

LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Programme:	BA Primary Education with QTS		
Module:	Yr Iaith ar Daith 3		
Module code:	ECAD6006C	Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):	40%
Lecturer:	Catherine Morgan	Internal Verifier:	
Assignment Title:	Critical response to an article that provides evidence of sound knowledge and understanding of themes related to the teaching of Welsh in the English-medium sector.	Word count (or equivalent):	2000
Submission deadline:	4th February, 2019	Return date of provisional marks & written feedback:	4th March, 2019
Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		

Critical response to an article that provides evidence of sound knowledge and understanding of themes related to the teaching of Welsh in the English-medium sector.

Overview

Throughout this assignment there shall be discussion of the teaching of Welsh as a second language in English-medium primary schools. There will be discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of learning another language. Also, there will be close analysis of the article Non-Native English Students Learning in English: Reviewing and Reflecting on the Research (Bernardo & Gaerlan, 2011).

Bilingualism

Throughout Bernardo & Gaerlan's (2011) article there is much deliberation about how people acquire languages. Practitioners in Wales could potentially refer to the article to gain better understanding of how children could effectively learn a second language. Donaldson (2015) suggested that multiple language learning could arguably cause challenges for curriculum design, particularly in primary schools. However, it is a national priority to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050 (Welsh Government, 2017). Therefore, it could be argued the teaching of Welsh needs to be prioritised within the English-medium primary school sector to enable this achievement. Arguably, the education system could be described as one of the most important ways for ensuring children develop their Welsh skills (National Assembly for Wales Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee, 2017). Providing children with the opportunity to begin to start learning Welsh as early as possible is arguably vital to produce Welsh speakers who could transfer the language to the next generation (Iorwerth, 2017).

Donaldson (2015) suggested there is a commitment to developing the Welsh language and bilingualism within primary schools. One of Iaith Pawb's (2003, cited in Welsh Government, 2010) visions was to create a bilingual Wales where people could choose to live their lives through the medium of either Welsh or English and where the presence of the two languages is a source of pride. Bernardo & Gaerlan (2011, pp.1) suggest that often second language acquisition could broaden "professional opportunities" in the future. It could be argued that having the ability to confidently speak Welsh could benefit people in Wales especially when communicating and

interacting with fellow bilinguals. Donaldson (2015) envisages a curriculum that helps create ambitious, capable learners who could communicate effectively in various settings, using both Welsh and English.

Bernardo & Gaerlan (2011, pp.1) suggest that in some communities parents “demand” second language education for their children. In contrast, Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (2013) discuss some children not being provided with sufficient opportunities to speak Welsh due to their locality. This could suggest that the levels of bilingualism varies from area to area and this could impact upon a child’s learning. However, Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011, pp.5) highlight that students sometimes “do not regard” their community as having an influence upon their language acquisition. However, it could be argued that a child’s social setting can have an impact upon their language acquisition, as if children live in an area where Welsh is widely used then they are provided with opportunities to develop the language. Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011, pp.1) discuss how people desire to acquire a second language as means of achieving “personal and social goals”. One goal could arguably be to gain a better understanding of a countries’ culture. Schools could use the Welsh language to help create an ethos that reflects the school’s position as a school in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2003).

Carmarthen County Council (2018) suggest that being bilingual can strengthen cognitive abilities and bilinguals find it easier to focus on a variety of tasks simultaneously. In somewhat agreement of this statement, Bialystok et al. (2007, cited in Bernardo and Gaerlan, 2011) suggest that bilinguals have “executive control skills” when completing various learning tasks “compared to monolinguals”. If these suggestions are correct then it highlights the importance of helping children to become bilingual as it could possibly strengthen their cognitive competences.

A person may possess simultaneous bilingualism having been brought up learning two languages simultaneously (NALDIC, unknown date). Some children may already be entering English-medium schools already being bilingual if their first language is different to English, and practitioners should arguably understand to take this into consideration when planning lessons. Children have a right to speak a language with a developed respect for their family and native heritage (UNICEF, unknown date). Some bilinguals may have high levels of proficiency in both languages or may have limited competence in one and be far more competent in the other (NALDIC, unknown date). This

could suggest a child who possesses simultaneous bilingualism may find the language acquisition process easier or more challenging than monolingual children due to present language knowledge.

Benefits and Limitations of Welsh within the English-medium sector

It could be argued some English medium primary schools encourage the development of additive bilingualism where the learning is conducive to the development of the child's first language, for many children this would be English, and the development of the second language (Baker, 2006). Good practice is demonstrated at Plascrug Community Primary School, the school prioritises preparing pupils to become part of a bilingual society by utilising incidental Welsh (Estyn, 2012). The idea of incidental Welsh has been utilised in many English-medium schools (Rhys, Taylor & Waldron, 2014). Further, many of the staff benefited from continued professional development as it helped improve their bilingual skills and teach more effectively through the medium of Welsh (Estyn, 2012). It could be argued practitioners should seek opportunities to improve their language skills and possibly enhance their confidence and quality of teaching.

Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) highlight that teachers need not be advocates of the second language. However, lack of confidence was found to be one of the main obstacles preventing staff from using Welsh (Welsh Assembly Government, 2012). Vygotsky (1978) highlighted that successful learning occurs for the child through interaction with a knowledgeable and skilful teacher. It could be argued that Gaerlan (2009, cited in Bernardo and Gaerlan, 2011) discussed the idea and importance of teachers modelling good language skills. One of Estyn's (2013) examples of best practice demonstrated at Mount Street Infants School in Powys, highlighted how nearly all staff were enthusiastic about Welsh, and therefore successful role models for pupils.

Roberts (unknown date, cited in National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Learning Committee, 2010) highlighted if there are few opportunities for children to apply their newly acquired Welsh language skills outside the classroom, they will not sufficiently develop their knowledge. Gaerlan (2009) discussed the idea of family related factors being important in shaping children's learning experiences of another language. It could be suggested that if children are not provided with the opportunity to speak Welsh at home due to their families lack of linguistic ability, children will not have the opportunity to develop their own skills. Hence, it could be suggested that regardless of teacher's development of Welsh second language, if children do not have opportunity to practise the

language at home, they will not become proficient in the language. However, it is from personal experience the author concludes that some schools hold extra curricular clubs, where children are building upon their Welsh language skills through various activities. These clubs perhaps are providing the children with opportunities to develop their Welsh skills that they may not be developing at home.

Language Acquisition

It could be argued that English speaking children learning Welsh would be living in a minority language social environment (Siegel, unknown date, cited in Wang, 2015). Within the article there is suggestion that if a pupil has poor language skills in their first language then their acquisition of the second language maybe poor (Bernardo and Gaerlan, 2011). In somewhat agreement, Cummins (2000) suggested that conceptual knowledge developed in one language could help to make input in the other language comprehensible. The sociolinguistic approach highlights how personal and social factors can impact upon a child's acquisition of language (Bernardo and Gaerlan, 2011). One of the qualified teacher standards (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009) is that teachers should understand the diverse learning needs of learners, help maximise their potential and respect their cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. It could be suggested that these factors need to be taken into consideration when planning the development of Welsh Second Language.

Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) suggest that teachers should ensure their learning objectives are not just related to second language acquisition but develop the ability to utilise the second language during different types of activities that engage their academic experiences. Estyn (2013) highlighted staff at Mount Street Infants School, in Powys used Welsh effectively in mathematical sessions, and this had positive impact on standards. Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011, pp.2) discuss learning as being an “array of complex cognitive processes” that involve the process of information with help from external resources. It could be argued that most practitioners have access to many resources that they can utilise to help maximise children's potential.

Furthermore, Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) demonstrate throughout their study how students acquire the content of a second language through non-language subjects. It could be suggested that some practitioners attempt to integrate Welsh second language into other subject areas. However, Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) discuss the importance of language consistency effect whereby

students better understand concepts that are in the same language. In harmonisation to this suggestion, it could be argued placing too much emphasis on the Welsh language in other subject areas may cause confusion for children. However, as aforementioned using Welsh across the curriculum can enhance pupils knowledge of the language.

Krashen (1987) suggested that learners with motivation and confidence are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. This could suggest that pupils who are confident with their language ability could be more successful in terms of second language acquisition. Moschkovich (2005, cited in Bernardo and Gaerlan, 2011, pp.4) suggest that switching from one language to another could “serve as a resource for elaborating ideas”. This could arguably suggest that practitioners should endeavour to help improve children’s language proficiency as having more knowledge of language could possibly improve their attainment.

Davies (2013) suggested that in some classes, the allocated time for Welsh second language is as minimal as one hour per fortnight. At present, it could be argued that the current standard of Welsh Second Language is not sufficient and the quality of deliverance and development varies from school to school. In somewhat support of this, Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011, pp. 7) highlighted that some teachers might have “different perspectives” on how language should be used in their classroom. It could be argued that these factors could have a detrimental effect on children’s language development as there is no consistency.

Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) suggest that some schools across the world have decided to change the language of instruction from the first language to the second language being acquired. It could be argued that this idea has been proposed by academics in Wales. Cymdeithas yr Iaith Cymraeg (2013) suggest that Welsh Second Language should be abolished, and Welsh should be taught as English is at present. Further, another proposal was a minimum of thirty percent of the curriculum being delivered through Welsh (Cymdeithas yr Iaith Cymraeg, 2013). Lewis (2015) discusses an intention to phase out Welsh Second Language, and move towards a system where children would receive part of their education through the medium of Welsh. A recent suggestion has highlighted that Welsh should no longer be considered a second language, as it has led to children not having enough knowledge of Welsh (Wales Online, 2019).

One school where effective practice is demonstrated is Mount Street Infants School in Powys, where Welsh is an integral part of the school, and pupils use their Welsh skills across all areas of school life (Estyn, 2013). The school is arguably a diverse school with a variety of ethnic groups possessing knowledge of other languages (Estyn, 2013). Therefore perhaps it is interesting to compare and contrast with Bernardo and Gaerlan's (2011) article. All staff are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning opportunities and the standards achieved in Welsh across the curriculum (Estyn, 2013).

Conclusion

It could be suggested that there is no single perfect method of language learning (Davies, unknown date, cited in Jones and Morris, 2016). However, it could be argued that there are many different approaches and methods available to teachers that they can adapt to suit their learners' needs when teaching Welsh Second Language. Some people may suggest that the standard of Welsh Second Language in primary schools is not sufficient, however with Donaldson's (2015) curriculum vision this may soon change. However, it could be suggested that the Welsh Government could examine the practices in the best performing schools regarding Welsh second language, and use their experience to put forward a standardised approach for everyone to raise standards.

To conclude, throughout the years there have arguably been countless debates on how children acquire second languages. Bernardo and Gaerlan (2011) highlight some very interesting points with regards to second language acquisition and these ideas have been explored throughout this assignment. The authors background and academic abilities would undoubtedly give credibility to their arguments.

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