

Content page

Module Title: Multilingual Practice in the Early Years (ECEY4010)

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For this assignment I submitted

A video of me performing a bilingual circle time Sent to accessor.

An essay

Total word count: 1515

AI Statement

I used co pilot to summarise. I have drafts to support this

Introduction

Bilingualism is using two languages daily. This means they can understand and communicate in both languages. This does not mean they are fluent in both or even confident in both languages. Some children are bilingual from birth and others learn that second language through childhood. A child will develop various levels of skill, exposure and literacy in each language. This is dependent on their environment and the opportunity to speak and learn the second language (Bialystok and Werker, 2017). Grosjean (2012, cited in Wright, 2025), agrees, a person who is bilingual does not have to be fluent in both languages; it can simply mean they use two languages daily. According to Chen (2019), bilingualism can be several descriptions, depending on how it is looked at, it can focus on fluency, whether a person has minimal to high fluency in the two languages. It can focus on whether someone is dominant in one of the languages more than the other or whether both languages are used similarly.

Benefits of Bilingualism/Multilingualism

Nickels *et al.* (2019), argues that children who grow up using two languages, think a lot quicker, they are continuously using two language system. They are thinking about correct words to say and switch between tasks, this mental exercise in their brain is helping their development, which will help them with problem solving, attention control and help them to manage conflicting information. Nickels *et al.* (2019) continues to say bilingual children's experiences may help with the child's cognitive system, these children often perform better than children who only speak one language on those tasks that require mental flexibility.

Antoniou (2019), suggests that a bilingual child have a wide range of advantages, they can communicate with more people, expanding social connections. And have more job opportunities. Agreeing with Nickels *et al.* (2019), that bilingualism can be linked to cognitive strengths such as attention control, problem solving and mental flexibility.

According to Muller *et al.* (2020), Bilingualism and multilingualism Children maintain both their dominant language and minority language. Family dynamics can be strengthened and support wellbeing. Children who grow learning and knowing their family home language can communicate more easily with their family especially grandparents. Studies also show children who are bilingual and can speak both

languages confidently, helps the child to be connected to their cultural background, and be able to speak to the wider community too. Bilingualism also helps with a child's social and emotional development. I demonstrated this switching naturally to two languages in my video.

Welsh as an additional language

Jones (2016), in the briefing explains that learning Welsh as an additional language is widely offered in English medium schools across Wales. Challenges arise due to lack of staffing who feel confident to teach this subject and opportunities to continue to use the language outside of that subject. Jones (2016), explains Welsh as an additional language and improving this is a national priority.

Welsh Government (2025), aim is to have a million of the population of Wales to be able to speak Welsh by 2050. They would like people to have the ability and confidence to use their Welsh language in their community. Welsh Government 2025, works in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin to expand opening new and supporting old Welsh playgroups and nurseries.

Mudiad Meithrin (2026), aims to support Wales to ensure all children have an opportunity to be able to play, learn and grow Welsh at a very young age, this will create new Welsh speakers, through providing early education through the medium of Welsh a child will become a confident speaker. I have demonstrated in my video that Welsh as additional language can help Children as young as two years old learn Welsh. The book and song chosen are used in real practice daily with minimal English and repetition to help the children start to speak/Sing and understand the Welsh Language.

Brain development

Pilatsikas *et al.* (2020), suggests that a child who grows up bilingual or multilingual can have an impact on how that child brain develops. These children's brains show different patterns of grey and white matter growth compared to their peers who can only speak one language. Bilingual children may show that the grey matter is slower at reducing than usual and it may thicken in certain frontal and parietal areas. These children keep more neural tissue as they develop and they may also over time show

strong white matter connections. Berken, Gracco and Klein (2017), continues by explaining that children who learn two or more languages from birth can shape how the brain networks develop as the brain is still building the core language. The brain is highly adaptable during childhood. Early exposure unused connections can strengthen neural pathways These children that grow up bilingual may develop flexible and efficient neural systems than those who may learn it later in life, as at that time the brain's language pathways are already well established. Archila-Suerte *et al.* (2018) says brain development will differ on each bilingual child, depending on how their language skills are. Children who can speak both languages confidently and at the same level will show a thinner cortex, whereas Children who are more confident in one language compared to the other will show a thicker cortex. This means the brain will be working harder when the child is speaking the second language These patterns indicate that the child's bilingual journey may shape the developing brain, this will influence how efficiently children process and learn language.

Divergent thinking

van Dijk *et al.* (2018), highlights that studies that compare children who speak one language to children who are bilingual, that divergent thinking is at an advantage to those children who are bilingual. Divergent thinking is the central component of creativity, meaning someone can generate multiple responses to open ended prompts.

According to Kharkhurin, Koncha and Charkhabi (2022), divergent thinking is a cognitive process shaped by multilingual and multicultural experiences. Children who have exposure to more than one language, cultures and their ability to contribute to this suggests they are divergent thinkers.

Divergent thinking is developing multiple, varied and original responses to a problem. Bilingualism could help strengthen divergent thinking as that person is able to manage two or more languages strengthens cognitive flexibility. (Xia,An and Guo 2022)

Framework and programmes

Across the world, more children grow up bilingually, this diversity should be valued and supported. Early exposure to more than one language helps children to naturally process and express their ideas using both languages, this benefits cognitive development. It is important for children to use their home language at home, ensuring a solid foundation is created. Children can distinguish what is their family language, it is important that the family continue to use their home language to establish this. Practitioners should work closely with families to support children who is first language is not English. (National Literacy Trust. 2022)

Wales has a number of policies to promote bilingualism in the early years sector A new curriculum has been created called the Curriculum for funded non maintained settings which emphasises the five developmental pathways. This includes communication. Practitioners are required practitioners to create environments that actively promote Welsh and English naturally through play-based pedagogy. (Welsh Government 2024) Alongside this framework, there is a national programme Cymraeg 2050. This is to increase the numbers of Welsh speakers in Wales, with early childhood education identified as the way forward for this to happen (Welsh Government 2017). Another Framework is Flying start programme which is an early intervention programme that actively promotes bilingualism and the Welsh language. Welsh government. Together these framework and programmes demonstrate a united front in Wales to promote bilingualism as core component of the early years pedagogy.

Conclusion

overall, the research demonstrates that bilingualism and multilingualism offer significant cognitive, social and cultural advantages for children is key at an early age. I t can be seen that growing up with two or more languages sentients skills, enhances mental flexibility and supports divergent thinking. Bilingualism helps form family bond and allows children to communicate with generations of family members and helps with emotional wellbeing. Children are clever and show reliance when keeping their home language and learning another alongside. In Wales, the Wesh language is shown as priority with the Cymraeg 2050, the Curriculum for Funded

Non-Maintained Settings and programmes such as Flying Start and Mudiad Meithrin highlight the importance of early language exposure in creating confident Welsh speakers. These frameworks help practitioners to understand the need to embed Welsh naturally not practice through play opportunities, ensuring family values are still sustained. Overall, it shows learning and being exposed from another language at the earliest intervention can help promote bilingualism this will help children developmentally and fits in with Wales long term vision.

My video demonstrates bilingual practice by modelling Welsh words, counting and songs with minimal English, this will help support early language, cognitive flexibility and emerging divergent thinking. It reflects how young children build neural pathways through learning a new language, through repetition and aligns with Welsh policy frameworks promoting natural, play-based exposure to the Welsh language.

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