

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Information comes from AskNCELA's glossary of terms related to the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students at www.ncele.gwu.edu/expert/glossary.html

BILINGUAL: Refers to the use of two languages. However, defining bilingualism is problematic since individuals with varying bilingual characteristics may be classified as bilingual. There may be distinctions between ability and use of a language; variation in proficiency across the four language dimensions (listening, speaking, reading and writing); differences in proficiency between the two languages; variation in proficiency due to the use of each language for different functions and purposes; and variation in language proficiency over time (Baker & Jones 1998). People may become bilingual either by acquiring two languages at the same time in childhood or by learning a second language sometime after acquiring their first language.

BICULTURAL: Identifying with the cultures of two different language groups. To be bicultural is not necessarily the same as being bilingual, and vice-versa (Baker 2000).

Dominant Language: The language with which the speaker has greater proficiency and/or uses more often (Baker 2001).

See Primary Language.

DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM/DUAL IMMERSION:

Educational programs designed to serve both language minority and language majority students concurrently. Two language groups are put together and instruction is delivered through both languages. For example, native English-speakers might learn Spanish as a foreign language while continuing to develop their English literacy skills, and Spanish-speaking ELLs learn English while developing literacy in Spanish. Also known as two-way immersion or two-way bilingual education.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs) : Children whose first language is not English and who are in the process of learning English.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL): An educational approach in which English language learners are instructed in the use of the English language.

HOME LANGUAGE: The language a person acquires first in life or identifies with as a member of an ethnic group (Baker 2000). It is sometimes referred to as the first, native or primary language.

IMMERSION: An approach to teaching language using the target language as the only means of instruction.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: The process of acquiring a first or second language. Some linguists refer to acquisition as the informal development of a person's second language and learning as the process of formal study of a second language. Other linguists do not distinguish between formal learning and informal acquisition. The process of acquiring a second language is different from acquiring the first (Baker 2000).

LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE: The protection and promotion of the first or native language in an individual or within a speech community, particularly among language minorities (through bilingual education, for example). The term is often used with reference to policies that protect and promote minority languages (Baker 2000).

MONOLINGUAL: Refers to using or knowing only one language. (American Heritage Dictionary 2000).

MULTICULTURAL: The broad term used to refer to several cultures. It also relates to a social or educational approach that encourages interest in many cultures. (American Heritage Dictionary 2000).

MULTILINGUAL: Refers to the use of three or more languages.

PRIMARY LANGUAGE: The language in which bilingual/multicultural speakers are most fluent or which they prefer to use. This is not necessarily the language first learned in life (Baker 2000). It is also referred to as dominant language.

SECOND LANGUAGE: This term is used in several ways and can refer to 1) the second language learned chronologically, 2) a language other than the native language, 3) the weaker language, or 4) the less frequently used language. Second language may also be used to refer to third and further learned languages (Harris & Hodges 1995).

Second Language Acquisition: The learning of a second language, often English.

SEQUENTIAL ACQUISITION: The process of acquiring a second language after the basis for the first language has been established (Tabors 1997).

SIMULTANEOUS ACQUISITION: The process of acquiring two languages from a very early age (Tabors 1997).

References can be obtained from the NCELA Web site.