

I have not used any AI in this assignment.

Contents

Activity <https://uowtsd->

[my.sharepoint.com/personal/2403985_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2F2403985%5Fstudent%5Fuwt%5Fsd%5F%2FDocuments%2FECEY4010%20Bilingual%20Practice%2FECEY4010%20Activity%20Emp4&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2E67679606%2D87c0%2D4095%2D964f%2D74c2871807d8](https://uowtsd-my.sharepoint.com/personal/2403985_student_uwtsd_ac_uk/_layouts/15/stream.aspx?id=%2Fpersonal%2F2403985%5Fstudent%5Fuwt%5Fsd%5F%2FDocuments%2FECEY4010%20Bilingual%20Practice%2FECEY4010%20Activity%20Emp4&referrer=StreamWebApp%2EWeb&referrerScenario=AddressBarCopied%2Eview%2E67679606%2D87c0%2D4095%2D964f%2D74c2871807d8)

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According to Baker and Wright (2021) bilingualism can seemingly be defined as using two or more languages and suggests that being bilingual does not necessarily mean the person has to speak another language and points out that a person can be described as bilingual if they have the capability to understand a different language. Similarly, Lam (2001) suggests that a person must have the ability to communicate in two alternate languages. However, points out that there are different forms of bilingualism that can be more difficult to define. NALDIC (2011) would agree and suggests defining bilingualism as tricky, suggesting that being bilingual can mean different things to different people. Baker (2011) recognises this and suggests there can be simultaneous bilingualism and sequential bilingualism. He describes simultaneous bilingualism as children who learn two different languages at the same time from a young age and describes sequential bilingualism as a language that is learned later in life once the child's first language is established.

This assignment will discuss the benefits of bilingualism in early years, focussing on the cultural and cognitive benefits for children. The paper will look at Welsh and English as additional language and explore how bilingualism affects brain development including divergent thinking.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [hereafter UNCRC], UNICEF (2024) article 31 states children have the right to play and take part in cultural activities. According to Smidt (2016) children learn and gain most of their knowledge through language in early year education and suggests that practitioners must celebrate different languages and promote inclusion by offering a multilingual pedagogy, creating links with home to better understand the children's cultural needs. Smidt (2016) describes theorist Loris Malaguzzi, an Italian educator and philosopher who founded the Reggio Emilia approach that states children learn from a hundred languages and use language to make sense of the world around them. Lebron (2013) would agree with Smidt and talks about culture as being children's beliefs and values and points out the main benefit of celebrating these differences would be that the children will feel a sense of belonging in the classroom. In the same vein, McTavish (2021) talks about the benefits of multilingualism and celebrating culture in early year settings and suggest practitioners must create

positive links with family and use different resources in the setting such as bi-lingual songs, food and other materials that can help spark curiosity for the children, she states that these experiences can have a positive effect on the children and suggests a varied curriculum needs to be provided. This view is supported by the Welsh Government (2024) Curriculum for Wales who state children must be ethically informed, suggesting children need to be educated about their own culture and other cultures from around the world. The Welsh Government suggest practitioners can value bilingualism and the different cultures in Wales by offering a range of activities such as stories, songs and poems. Examples of this can be seen in the video where the practitioner is greeting the children bilingually and singing songs to make the activity fun.

According to the Cultural Learning Alliance (2021) children who participate in bilingual learning activities have an increased cognitive ability by 17% and suggests sharing in such activities will help develop relationships and enhance social skills. The National Library of Medicine (2018) share these views and state language, and cognition are interconnected and suggest bilingual children do better academically, showing a range of skills using different abilities. This is supported by Frontiers (2017) who's study of bilingual languages found that cognitive function in bilinguals was more developed than those in monolinguals and suggests the brain of a bilingual person works harder, generating more original ideas. However, Science Direct (2021) would disagree and state there is no link between bilingualism and cognitive ability in children and point out that children do not need to be bilingual to gain knowledge and skills and suggest children can get the same level of knowledge and ability from multicultural activities in the setting. Bright and Filippi (2019) would share this view and point out the challenges of children using more than one language and suggests that children can become confused causing delays in the acquisition. The Welsh Government (2022) understand this and have introduced the Global Futures plan, which will aim to improve international languages in schools throughout Wales by 2025 and suggest that they will support practitioners to deliver meaningful activities in different languages sharing a curriculum to help all young learners understand different languages.

According to the Welsh Government (2014) Welsh as an additional language [Hereafter WAL] can be defined as a child whose first language is not Welsh or

English and suggests these children will need support to learn through the medium of Welsh. According to UNICEF (2024), the UNCRC articles 7 and 8 share that children have the right to a name, nationality and identity. The Welsh Government Cymraeg 2050 strategy aim to support children's rights and has set a target and hope to have one million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Gorrara *et al.*, 2020). The Welsh Government (2024) aim to support children and state for learners to progress in the Welsh language practitioners must support the children with bilingual activities in settings by creating an environment filled with the Welsh language and suggests making learning languages fun. For example, singing the days of the week song in English and then repeating in Welsh. Once again this can be seen in the video where the practitioner dresses the teddy, shares the words bilingually with the children then proceeds to sing songs. Similarly, Jones (2019) suggests there is a need for focus on the Welsh language in Wales and states schools must have adequate staff to deliver teach bilingually. This is supported by the Welsh Government (2020) who state the Welsh language measure legal framework was made law in 2011, making Welsh the official language in Wales. The Welsh language commissioner (2023) supports this legal act and promotes the provision of the Welsh Language in schools. However, point out that WAL for children with additional learning needs can be difficult and suggest local authorities must support schools with a strategic plan. The Welsh Government (no date) model of WAL suggests children learn differently and points out that practitioners must be patient allow the children time to progress through the stages of development, ranging from stage A where the child is new to English through to stage E where the child is fluent. This runs in the veins of according to Doyla (2019) Vygotsky and his theory called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and suggests his theory of knowing where the child is to help them move on shows similarities to the model of WAL acquisition. This approach can be seen in the video where the practitioner is shown helping the children develop their languages by having fun, reputation, gestures and facial expressions.

According to Kuipers and Thierry (2015) bilingual children are more capable and believe this is because of the auditory cortex, an area of the brain used to control and process language. Hofman (2020) would agree and adds that bilingual children have a greater connection in the Wernicke's area of the brain and suggests

this is the part of the brain where language is processed and then passed to other areas of the brain such as, Broca's area and Motor Cortex. These areas of the brain control speech and second language. Similarly, Pliatsikas *et al.* (2020) state bilingual children have a more developed brain structure and suggest greater connections in the area can lead to better development in language, processing and control. Thomas (2018) points out that the brain of bilingual children works harder as the children switch between using the different languages and suggest that practitioners must allow the children time and see them as unique by valuing them. This is underpinned by UNICEF (2024) UNCRC article 30 that states children have the right to use their own language. Examples of this can be seen in the video where the practitioner takes time to slow down speech, being careful to repeat and leave pauses for any questions. However, Thomas (2018) suggests some children may find switching between two languages difficult and suggests they can become easily confused causing them to isolate one language. Bialystok (2024), a Canadian psychologist and researcher would disagree with Thomas here and suggests being bilingual allows the child to tap into the different languages increasing their metalinguistic knowledge, suggesting that the children will have a better understanding of language and its meaning. For example, children's grammar and punctuation will be more developed.

Hoffman and Russ (2012) describe divergent thinking in children as being imaginative and indulging in pretend play. They suggest this type of free play can help facilitate divergent thinking and increases cognitive development. Similarly, Booton *et al* (2012) state divergent thinking can be linked to creativity and suggest children are better at problem solving because they can think outside the box. Theorist Guilford (1967) claims divergent thinking has four main features, fluency, flexibility, elaboration and originality. Guilford describes fluency as having the ability to come up with hundreds of ideas for any given problem. For example, children can be given an empty bottle and would be able to turn it in to so many different things. Robinson (2010) would agree with Guilford and suggests that many children under the age of five are a genius and suggests children learn creativity from each other. However, points out that education can be a barrier to divergent thinking and points out that schools are the reason creative thinking stops.

In conclusion, bilingualism in education is essential for giving children opportunities to learn and grow and has cognitive advantages. The essay discussed the advantages of bilingualism for children and recognised that children are more informed of the world around them, setting them up to be culturally aware citizens of the world.

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