

Colin Baker  
*A Parent and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*  
Clevedon  
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The third edition of *A Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism* is presented by Multilingual Matters in an e-book format divided in 6 different sections. Each of these sections include a clear general introduction to the third edition. The initial section provides the information regarding the recent updates made to the last edition and also adds an introduction to bilingualism. The following part of the book explains the structure and organization of the book.

After the introduction, the book is divided in 9 sections (A to F) written in a friendly question-answer format concerning the following topics: Family Questions, Language Development Questions, Questions About Problems, Reading and Writing Questions, Education Questions, Types of Bilingual Education, Achievements and Underachievement Questions, Language in the Classroom and Concluding Questions. At the end of the book there is a Glossary and Index section.

Baker covers the highlights of a series of common problems and questions regarding bilingualism. The book includes the latest research in multilingualism, incorporating the main aspects of having a bilingual family. Among these aspects we find bilingual education, language acquisition, bilingual literacy and the social dimension involved in the process of educating children in a bilingual family. By doing this, Baker dispels a myriad of myths surrounding bilingualism, but also provides considerable academic evidence that supports the book's arguments and statements about bilingualism.

The author is clear to state that the book has a non-academic style, so that it could be of easy reading to any person without any previous knowledge on linguistics or teaching-related concepts. To help with that goal, the book also includes a glossary section that provides a set of useful definitions and clear explanations of the terms used through out the book. This section appears to be carefully designed with the intention to help parents and tutors that could need any further explanation on the terms used in the book. The organization of the book is clear and helps the reader to focus on his own areas of interest, this organization also allows the reader to navigate through the book according to their own interests, without the necessity of having to follow a linear reading.

The first section of the book, "Family Questions" is made of a set of 17 questions that covers a series of linguistic issues regarding bilingualism at home. The book starts with a series of relevant questions that most bilingual families usually have. Some of the highlighted questions from the book are: What are the advantages of my child becoming bilingual? What happens if parents don't agree that their children should become bilingual? If we raise our child to be

bilingual, will it affect our marriage? We have just moved to a different country. Should we speak the host country's language in the home to help our children?

Baker in this chapter also deals with some questions regarding the relation between the members of a bilingual family and its community. The book also covers important issues in relation with cultural factors and what linguistic strategies should be considered to best approach these issues. By setting this question-answer style, the author effectively manages to organize the book in short sections. Each of the questions are easily covered by simplifying theories into a simple style, by doing that, the book is of easy access for parents and tutors.

Although the initial chapter of the book seems to be lacking of academic and research support, the end of the book provides a compendium of further sources to support Baker's statements.

The next section of the book, "Language Development Questions" addresses a set of contents and linguistic theories related with language development, cognitive theories and second language acquisition. Fortunately for novel readers, Baker explores these ideas with a simple style, successfully connecting more complex language theories with his own bilingual experience and his observations as a father of bilingual children. The questions covered in this section, show the straight intention of being designed to help parents understand the acquisition language process using a simple language. This section also explains how bilingual children overcome most common issues regarding bilingualism. Among some questions worth to be highlighted are: How early do bilingual children recognize that they have two languages? How do I know my child's language development in each language is normal and acceptable? Will learning a second language interfere with development in the first language? What effect will bilingualism have on my child's intelligence? My child mixes two languages. Is this normal?

Baker acknowledges the marvelous capacity that children at young ages have for language acquisition. Although the language is simply, the author supports his ideas with a variety of previous studies. These studies cases provide the balance between the simplicity of the book and the academical support of its statements.

The third section of the book is titled "Questions About Problems". In this part of the book, the author is clear to state why he decided to use that title. Baker takes care of those difficult questions covering the most common struggles that affect bilingual families. Some of the problems covered are related with stuttering, learning difficulties, languages disorders, unbalanced language acquisition, social disorders and language prejudices. Some of the questions in this section are: My child mixes the two languages. What should I do? My child refuses to use on of his/her languages. What should I do? People make fun of our children for speaking a minority language. How should I react? My second language is not perfect. Should I speak it to my child? A local professional (e.g. a doctor, psychologist, speech therapist, teacher) advised me again bilingualism. Is this correct? As these questions are clear to point out most common conflictive issues, the author encourages parents to consult advice from experts only, and seek guidance from professionals who specialize in second language acquisition.

The Section D of the book focuses on bilingual literacy and the main issues regarding bilingualism. In this section Baker also covers, although without offering further details, most of the strategies recommended for parents and tutors involved in the process. The chapter maintains the question and answer style and gives focus to reading and writing abilities and how these can be better developed with the right approach. Questions to be highlighted here are: When should a child begin to read in a second language? Which approach to teaching reading works best? The 'look and say', 'phonemic awareness', 'phonics', 'Whole language' or what approach? Should I buy books for my child to read that contain two languages or just one

language? My child seems slow in learning to read. Is this due to bilingualism? In this section Baker explores the questions and answers that most parents might have regarding language learning. Although some studies are presented, some over generalization is perceived in this chapter. Depending on the different contexts and communicational situations, each bilingual families could have different outcomes that can not be easily generalized.

The next section covers a variety of questions regarding education and learning. As this is the longest section of the book, it is divided in 5 sub-subsections that cover the following topics: Section E, Basic Questions: Basic Education Questions, Types of Bilingual Education, Achievement and Underachievement Questions and Language in the Classroom. This section could be of great interest for educators, second language instructors and teachers with bilingual students in their classroom. Some of the highlighted questions covered here are: Is there a 'critical age' when children shouldn't be moved to a school with a different language pattern in the curriculum? What type of bilingual education exist? What language strategies are used in immersion classrooms? My child is suffering in school because other children tease him/her about speaking another language. What can I do? Are teachers trained to help bilingual children?

The final and closing section of the book, 'Concluding Questions' addresses the economical, political and cultural views on bilingualism. Baker also gives further reference to certain books to avoid and how to expand parents' knowledge on bilingualism. Among the most remarkable questions we find the following: Why are many politicians against bilingualism and bilingual education? language is an important part of our religion. Should my child learn a second language for this purpose? Is the internet going to affect my child's bilingualism? Each of these questions take bilingualism and extrapolate it into the different aspects of the social phenomena, most of them are not fully covered by the author, but Baker leaves the door opened for further research in the area.

In general words, Colin Baker's a Parents' and Teachers' Guide to Bilingualism is a very recommendable book for those involved in bilingualism as well as teachers with bilingual students. Anyone who is looking for a practical and straightforward book to help them out with the pros and cons of educating children bilingually could highly benefit from reading the book. Although the highlights, those who are looking for a more academic oriented text should consider instead other sources when it comes to bilingualism. Other academic-oriented options published by Multilingual Matters and written by Baker are the following: Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism (2006) and Encyclopedia of Bilingualism and Bilingual Education (1998).

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