Cummins (2021) looks at the findings of Elly and Mangubhai (1983) who researched the effects of a ‘book flood’ in Fiji. Children who read English books independently or were read to in English by a teacher, were found to expand their English significantly more in two years than those who were taught in traditional methods. Using a Welsh story within my activity has built on the idea of using books to develop an additional language. Although, I feel that my activity could have had more use of the Welsh language to support the idea of a ‘book flood’.

Vygotsky shares the ideas of Elly and Mangubhai (1983) believing involvement from an adult can support a child's development. Veraksa and Samuelsson (2022) mention the term, Scaffolding, used by Vygotsky, who said to build a child's learning requires the adult to model and provide the experience and language for the child and by joining in with the child's play.

Brain Development

Findings from Penfield (1965) and Lenneberg (1967) shared by Cunningham (2011) consider how children are able to develop a language with more ease compared to adults. It is thought that there is a critical period within a child's brain development where language can be picked up with more ease, referred to as brain lateralization and neural plasticity. They go on to suggest the brain can no longer learn a language in such a way once a child hits puberty. This could indicate that teaching monolingual children Welsh as a second language in the early years, as suggested by Welsh Government (2025), could be the an ideal time for teaching.

Garvey (2024) states, there are individual cells within the brain which communicate through circuits. The more the cells are used, the stronger they become. From this they develop a memory enabling the brain to react quicker each time. This shows how humans can learn from repetition. The same could be considered for language development. When learning a new language, constant repetition could help to memorize the skill. My activity has supported this idea with the use of repetitive language and the use of songs that are sang daily for the children. For example, "Sut wyt ti?" followed by "How are you?" is repeated for each child. This will enable the children to become familiar with the phrase. The idea of repetition is shared by theorist Piaget (2001) who suggests in the early years children love to repeat and play with language, repeating words they hear and copying syllables even if they have no concept of the words meaning.

Divergent Thinking

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) cited in Liang- Su, Wei and Chuang (2026) describes Divergent Thinking as the ability to look more creatively at a problem with the skills to produce innovative ideas. Guilford (1967) cited in Storme *et al.* (2017) shares the same ideas, defining

divergent thinking as a process that enables a person to produce many different responses to a problem.

Su, Wei and Chuang (2026) share research between creative thinking and cultural experiences. It was found that those with open minds to different cultures and cultural experiences were more creative and divergent in their thinking. However, it should be considered that future research could include a more diverse range of people such as age and professional careers as, Booton *et al.* (2021) state that research into bilingualism and creative thinking is inconsistent with conflicting findings, referring to Leikin and Tovli (2014) who found bilingual children performed better with verbal creativity and Jacobs and Pierce (1966) who found no difference.

Reggio Emilia (Reggio Emilia Approach, 2022) believe children possess 100 languages, meaning a hundred ways of thinking and expressing themselves, with 100 languages being a metaphor for the capabilities of a child. It can be considered from this, if children are born divergent and creative thinkers, is bilingualism the reason people think more creatively or could it be the environment and teachings surrounding the child. As mentioned above, Su, Wei and Chuang (2026) found cultural experiences and those with open minds were more divergent in their thinking. Therefore this supports the argument for experience and teaching of open mindedness and culture as well as language.

Frameworks and Programs

The curriculum for Early Years Wales (Cwlwm, 2021) discuss belonging as a part of children's development. It talks about identity and how children and babies begin to recognise the groups in which they belong, going on to say that familiar songs and rhymes support communication. As discussed, Welsh Government (2017) feel that Welsh culture and language defines Wales, therefore supporting their ideas in the curriculum (Cwlwm, 2021) of belonging and culture.

Mudiad Meithrin (Meithrin, n.d.) is acknowledged as the main provider of Welsh language and provision within the early years. It states it's passion for the Welsh language and keeping the Welsh language alive for future generations, believing that bilingualism will benefit children. Mudiad Meithrin (2023) states, the immersion

method is the most effective way of teaching Welsh to children who have never spoken the language, believing the more Welsh language the child hears, the more they will learn.

The teaching methods within Wales are questioned by Hickey and Mejía (2014) who share findings of concerns that the use of only the Welsh language could be too difficult for Welsh language learners. They go on to suggest more quality training for teachers and a more considered approach to diverse needs.

Within my activity I have used an immersion of Welsh songs. However, throughout my story I have used both English and Welsh language. This links to the findings of Hickey and Mejía (2014) as I have taken into consideration the age of my children and their understanding of English and Welsh.

Conclusion

It can be seen how bilingualism can impact brain development and divergent thinking, though, as suggested throughout this paper, there could be more research conducted on a broader range of people with different backgrounds. It seems that immersion into culture and opened mindedness can support divergent thinking, therefore, it suggests that immersing children within a language and culture can have its benefits. It also seems clear that teaching plays a part within the learning as suggested by theorist Reggio Emilia (Reggio Emilia Approach, 2022) and the Welsh Curriculum (Cwlwm, 2021). Overall, it is apparent that even with no definitive answer of its benefits, there seems to be no negative reason for children to be educated bilingually.

Part 1 - Link to Activity

https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/:v:/r/personal/2513719_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/Documents/IMG_0341.MOV?csf=1&web=1&e=AtIMUJ&nav=eyJyZWZlcnJhbEluZm8iOmsicmVmZXJyYWxBcHAIoiJTdHJIYW1XZWJBcHAIJCJyZWZlcnJhbFZpZXciOiJTaGFyZURpYWxvZy1MaW5rliwicmVmZXJyYWxBcHBQbGF0Zm9ybSI6IldlYiIsInJlZmVycmFsTW9kZSI6InZpZXcifX0%3D

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