

## **Book reviews**

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### **BILINGUAL FAMILIES: A PRACTICAL LANGUAGE PLANNING GUIDE**

*Crisfield, E.*

*Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2021*

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*Bilingual Families: A practical language planning guide* is a clearly structured guide for parents and families raising their children with more than one language. It provides a structured introduction to the theory and research underpinning bilingualism and multilingualism without overwhelming the reader. The book provides examples of the situations that families may encounter and guides the reader in how to navigate the challenges that may arise. The book includes practical question and answer sections to guide families to decide on a structured approach to their family's language plan. The reasons behind such a plan are clearly elaborated. Section 1 focuses on "de-mystifying bilingualism" and clarifies some of the common myths and misconceptions with a general overview of current research and thinking. Section 2 sets out the need and structure for "family language planning" and provides the structure for developing such a plan. Section 3 focuses upon "supporting your family language plan" and addresses common challenges in enacting a family plan involving multiple languages. The appendix shows an example of a family language plan and a plan for the formal schooling of a child.

*Bilingual Families: A practical language planning guide* is an extremely useful tool for parents and families embarking on the journey of raising their children with multiple languages. It is written in accessible language, with reference to further academic reading on some of the major topics. The book provides a useful but succinct overview of the key research looking at child bilingualism and multilingualism and dispels a number of the commonly held myths. It provides a useful means for parents and families to become empowered to resist some of the challenging messages they may receive throughout their child's education.

Drawing on some of the ideas in the book would enable parents to respond to negative responses to their family's language plan. In addition, the book provides useful templates and guides to plan and execute a family language plan which can evolve with the needs of the child. The book has a logical structure and is presented in an accessible way. Each chapter is succinct summarising key ideas and providing templates or guides at the end of each section for the individual family to develop their own response to the material in that section of the book. Perhaps the most useful section is the third section which offers the reader a structured guide to developing responses to the challenges that they may encounter as they raise their child(ren). For example, there are guides to support how to respond to schools, medical professionals and family and friends who may not support the family's choice to pursue multiple languages. This section of the book provides clear suggestions for how to respond, and provides the tools for families to pre-prepare responses to people they may encounter who do not clearly understand the benefits and need to support the bilingual development of children.

The introductory section of the book provides an easy-to-access summary of key ideas in research and theory and a deliberate choice has been made not to suggest further reading until page 63 of the book at the end of section 2. This is potentially a wise choice so as not to overwhelm the reader early on with a plethora of potential further reading. As an academic, I would like to see some further reading suggestions in section one to support the parent who might like to read further on certain aspects of bilingualism/multilingualism. However, there is also strength in keeping this section succinct and straightforward.

Overall, I find this book a valuable tool that I would recommend to any family thinking of, or already undertaking, the choice to raise their child with more than one language. This can be a daunting task, and the book presents a clearly set – out guide for the parent to understand key underlying ideas without overwhelming the reader with too much technical information. The practical guides and templates are particularly useful in assisting the family to develop a coherent plan and to consider and decide upon the priorities for their family. Having such a clear plan is essential and the templates offer the family the clarity needed to amend their plan as the need arises. Crisfield shares useful anecdotes from personal experience to illustrate the challenges that families may encounter, and to highlight that plans

will need to be flexible and may need to change for each child in the family at different stages of their development. It is a useful support tool for any family that uses more than one language. I will be recommending it to families that ask for advice.