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Multilingual Practice in the Early Years

(ECEY4010/C)

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(A.I was not used in this Assignment)

Section 1 -

[IMG 7344.mov](#)

Section 2 -

Bilingualism is defined by Strauss (2024) as the ability to speak two languages fluently and can engage in conversation with someone in either language easily or effectively.

Multilingualism is defined by ScienceDirect (2024) as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage in more than one language in their day to day lives. It is described as a phenomenon that has become prevalent in the educational context due to many different historical and social reasons. Herndon (2023) states that a person can become bilingual because they are being raised in a household that are dual-language or because they learn a second language later in their life, through school or independently.

National Deaf Children's Society (n.d) states that sign language is a visual language and if an individual is fluent in one language and fluent in sign language they would qualify as a bilingual person.

The many benefits of bilingualism are highlighted by Puente (2025) who states that mastering another language can improve a child's first language skills. This can lead to them feeling a certain level of personal satisfaction and an increased level of self-confidence. Additionally, some research suggests that bilingualism may contribute to a delay in the onset of dementia and age-related cognitive decline, due to the brain staying active because of the

constant switching between languages. St. Augustine College (2025) states that there are 5 cognitive benefits of being bilingual. Enhanced problem-solving skills as switching from one language to another allows an individual to approach problems from a different angle. Another benefit is improved memory and multitasking, bilingual individuals often have better working memory, due to the brain having to manage two languages making retrieving information more efficient and stronger. Bilingualism allows a greater attention and focus. The brains' ability to manage two languages enhances selective attention, enabling bilinguals to concentrate better and filter out any distractions. A benefit of bilingualism is the delayed cognitive decline and increases cognitive reserve. Research has demonstrated that bilingualism can delay the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease by several years. This is due to the brain staying active and engaged due to the mental workout involved when using two languages. Another benefit is the enhanced executive function and mental agility. Bilingual people often show enhanced executive function, as the brains need to manage two language system require greater planning and organizational skills. Translating to better decision making and problem-solving skills in day-to-day life. The last benefit given is that bilingualism offers the chance to unlock one's potential, this is due to an increased amount of job opportunities an individual could get, resulting in a potentially more successful and fulfilled career. Powys (2025) states that there are many different advantages to a bilingual education, the ability to speak more than one language can be good for an individual's social life, career and even their health.

Throughout education in yearly years, Welsh is taught in a wide variety of different ways. Wales Language Development (2025) states that young children in the foundation phase in English-medium settings and schools will be given the opportunity through play and active learning. This is with the hope that the attitude to learn Welsh is positive. Wales Language Development (2025) also states that speaking a few words and singing simple Welsh songs is an effective way to start developing a child's understanding of Welsh. Early Years Wales (2020) states that the Cydweweth Cymraeg project takes a collaborative approach to Welsh language learning in the early years and delivers exciting and, more importantly, engaging child-centred activities, bringing parents, practitioners and children together to learn the language. The sessions are themed and consist of games, stories and songs. Focusing not

only on the development of Welsh language skills but they also consist of back-and-forth interactions which help promote healthy brain development. Bishopston Primary School states that learning Welsh when in early years will help the children keep their brain healthy, stating that it helps make the brain more creative, it helps in learning other skills like instruments, and it increases the amount of time an individual can concentrate for. They also state that the Welsh language allows the children to feel a sense of identity and culture. WJEC CBAC (2019) supports this by stating that speaking Welsh will offer the children opportunities to celebrate the cultures, languages and traditions of Wales, whilst also respecting the values of cultures

Speech and Language UK (n.d) reveals that research has shown that many bilingual children do better academically than children who hear and speak only one language. A strong foundation in the one language helps the children learn other languages, including English better, helping them to do better in school. The British School of Barcelona (2024) states that being bilingual/multilingual increases brain power and strengthens neural connections. This results in an improvement in areas related to memory, attention and language. This can also facilitate learning and retention of information in general beyond the language being learned. Another affect bilingualism has on the brain is that it slows down ageing of the brain. It can also increase multitasking ability as alternating between two languages requires constant inhibition and activation of language systems, strengthening multitasking skills. Also, exposing the brain to new languages and new ways of thinking can increase the creativity of an individual. This is because the brain becomes more flexible and receptive to new ideas.

Airfocus (n.d) states that research shows that individuals that are bilingual or multilingual are more likely to develop the divergent thinking trait when growing up. This is because bilingualism and multilingualism allow the brain to think more flexibly and creatively, linking its brain development to divergent thinking. Storme *et al.*, states that language switching and mixing between languages during conversation increases the individuals creative and divergent thinking allowing them to develop characteristics that benefit them in future careers. Children who can speak more than 1 language tend to do better in education and academically in comparison to monolinguals. Minshew (2025) states that divergent thinkers

can lead to creativity as students come up with more unique solutions. Likewise, encouraging creativity in your students can lead them to consider divergent answers to their problems. This links to St. Augustine College (2025) stating that bilingualism can also lead to creativity and unique problem-solving skills.

As stated by Pembrokeshire County Council (2024) WAL means Welsh as an additional language, EAL means English as an additional language. WAL/EAL refers to pupils that don't speak either Welsh or English as their first language as they were born in a different country or because their parents speak a different language at home. These children are supported in schools, according to Pembrokeshire County Council (2024), using a wide variety of different strategies in hope of helping the development of their Welsh/English and also with the desire of making the school environment feel safe and comfortable for the children, in order to give them the best opportunities and results in education. Pembrokeshire County Council (2024) suggests that one way of supporting a child to learn Welsh/English is by doing the buddy strategy which involves them being paired up with and looked after by another child. This then allows them to talk and form friendships and to help them in class with the language and communication barriers. To help with the language and communication early on a visual timetable to help them understand specific words for specific items or actions. These could be toilet, lunch, drawing, spelling, P.E or sports. Pilar (2024) suggests that to help overcome language barriers in early years education, educators should put in place different strategies and approaches. For example, incorporating visual aids, peer mentoring, interactive activities, simplified language and technology tools. This enables a more inclusive and supportive environment for learning. NHS borders (n.d) suggests that to help the WAL/EAL child, the educator must keep commands and instructions short and simple. Allow ample time for the child to process the information and respond. It is important to support children with WAL/EAL as children with English or Welsh as an additional language need to hear English or Welsh spoken by adults in the setting in as many different contexts as possible. They learn the most when the context has meaning, according to Department for Education (2024). Harris (2023) states that it is also important to support children who are WAL/EAL as the pupil's self-esteem and engagement with learning is heightened and it helps peers to better understand other perspectives. Harris (2023) continues by suggesting that research shows that pupils with WAL/EAL who have had the appropriate amount of support

often outperform their monolingual peers. Harris (2023) states that the WAL/EAL pupils can develop a sense of pride and belonging when given the support needed and it gives them the best opportunities in life and helps them to reach their personal potential.

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