

Bilingualism, Multilingualism and Multi-thinking presentation

Good morning and welcome to my presentation. My name is Rebecca and my student number is 2209334. The module code is ECEY4004/C. My presentation is based on Multilingualism and Multi-thinking.

There are various definitions and interpretations of Multilingualism. According to Valdes (2015, cited in Baker and Wright, 2021) and Dewaele (2015), if an individual is multilingual or bilingual, they can function in more than one language - which includes understanding, speaking, writing and reading, even to a limited degree. Mohanty (2019, cited in Baker and Wright, 2021) believes that a multilingual person would have the ability to communicate and interact with people and society, in two or more languages. However, Tozun (2013) points out that multilingualism can be misinterpreted because it is associated with 'teaching' rather than 'facilitating' language use.

According to Baker (2014) if a child acquires a first and second language concurrently, or before the age of 3 a second language is learnt, this is known as simultaneous bilingualism. Sequential bilingualism is when a second language is learnt later than the first language or if a child becomes proficient in the language after the age of 3. The activity in the first video is aimed towards sequential bilingualism. Pound (2014) states that Chomsky believed that when babies are born, they have a 'language acquisition device' meaning they have an innate understanding of language structures.

I will move on to the main body of my presentation – the benefits of multilingualism. According to Bialystok and Werker (2017) the experience of learning two languages has been shown to influence both the process of language acquisition and the cognitive systems associated with language application, language use and encoding. The bilingual child learns two sound systems, two sets of word order rules, two lexicons, and a plethora of other differences in how both languages encode and represent the world. As shown in the previous video, words are repeated in both English and Welsh to reiterate the understanding and meaning of the additional language.

Nevertheless, Rhys and Thomas (2012) maintain that differences between bilinguals' and monolinguals rate of language acquisition disappear as children get older and receive continued exposure to both languages, depending on the level of engagement with them.

Bialystok (2015) says that children experience different language environments, these influence the development of their cognitive systems. Evidence shows that bilingualism has a positive affect on developmental outcomes. Executive function is trained through bilingualism due to its continuous recruitment for language selection. Executive function predicts future academic success. The activity in the previous video develops working memory, cognitive flexibility and inhibitory control. Each child needed to remember and repeat the Welsh sentence patterns.

Leikin and Tovli (2014, cited in Dijk *et al.*, 2018) believe that enhanced executive functioning is a likely underlying mechanism resulting in bilinguals out-performing monolinguals on creative measures. Costa *et al.* (2009, cited in Dijk *et al.*, 2018) points out that bilinguals need to focus their attention, whilst inhibiting the interference of another language to select the correct language. This shows they have an executive function advantage. Dijk, et al. (2018) states that to have a strong level of language proficiency, one must have deep and broad conceptual knowledge.

By partaking in bilingual activities like the one in the first video it ensures children's rights are respected. Unicef (2019) say that every child has the right to use and learn the language, practice the religion and abide by customs in line with their family, regardless of whether these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

According to Thomas (2012) bilingualism broadens different ways of thinking and enhances world views. It can benefit adults when applying for jobs, providing greater ease finding work. It also gives children a better understanding and more respect for different cultures. However, if a child grows up bilingually it can prevent issues that arise when learning a foreign language at an older age.

Next, brain development will be discussed. Noort *et al.* (2019) maintain that cognitive reserve is enhanced by lifelong bilingualism. Evidence shows that this applies to people who acquire the second language at any age. Cognitive reserve was enhanced more for trilingual people, the greatest effects were on the people who spoke 4 or more languages. However, Mukadam *et al.* (2017) argue that bilingualism does not protect everybody from cognitive decline. The neuroprotective effects of bilingualism over time may be due to specific patterns of language use rather than bilingualism itself. Mukadam *et al.* (2017) and Noort *et al.* (2019) believe that studies show dementia can be diagnosed in

bilingual people between 4 and 5 ½ years later than monolinguals, as bilingualism can delay cognitive decline.

According to Berken, Gracco and Klein (2017) The bilingual brain is wired differently if the skill is learnt from birth, as the brain circuitry is in the process of being formed, whereas if learnt later in life the pathways serving the first language are already advanced. Hernandez (2013) states that Piaget discovered the theory of cognitive development. Thinking is done in a sensorimotor way during the first few years of life and as they grow older the focus is on wider patterns that make up the world. Hernandez believes that early in childhood, it is possible to learn the speech sounds of two languages well; nevertheless, it gets much more challenging as people age. The activity in the video previously watched was aimed at 4-5 year olds, this is an appropriate age to teach Welsh due to good neuroplasticity.

Ramezani *et al.* (2020) point out that when an individual switches between 2 or more languages, this is known as code switching. Various parts of the brain are impacted by codeswitching, including the frontoparietal, subcortical and to a lower degree, mid-temporal regions.

Multilingual Montessori (2023) states that a sandwich technique is used to introduce new vocabulary to children in the target language. This is when the familiar phrase is said between the new phrases resulting in them conveying meaning quickly.

I will now explain the importance of Welsh as an Additional language. Hickey, Lewis and Baker (2014) maintain that some practitioners are apprehensive about the exclusive immersion approach due to the concern that it will impact second language learners transitioning to childcare. There should be differentiation in settings. Comprehension skills including simple structures and basic vocabulary need to be developed for children that are second language learners. Grammatical accuracy and vocabulary extension should be enriched and developed for children as first language learners.

Gorrara et al. (2020) believe that the new Curriculum for Wales 2022 promotes a multilingual approach. Language learners will be more resilient and engaged with a dynamic approach to language learning due to finding connections between cultures and languages. However, good multiple language competence can only be delivered if teachers are appropriately trained and are supported with continuous professional development based on languages. The

Welsh activity in the previous video is bilingual which fits in with the ethos of the Curriculum for Wales.

Mc Leod, Verdon and Theobald (2015) say that some factors have an impact on children when facilitating friendships such as engaging in activities together, sharing mutual language competence and mutual interests. This can determine inclusion or exclusion.

Divergent thinking is the next topic to be evaluated. Baker (2014) points out that Divergent thinking is creative, imaginative and original. Children who are divergent thinkers will have various answers to questions.

Tozun (2013) suggests that research shows there may be advantages for bilingual children over monolinguals with regards to divergent thinking. The ability to speak two languages can provide more awareness into the way language relates to thinking. However, Booton et al. (2021) say that during a study, there was no evidence found to show that bilingualism effects creativity and divergent thinking. Differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in other studies may be due to general intelligence. Kharkhurin and Wei (2015, cited in Storme et al., 2017) maintain that bilinguals who switch languages more frequently than their non-habitual counterparts found more creative ideas in verbal and graphical divergent thinking tasks.

The final topic that will be discussed is frameworks and programmes used in Wales. According to Welsh Government (2021) there are 5 types of standards in regulations that Welsh Ministers can specify. They are stated in the Welsh Language Wales Measure 2011. These are; service delivery, policy making, operational, promotion and record keeping. The commissioner provides each body with a compliance notice, stating standards that must be adhered to.

Welsh Government (2022) point out that Welsh language is a fundamental part of the culture of Wales and every setting in Wales should teach Welsh. The learning environment must promote a strong Welsh ethos. Adults should teach the children about Welsh culture, promoting the diversity of it and giving children opportunities to explore aspects of Wales.

Mudiad Meithrin (No date) believe that all children need the opportunity to grow, learn and play through the Welsh language. In every Mudiad Meithrin setting Welsh language should be present. Being bilingual benefits children, therefore they aim to keep the Welsh language alive and relevant to today's generations.

Word Count: 1544

To conclude, multilingualism presents many benefits to brain development such as; divergent thinking, cognitive reserve and executive functioning. It enables understanding of cultures and promotes diversity.

Thank you for listening. Any questions?

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