



education review // reseñas educativas

editors: gene v glass gustavo e. fischman melissa cast-brede

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

December 9, 2010

ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>

García, Ofelia. (2009). *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell

Pp. 496 ISBN 978-1-4051-1994-8

Reviewed by Luis M. Partida
University of Texas at Brownsville

In *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*, García outlines key topics that are important for bilingual education for the 21st century. The author addresses myths, misconceptions and realities, and gives explanations about languaging and translanguaging. She distinguishes between monoglossic and heteroglossic views of bilingual education and gives examples from around the world. García closes her book by addressing the different ways schools have approached bilingual education, language maintenance, shift and death, as well as additive and subtractive models of education and outlines the cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism.

The book comprises four parts. The first part consists of an introductory overview of bilingual education. The first chapter includes scenarios in bilingual education from the United States and Japan. Further, chapter one discusses what bilingual education is, its beneficiaries and reasons

Citation: Partida, Luis M. (2010 December 9) Review of *Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective* by Ofelia García. *Education Review*, 13. Retrieved [Date] from <http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1005.pdf>

for bilingual education , as well as geopolitics and language orientations. The second part of her book, chapters 2-5, addresses: languaging and education, models of bilingualism, misconceptions, sociopolitics of bilingualism, and the benefits of being bilingual. The third part of the book addresses the bilingual education policy and language promotion by European institutions. Part four delves into bilingual education practices, approaches, methods as well as the assessment of bilinguals. Part five concludes the book and addresses bilingual education in the 21st century.

Bilingual Education in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective, is provocative yet comforting. In her book, the author challenges the perception of what it means to be bilingual and does not succumb to the myths of bilingualism. Bilingual education, according to García is to "educate generally, meaningfully, equitably, and for tolerance and appreciation of diversity" (p. 11). She points out that bilingual education is good for all children, as well as good for all adult learners, and that bilingual education is not new to our society. Tablets unearthed in Aleppo, Syria, indicate that bilingual education is at least four to five thousand years old.

For bilingual education to be effective it cannot be taught the traditional way foreign languages have been taught. The language must be the medium of instruction. It must establish meaning for the students. Therefore, both the home language and the target language must be utilized together and it must incorporate content. By doing so, the language will build upon a student's prior knowledge and understanding in the home language.

García examines two key views of bilingual education: monoglossic and heteroglossic. The monoglossic view treats the two languages a student is learning as separate parts of the whole. These two parts function independently, yet are bound within the student. The monoglossic view treats two languages as different rather than focusing on the commonalities. In the heteroglossic view of bilingual education, the languages are woven together rather than being separate. A person's understanding in one language helps lead to greater understanding in the other language. A heteroglossic view of bilingual education is also important in disproving the

misconception that bilingual education confuses students and delays their acquisition of the new language. Under the heteroglossic view, the student's acquisition of the new language is aided by the understanding of the home language.

Languageing and translanguaging are fundamental concepts García also discusses. Language plays an important role in the globalized world and in education (p. 31). A language is a system of symbols or letters for decoding information. Some languages can become sacred or symbolic of a community. In some languages the code is fluid, there is not a set structure to the language, in others the language is verbal, and not written. More importantly, language has become an identity to some minority groups. Translanguaging is to describe how bilinguals utilize the language on their own terms; typically with writing taking form in one language and oral conversations taking place in another language (Baker, 2001 as cited in García, 2009).

Fishman (1968 as cited in García, 2009) identifies language maintenance and language shift as:

The relationship between change (or stability) in language usage patterns on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural process, on the other hand, in populations that utilize more than one speech variety for intra-group or for inter-group purposes (p 80).

For language maintenance and language shift to occur there must be a coexistence of more than one language, a distinction between the language minority and the language of power, and pressure between the two languages (Fishman, 1968 as cited in García, 2009). With the two competing languages and one being the language of power there is a need for those in the language minority to learn the language of power. When this happens, those who are learning the new language risk the possibility of losing their home language. These individuals who shift away from their home language begin to lose the ability to language with friends and family who have not shifted. Within three generations (Fishman, 1968 as cited in García, 2009) the language shift will be complete and the third generation will not be able to communicate in what was the family's home language. After the third

generation, the language experiences death. When a language dies, part of the culture dies with it.

Garcia notes that there are various cognitive and social advantages to bilingualism. An advantage to bilingualism is that the persons who are bilingual have a greater metalinguistic awareness, and are divergent thinkers. Additionally, students that can language in two languages will be more apt to embrace other cultures. These students will have an economic advantage over monolingual speakers and will experience better interaction on a local and global level. With the advent of the Internet and the collision of cultures in an era of globalization, bilingual education will produce better citizens.

The author discusses the approaches that the schools have taken toward bilingual education. Typically, four approaches to bilingual education have been followed. The first is the subtractive method. In this method students are taught in their first language and the second language is added. A second, monoglossic view is the additive method of bilingual education. In this case, the language of the students is still treated as individual languages that do not intermingle in the students mind. The recursive model of bilingual education is unique to groups that are trying to reclaim a language that had died. This model is a continuum based on a heteroglossic perspective that reaches back and forward between the two languages to build understanding. The most comprehensive heteroglossic model schools can utilize is the dynamic model. In this model, the languages work together to build a greater understanding. There is a free exchange of ideas and concepts. Code switching shows a greater level of understanding of both languages.

García has tackled a difficult topic and explained it with a depth and breadth that makes refuting it difficult. In particular, García's dynamic model and her views on code switching are worth noting. As simple as the dynamic model appears, it represents what bilingual education should become. When first described the monoglossic additive model makes perfect sense – teach two languages and they will learn two languages. However, the result is the two languages were being taught in a way that was compartmentalized. The dynamic model, on the other hand, is alive in the mind of the student and the free

exchange of ideas and concepts can be accessed in both languages.

Aristotle wrote that man is a social animal. When we socialize, we communicate, and when we communicate, we language. García's book highlights the importance of being bilingual and how to work for and achieve bilingualism. Through bilingualism, we can achieve languaging on a global scale.

Copyright is retained by the first or sole author, who grants right of first publication to the *Education Review*.

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the National Education Policy Center <http://nepc.colorado.edu>



Editors

Gene V Glass

glass@edrev.info

Gustavo Fischman

fischman@edrev.info

Melissa Cast-Brede

cast-brede@edrev.info
