


# A Heteroglossic Lens on Washington State's Growing Dual Language for Multilingual Learners

Chioma Ezeh, Elizabeth City State University, USA\*

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4489-4056>

## ABSTRACT

This article examines Washington State's growing dual language program through the lens of heteroglossia. A heteroglossic lens is significant to understanding the contemporary linguistic landscape and framing language policies that will equitably serve multilingual learners and communities. With the increasing multilingual complexities of today's classrooms and the history of academic achievement gaps between monolingual and multilingual learners, heteroglossia illuminates the contextual ways in which language practices and policies hegemonize certain groups and create educational and social inequities. The article argues that unless the state's language policy is structurally revised and informed with a heteroglossic ideology and theorization of language education, its aspirational goals of equitable education for its multilingual learners may never be attained. It offers an overview of the theoretical lens of heteroglossia that must guide the planning of an equitable language policy/program that reflects multilingual learners' authentic fluid language practices.

## KEYWORDS

Dual Language Program, Heteroglossia, Language Policy, Multilingual Learners

## INTRODUCTION

Through the theoretical lens of heteroglossia, this article examines language policy efforts of Washington State, particularly its current emphasis on Dual Language (DL) programs which is a model of bilingual education that has gained attention in the United States. DL programs are structured to develop and use two languages, English and a Language Other than English (LOTE), for instruction based on time allotments. The article reviews and offers a challenge to Washington State's current language policy that serves linguistically diverse students and proposes a structural shift towards heteroglossic foundations of bilingual education. Reframing the state's language policy with heteroglossic understandings is aimed at addressing the diversity and fluidity of language practices constituting today's classrooms. In what follows, the article presents an overview of heteroglossia as a theoretical lens, based on which it reviews Washington State's language policy efforts in general and more emphasis on its growing DL program. Practical examples from research are used to support its

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\*Corresponding Author

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discussion of the state's DL program. This article argues that for Washington State to accomplish its goals of addressing educational equity and developing multilingual learners' (ML) bilingual, bicultural, and biliteracy skills for global competitiveness, its language policy must key into a heteroglossic underpinning of language education and language diversity.

### **Theoretical Lens of Heteroglossia**

Heteroglossia is a theoretical lens to understand language diversity in relation to its historical, social, and political implications. It is an umbrella term for all policies, pedagogies, and practices that legitimize and support bilinguals to make meaning and understand their world using their whole language repertoires in ways that are explicitly connected with their socio-historical relationships (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011; García & Kleifgen, 2018; García & Kleyn, 2016; García et al., 2018). Theoretically, heteroglossia challenges structures, policies, and institutions that tend to enforce a unified language (Busch, 2014). Its framework illuminates the realistic and contextual ways by which language functions in an increasingly growing global world and its communicative complexities (Flores & Schissel, 2014). It draws our focus to how language and its practices are shaped by social, historical, and political factors. The linguistic repertoire is neither fixed geographically nor static but keeps evolving and is fluid depending on time and context (Blackledge et al., 2014; Busch, 2014).

A heteroglossic lens acknowledges the presence of different languages and codes as legitimate resources. While Bakhtin (1981) first theorized heteroglossia, it can be understood within three concepts used by Blackledge and Creese (2014) to describe it: indexicality, tension-filled interaction, and multivoicedness.

#### *Indexicality*

Indexicality explains Bakhtin's idea that language indexes a particular social class or position, ideology, and point of view. As heteroglossia refers to the simultaneous use of languages or features of languages, Bakhtin explained that heteroglossic resources, whether within a named national language or a set of complex linguistic repertoires, carry different ideological points of view. Besides the given names of languages, language is further stratified into socio-ideological categories such as social groups and positions, social practices, professions and genres, and generations (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Using or normalizing a particular kind of language practice could imply establishing positions of power for a particular group by repeating or echoing their voices.

#### *Tension-Filled Interaction*

Language is inherently full of social tensions in any context or form of its use because a word does not make meaning in isolation from other words that could execute similar functions (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Bakhtin (1981) used two concepts, "centrifugal and centripetal" to explain the forces that compete against each other in any instance of word usage: centrifugal forces incline towards the disunified heteroglossic aspect of language while the centripetal forces incline towards the unitary aspect of language that seeks homogeneity and standardization. In language use, these forces participate in each other as much as they compete against each other (Blackledge & Creese, 2014). Because language use indexes a particular social group and its societal position, Duran and Palmer (2014, p. 384) acknowledged that the "debate around language policy is about much more than language, it is also implicitly about identity, power relations, and ideology". The tensions in discourses are about the voice recognized and shared therein and whose socio-political and historical ideologies are projected (Blackledge & Creese, 2014).

#### *Multivoicedness*

Bakhtin (1981) called attention to the central place of linguistic diversity in discourse. That is, a word exists in relation to other words and their historical associations, and other people's words. We find

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