

Bilingual Education

In defining bilingual education we will present the findings of Ofelia Garcia, and Colin Baker. Their work in the field of bilingual education is exceptional and it is of its highest quality. We will use their description of bilingual education through their findings in the area of bilingual education. Their findings present important factors that must be considered when trying to understand bilingual education. Baker (2006) depicts that "bilingualism is not simply about two languages" (p. 2). Baker seems to set a higher standard for the meaning and definition of bilingual education. His standard surpasses the definition found in the Merriam Webster dictionary online, which defines bilingualism as:

- *The ability to speak two languages

- *The frequent use (as by a community) of two languages

- *The political or institutional recognition of two languages

Furthermore, even when bilingual education is literally defined in such a way, Baker brings forth a challenging and thought-arousing description of bilingualism. Baker's (2006) focus regarding bilingual education "is to show that the ownership of two or more languages is not simple as having two wheels or two eyes". It is clear that bilingualism is more than just two languages and in bilingual education this is a significant observation that is taken for granted by many involved in education. Baker presents questions that arouse a high level of thinking towards bilingual education. In understanding and becoming more familiar with bilingual education or bilingualism, Baker presents the following questions:

- Is someone bilingual if they are fluent in one language but less than fluent in their other language?
- Is someone multilingual if they rarely or never use one of their languages?

These questions are radical because they question the definition of bilingualism, and establish a new paradigm on what and how bilingual education should be described and perceived. Similarly, Ofelia Garcia has ideas that relate to Baker; however, she inclines her

arguments towards the reposition of bilingual education for the twenty-first century. Ofelia Garcia, like Baker expresses that "bilingualism is not simply seen as two separate monolingual codes - a vision that goes beyond "one plus one equals two" (p. 5). Like Baker, Garcia explains that her vision of bilingualism or bilingual education can take place if there is a "re-conceptualization of understanding about language and bilingualism" (p. 5). In defining bilingualism Garcia places a greater emphasis on the reconstitution of the activity known as "bilingual education;" Garcia (2009) argues that "we reposition bilingual education for the twenty-first century, while building on the scholarship of the past; and we outline how this inclusive plural vision of bilingual education has the potential to transform the lives of children and adults throughout the world" (p. 5).

In presenting a brief description about bilingual education we can agree with Ofelia Garcia (2009) when she declares this about bilingual education: "that bilingual education is the only way to educate children in the twenty-first century" and that bilingual education is "a simple label for a complex phenomenon. (p. 5).