

We live in a world of great linguistic diversity. More than half of the world's population **grows up with more than one language.**

“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

One brain...Two languages...many advantages.

‘The person who knows only one language does not truly know that language’

Goethe



Why are we promoting a bilingual education?

To achieve Carmarthenshire County Council's aspirations as set out in 'The Welsh Language in Carmarthenshire Report'

One of the most important principles in the report is that every pupil should have the opportunity to be fully bilingual by the time they leave school, so that they can use and develop their language skills in the community and in the workplace. Promoting the economic and community advantages of bilingualism to parents and pupils is central to this...

To achieve Carmarthenshire County Council's aspirations as set out in 'Carmarthenshire's Welsh in Education Strategy'.

Achieving the key aim as agreed by full Council-

- *Increase the provision of Welsh medium education in Carmarthenshire and ensure linguistic continuity from the nursery sector along the key stages to the secondary sector so that every pupil becomes fluent and confident in both Welsh and English languages.*
- *Ensure that Welsh medium or bilingual education is an educational experience available to every child and that it should be within a reasonable travelling distance from children's homes. This refers to children of pre-school age and above.*

To support the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy 2012–17

Our vision is to see the Welsh language thriving in Wales. To achieve that, the strategy aims to see an increase in the number of people who both speak and use the language. Our six aims are:

- *to encourage and support the use of the Welsh language within families*

- to increase the provision of Welsh-medium activities for children and young people and to increase their awareness of the value of the language
- to strengthen the position of the Welsh language in the community
- to increase opportunities for people to use Welsh in the workplace
- to improve Welsh language services to citizens
- to strengthen the infrastructure for the language, including digital technology.

A living language: a language for living Welsh Language Strategy 2012–17

To support the Welsh Government’s ambition as set out in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy

To have an education and training system that responds in a planned way to the growing demand for Welsh-medium education, reaches out to and reflects our diverse communities and enables an increase in the number of people of all ages and backgrounds who are fluent in Welsh and able to use the language with their families, in their communities and in the workplace.

Welsh-medium Education Strategy, April 2010

To support the Welsh Government’s ambition for Wales to become a ‘Bilingual plus 1’ nation AND Supporting triple literacy: Language learning in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

‘As a bilingual nation, we start from a positive position because we provide education through the medium of English and Welsh. Both languages are embedded in our education and training system. Our young people therefore have a head start by developing language and literacy skills that they can readily apply to other European and world languages. Conversely, the study of a foreign language can support learners’ literacy in English and Welsh.’

Supporting triple literacy: Language learning in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3

National and international research- bilingualism is much more than two languages

Research shows that children who speak more than one language have advantages over their monolingual playmates – in communication, cognition and social interaction. These include-

- The child’s brain is not ‘*naturally monolingual*’; it can deal with two (or even more) languages. Children can acquire any language without any ‘effort’, just like learning to walk
- Early separation of the two languages
- Similar stages and milestones in bilingual and monolingual language development
- Spontaneous understanding of how language works ⇔ in all languages
- Competence and creativity in language mixing
- Bilingualism helps children’s learning because they can think about their ideas in both languages. Having two words for objects, ideas and processes helps understanding

- Smaller vocabulary in each language but wider vocabulary across languages
- Better metalinguistic abilities (*relation between language and other cultural factors in a society*)
- Transfer of aspects of reading skills from one language to the other
- Children acquiring two or more languages from birth are able to differentiate the grammatical systems of their languages from very early on and without apparent effort.
- Earlier awareness of other people's perspective
- Social advantages- access to two cultures, more tolerance towards and interest in other cultures, easier to travel, find a job
- Better control of attention and ability to handle conflicting information
- One aspect of research shows that bilingual children 'notice' better how language works and outperform monolingual children in tasks linked to language awareness.
- Studies show that a bilingual child is better able to cope with tasks that involve attention, memory and concentration. The mental gymnastics needed to constantly manage two or more linguistic systems increases cognitive flexibility and makes learning easier.
- Bilingual children have an extra 'gear' that can give them an advantage in some situations.
- Children will use words that they know rather than not say anything at all. For instance, if a child knows the word for 'ice cream' in one language and not the other he/she will use the word in the language he/she knows rather than not ask for ice cream at all. The child is not confused; he/she is simply making use of all the language he/she has.
- Some new studies suggest bilingualism may offer some protection against the decline of cognitive abilities in old age, both in normal and pathological ageing.
- **Bilingualism has positive effects on children's linguistic and educational development.** When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school years, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both, and they are able to compare and contrast the ways in which their two languages organize reality.
- Research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages.

No studies/research reports bilingualism as being a disadvantage

Based primarily on the work of Bangor University, University of Edinburgh (Antonella Sorace) and Jim Cummins (University of Toronto Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)

Websites/Further information

<https://www.bangor.ac.uk/bilingualism/>

<http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/bilingualism-is-good-for-learning>

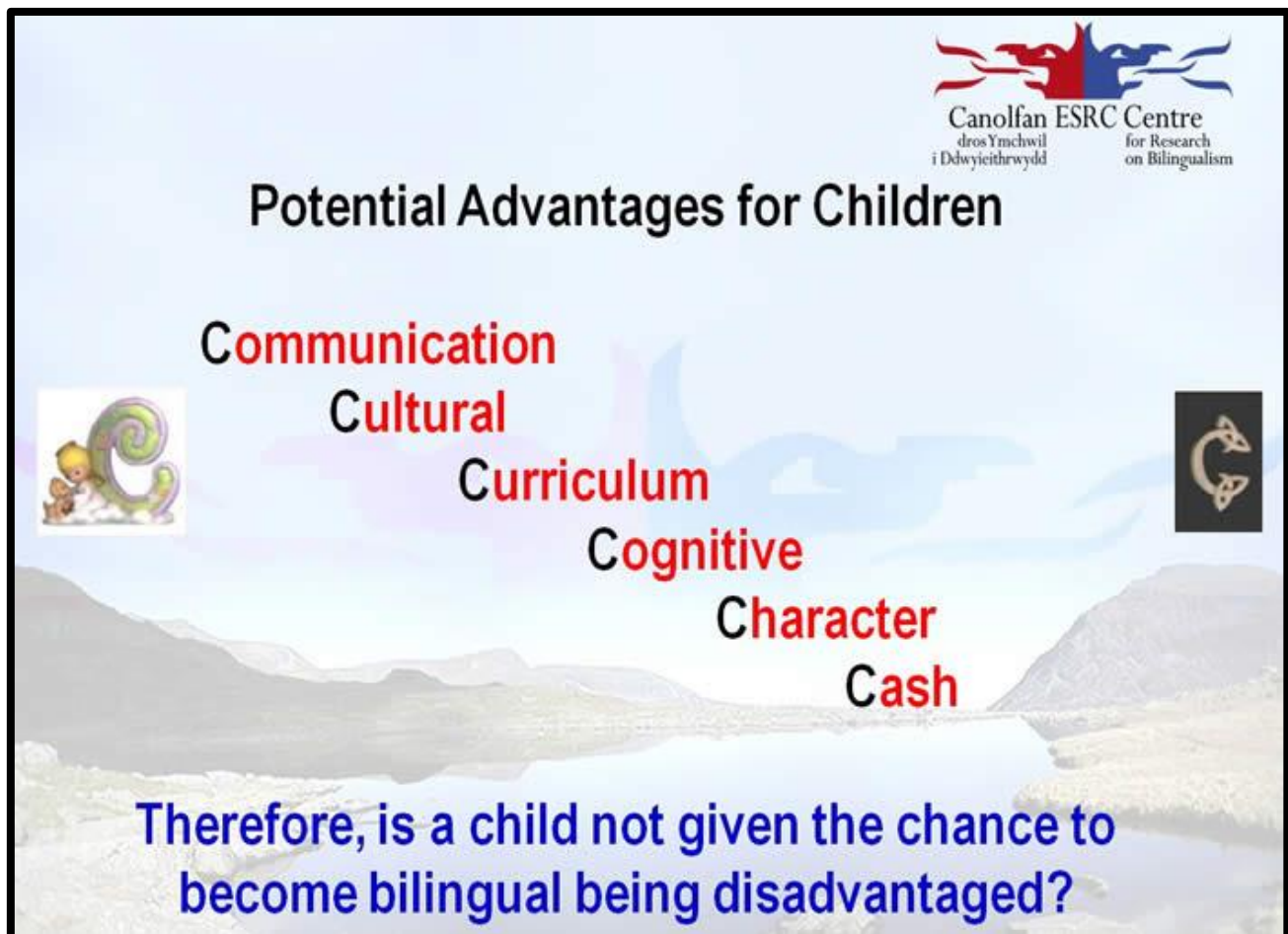
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_advantages_of_bilingualism


<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/does-being-bilingual-make-you-smarter>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-35170392>

<http://theconversation.com/speaking-in-tongues-the-many-benefits-of-bilingualism-49842>



<http://www.spring.org.uk/2013/09/10-superb-psychological-advantages-of-learning-another-language.php>




Canolfan ESRC Centre
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for Research
on Bilingualism

Potential Advantages for Children

Communication
Cultural
Curriculum
Cognitive
Character
Cash



Therefore, is a child not given the chance to
become bilingual being disadvantaged?