

Multilingualism/ Multi-thinking

10 Minute Video. Academic Piece.

“Rosa Morgan 2318269. This is my 10-minute academic video on multilingualism and multi-thinking.”

Section 1 – Benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism

Initially, I am going to discuss bilingualism. Bilingualism is often described as being fluent in two languages. However, it is often argued that it can sometimes be difficult to give a correct definition of bilingualism because of the uncertainty of what extent fluency refers to. According to Cambridge Dictionary (2024), fluency is referred to as the capacity to write or speak a language rapidly, fluently, and easily, although Baker and Wright (2021), point out that being bilingual may mean different things to different people, such as, a person may be considered as bilingual if they speak two languages but do not utilize them both or if they are more adept in one language than the other. For example, as shown in my activity (part 1), I have used a range of English and Welsh throughout for the children's benefit, however, I am not fluent in Welsh, although I believe that I represented as bilingual. Moreover, Bialystok and Werker (2017) discuss that bilingualism is a highly beneficial lens for expanding knowledge on early child development because bilingualism has many future advantages, these include, educational and career benefits, cultural benefits, improved problem solving and multi-tasking, excellent listening skills, advanced memory, more opportunities and seeing the world with a different perspective (French for Life 2015).

Secondly, Aronin (2018) implies that multilingualism is also defined in various ways, yet it is commonly described as complex because it involves being able to use 3 or more languages. Nevertheless, some may describe multilingualism as being able to use several languages. Being multilingual is one of the most fundamental social practices in the world due to worldwide significance, even so, according to UWTSD (No Date), only 3.0% of the world population is multilingual. So, for example, National Literacy Trust (2022) believes that multilingualism is an attribute that should be praised and supported in the early years since it promotes brain development, enhances cognitive function, and improves brain flexibility. Another benefit that multilingualism provides is that it facilitates better communication, which helps people integrate into new groups and cultures more easily and effectively (Kent State University, 2024).

Section 2 – Welsh as an additional language and English as an additional language

Thirdly, The Welsh Government (2014) point out that WAL is where the individual is pursuing a Welsh medium education, yet their native language is neither Welsh nor English, support is then necessary for the purpose of accessing the entire curriculum in Welsh. Siencyn (2019) says that

Her Majesty, at that time, declared that children should be provided with opportunities of the Welsh language and the Welsh curriculum throughout the early years because this is the optimal period for children to acquire language. To illustrate, B.F. Skinner believed that everyone is born with a tabula rasa (blank slate) and that a human's contact with the world is a series of stimuli that they react to. Moreover, both Skinner and Eric Lenneberg had the idea that language is naturally inborn, however, it requires to be echoed and set off by the speech in their environment. Skinner thought strongly that language is reinforced when a parent rewards the child and Eric claimed that a child will not acquire or maintain a language if there are minimal to no opportunities in their environment (Crowley and Smith, 2010). To expand on this, The Welsh Language Commissioner believes that bilingual countries should also be reflected in the supply of additional learning needs. However, key conclusions demonstrate that there are too many difficulties, both structural and national, in providing ALN through the medium of Welsh, therefore, the Welsh Government will continue planning.

Next, EAL is teaching English to pupils who are native speakers of another language, this is referred to as 'additional' instead of using the term 'second' because pupils may be proficient in multiple languages (Twinkl, No Date). Within schools, the goal is to support pupils that do not have English as their mother tongue (WHS, 2022). According to Rhys and Thomas (2012), concerns regarding their child's growth in a language other than their native tongue and the impact of their growing fluency on their academic performance are common among parents. This is particularly true in nations where the educational system works to ensure that historically significant minority languages continue to exist. Although, there is an absence of data in this field, it appears that schools that implement English as an Additional Language (EAL) program do not negatively impact students' proficiency in their first language.

Section 3 – Brain Development

Christos *et al* (2020) state that numerous studies indicate that children who grow up learning and using multiple languages will likely have structural changes in their cortical regions, subcortical grey matter structures, and the white matter tracts that connect these areas, later in life. Significant structural alterations in the brain can also be affected by bilingualism and multilingualism, including improved phonological awareness, greater control, an easier time learning new phonemes, and an easier time processing auditory information (Kuipers and Theiry, 2015). Hoffman (2020) says that the way in which this works is, language production, processing and increased connectivity is carried out in Wernicke's area. This information then travels to Broca's area where muscles control the speech production and there is a larger amount of grey matter. Ultimately, speech is produced by the motor cortex, and increasing activity in the second language is associated with it (Hoffman, 2020). Simple Psychology (2023) believes that grey matter is also important because it is a principle in sensory perception,

decision making and attention. Grey matter has positive effects on memory, fine and gross motor skills and emotions. A number of illnesses can have an effect on your grey matter, for example, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease and having a stroke (Cleveland Clinic, 2024). As claimed by Schug *et al* (2021), a study that looks at gray matter volume contrasts resulting from the bilingual involvement in children and adults discloses that there was more GMV in bilingual children in comparison to monolingual children (children that only speak one language). There are many ways in which brain development can be supported in an early year's practice, these examples will range from providing secure relationships, stability, pattern, opportunities to experience many ways of learning and playing, meeting their needs (likes and dislikes) and finally, engaging the child in different types of communication and interactive language (Edie and Schmid, 2007).

Section 4 – Divergent Thinking

Thomas (2018) says that bilingual children will often need to alter between both participating languages as they will not always have the chance to use two in every circumstance. Due to the brain switching between languages so quickly, individuals may need to make a concerted effort to ignore the other when speaking in one language, this results in a hardworking brain. For example, during my activity, when asking the children questions in Welsh I continuously thought about providing them enough time to respond in order to give them the correct opportunities and prevent stress. In addition, when in an early childhood setting, the practitioner must think about the singularity of each child's experience with language. For example, Hoffman and Russ (2012) believe that when looking at divergent thinking through play within a setting, play involves a cognitive process that involves divergent thinking, play enables children to improve their divergent thinking abilities. For instance, children that engage in imagery play typically have superior divergent thinking skills compared to non-participating children. When a child is looking at a strategy, whether this is through play or academically, that stimulates them to come up with many different solutions to the problem, a list of benefits can come from this, these include, an open mind because the mind is working longer and harder, social- emotional skills and positive self-identity. These abilities will subsequently benefit these children later in life. According to UWTSD (No Date), divergent thinkers have a higher test-taking percentage, are more likely to attend college or university, recover from strokes quicker, and delay the beginning of dementia. In 1967, Guilford identified four fundamental attributes connected to divergent thinking. These included fluency, flexibility, elaboration and originality which gathered that divergent thinking is overall a tendency to come up with original ideas by fusing several kinds of knowledge together in original ways (Madore et al, 2017).

Section 5 – Frameworks and the Curriculum

Chapman (2014) stated that John Saunders Lewis became involved in the founding of plaid Cymru in 1920 and, six years later, the organisation's president. John changed the course of history in 1962 when he declared his belief that eventually, the Welsh language will no longer be a spoken language. Time after, new frameworks and legislation pertaining to the Welsh language were introduced, together with modifications to existing laws and policies regarding the curriculum. For example, Early Years Wales (2020) implies that the Welsh Government established a target in 2017 to raise the number of Welsh speakers and an appreciation of the language throughout all ages. Consequently, early years Wales established principles that emphasise that those living in Wales ought to be able to live their lives through the Welsh language if they wish to do so, and that the Welsh language shouldn't be regarded any less positively than the English language. A practitioner may think about utilizing frameworks and the curriculum Cymreig to support the children in an early childhood environment. This might involve making visits to the home to acquire knowledge on the child's cultural norms and values, setting aside time for quiet and a more focused reaction, interacting with families, and generating possibilities through play (Dasilva, 2020). One of the 4 purposes in the Welsh curriculum is to be an enterprising, creative contributor. HWB (2022) says that when working in an early years setting, to meet this aim the practitioner will need to use different materials for exploration which helps to encourage freedom and trigger curiosity, provide real life context and insight so that the children can take part in firsthand experiences, have an up-lifting and resilient attitude while having the knowledge to focus on the process, not the outcome and finally, to get involved so that you can encourage the children to take part in new activities which may involve, risky play, problem solving and different levels of difficulty.

To conclude, I have learnt that learning a second language is often easier as a child and speaking 2 or more languages is beneficial in a variety of ways, from brain development to divergent thinking, and finally, it should be praised daily due to the difficulty it can cause for a number of people.

References

- Aronin, L. (2018) *Multilingualism in Society and Education*. Bristol: Multilingualism Matters.
- Baker, C. and Wright, W. (2021) *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bialystok, E. and Werker, J. (2017) *The Systematic Effects of Bilingualism on Childrens Development*, 20(1).

Cambridge Dictionary (2024) *Meaning of Fluency in English*. Available at:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org> (Accessed: 26 March 2024).

Chapman, T.K. (2014) 'Lewis John Saunders (1893-1985), Politician, Critic and Dramatist',

Dictionary of Welsh Biography. Available at: <https://Biography.Wales/article/s10-LEWI-SAU-1893>

(Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Christos, P., Lotte, M., Verissimo, J., Delluka, V., Shattuck, K. and Ullmam, M.T. (2020) 'The Effect of Bilingualism on Brain Development from Early Childhood to Early Adulthood', *Brain Structure and Function*, 225(7), pp.2131-2152.

Cleveland Clinic (2024) *Gray Matter*. Available at: <https://myclevelandclinic.org> (Accessed: 28 March 2024).

Crowley, K. and Smith, L.H. (2010) *The Critical Period Hypothesis*. Available at:

<https://web.mnstate.edu> (Accessed: 11 April 2024).

Dasilva, N. (2020) *Supporting Bilingual Learners in the Early Years*. Available at:

<https://www.hfleducation.org> (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Early Years Wales (2020) *Welsh Language Support*. Available at:

<https://earlyyearswales/en/welsh-language-support> (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Edie, D. and Schmid, D. (2007) *Brain Development and Early Learning*. USA: Wisconsin Council.

French for Life (2015) *Listen up Language Learners: 10 Things You do Better When Bilingual*.

Available at: <https://frenchforlife.ca> (Accessed: 26 March 2024).

Hoffman, C. (2020) *A Literature Review Examining the Effects of Bilingualism in Individuals who Stutter*. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.murraystate.edu> (Accessed: 28 March 2024).

Hoffman, J. and Russ, S. (2012) 'Pretend Play, Creativity and Emotion Regulation in Children', *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Arts*, 6(2), pp.175-184.

HWB (2022) *Developing a Vision for Curriculum*. Available at: <https://hwb.gov.wales> (Accessed: 11 April 2024).

Kent State University (2024) *Benefits of Multilingualism*. Available at: <https://www.kent.edu> (Accessed: 26 March 2024).

Kuipers, J.R. and Theirry, G. (2015) *Bilingualism and Increased Attention to Speech: Evidence from Event-Related Potentials*. Available at: <https://sciencedirect.com> (Accessed: 28 March 2024).

Madore, K.P., Jing, H.J. and Sahacter, D.L. (2017) *Divergant Creative Thinking in Young and Adults: Extending the Effects of an Episodic Specificity Induction*, 44(6), pp.974-988.

National Literacy Trust (2022) *Understanding Multilingualism in the Early Years*. Available at: <https://literacytrust.org.uk> (Accessed: 26 March 2024).

Rhys, M. and Thomas, E. (2012) *Bilingual Welsh – English Childrens Acquisition of Vocabulary and Reading. Implications for Bilingual Education*, *International Journal pf Bilingualism*, 16(6), pp.633-656.

Schug, A.K., Brignoni, E. and Eden, G.F. (2021) 'Gray Matter Volume Differences in Bilingual Compared to Monolingual Children', *Journal of Clinical Translation Science*, 5(1), pp.20-21.

Siencyn, S. (2019) 'Teanga', *Early Years Provision for Young Children in Wales: History, Challanges and the Welsh Language*, 10.

Simple Psychology (2023) *What is Gray Matter in the Brain*. Available at: <https://simplepsychology.org> (Accessed: 28 March 2024).

Thomas, E.M. (2018) *Cynhadlled Dwyiethrwydd Tachwedd 2018 – Bangor*. Available at: <https://youtube.com/watch?V=9LeGXUkz8LI&t=3970s> (Accessed: 8 April 2024).

Twinkl (No Date) *What is English as an Additional Language?* Available at: <https://www.twinkl.co.uk> (Accessed: 27 March 2024).

UWTSD (No Date) *Lecture 3 Multilingualism*. UWTSD: Wales.

Waterford (2020) *How to Teach Divergent Thinking Skills in the Classroom*. Available at: <https://waterford.org> (Accessed: 8 April 2024).

Welsh Government (2014) *Welsh as an Additional Language Research into the Level of Need and Current Support Provided to Black Minority Ethnic Pupils with Welsh Language Support Needs*. Available at: <https://gov.wales> (Accessed: 27 March 2024).

Welsh Language Commissioner (2023) *The Welsh Language in the Additional Learning Needs System*. Available at: <https://www.childcomwales.org.uk> (Accessed: 27 March 2024).

WHS (2022) *English as an Additional Language (EAL) Policy*. London: Westbury House School.