

# Language Policy

## St. Kitts and Nevis

June 3, 2018

### Introduction

The history of St. Kitts and Nevis, like other islands in the Caribbean region, contributed to the linguistic context which characterises the twin island state. Roberts (1988)<sup>1</sup> suggests that migration patterns helped to shape the language varieties spoken on the islands and the vernacular variety which co-exists with English has a relationship with vernacular varieties spoken in Antigua and Barbuda as well as Montserrat. Educators in St. Kitts and Nevis<sup>2</sup> acknowledge that English and a dialect are spoken in the islands and that the dialect is “often used in schools, by both teachers and students alike, most often in informal discourse...” The Educators also assert that the “English-based dialect is accepted as a legitimate first language of the students (and that) Standard English is the acknowledged language of formal education.” They emphasise the importance of “developing students’ competence in Standard English in the classroom through oral activity.”<sup>3</sup>

Educators also acknowledge that developing competence in English can pose some challenges for learners and teachers. Concern about this has led to recommendations for implementation of an appropriate policy as well as a Language arts programme that includes effective approaches for literacy instruction. One approach which has been discussed in research reports on language learning is the use of the home language, as a building block for literacy and success in school work.

### The Context of Language in St. Kitts and Nevis

English is the official language of St. Kitts and Nevis and the one used primarily for instruction and examinations in schools. Mastery of English determines student academic success. The grammar of the dialect is Creole influenced and structurally different from English so that children who speak the dialect as their first or home language need to learn English as a second dialect. They know the home language well and communicate fluently in it. Children who speak a dialect as the home language will not automatically be familiar with, or understand, the variety of English used for instruction or in text books because this variety, which is described as being “decontextualized” and “context-reduced,”<sup>4</sup> is different from the English used in casual and informal contexts. It also has grammatical features that are different from the grammar of the dialect.

The St. Kitts and Nevis updated curriculum document notes that children use a range of varieties at home and in play and “there is no standard form.” Roberts notes that “Kittitian speech is basically in the same camp as Jamaican and Antiguan” (p.100). He describes some minimal differences of pronunciation and sentence structure between Kittitian and Antiguan varieties. The following are some examples.

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, Peter. (1988) *West Indians and Their Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>2</sup> St. Kitts and Nevis Language Consultation Policy Report. April 2018, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> The Language Policy: Policy Language Arts – Draft, p. 3, Sect. 4.3.2

<sup>4</sup> Cummins, Jim. Cited in Ovando and Collier. 1998. *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, p.93.

1. Use of *gon* and *an* to signal future:
  - i. *He an go town fi you* - He will go to town for you
  - ii. *A gon do om soon* - I will do it soon
  
2. Use of [sΛ] as a relative pronoun:
  - iii. *Dat a di woman [sΛ] tief di mace* - That's the woman who stole the mace.
  
3. Sentence tags specific to St. Kitts:
  - iv. *He lef he wife, bΛdi/ba* - 'He left his wife.'
  - v. *Let me show om, daadi-bΛ* - 'Let me show him.'<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from these examples that the dialect spoken in St. Kitts and Nevis is Creole-influenced and structurally different from English so that children for whom this is the dominant language need to learn English as a second dialect. They need special attention to learn Standard Kittitian English when they come to school because of the existence of Creole features in the dialect that differ from the structure of English grammar. Roberts observes that "there are a number of features outside the English language which occur in a patterned way... and form a normal part of the language and competence of West Indians... Features identified as Creole English do not necessarily occur, or occur with the same frequency, in all the West Indian territories."<sup>6</sup> Instruction of children who come to school speaking any of the Creole-Influenced varieties (CIV) should be tailored to help them transition to the use of the Standard English for oral and written purposes related to their school work. This does not mean that their knowledge or use of the dialect will be eradicated because wide support for it in the community and use of it to communicate in that context is likely to lead to its retention as a viable "lect" which was learned as a native language.<sup>7</sup> The instruction in school should be such that children will learn the variety of English required for school and add it to their repertoire. This will empower them to switch codes based on appropriateness of use in social contexts and to use the Standard variety for school purposes as well as the dialect for authenticity of representation of characters, for example, in creative writing. If children have only surface level Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in Standard English they will not perform well in classrooms where the emphasis is on Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP).<sup>8</sup>

The English used in text books and for school purposes, is referred to as "academic language, and it is described as being "more abstract and complex, and thus more challenging for students.' Ovando and

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<sup>5</sup> Examples taken from Roberts (1988:100). He notes the source of No. v as from Evelyn 1982 and all others from Martin 1982.

<sup>6</sup> Roberts, Peter. 1988. *West Indians and Their Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.50.

<sup>7</sup> Rickford, John. 1983. "What happens in Decreolization." In R. Andersen (ed.) *Pidginization and Creolization as Language Acquisition*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers Inc. Pp. 298-319.

<sup>8</sup> See Jim Cummins 1991. "Interdependence of first-and second-language proficiency in bilingual children". In E. Bialystok (Ed.) *Language Processing in Bilingual Children* (pp. 70-80) for a discussion on CALP and BICS.

Collier<sup>9</sup> claim that it takes more years to master academic than social language. Cummins used the term 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP) to refer to the academic language that learners need for school. He described it as being "context reduced" and "decontextualized" because it uses fewer contextual clues and one must depend on the language itself to derive meaning. He distinguished between CALP and 'Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) which is more closely related to social language development.<sup>10</sup> Ovando and Collier explain that social and academic language "represent a continuum; they are not separate, unrelated aspects of proficiency. However, academic language extends into more and more cognitively demanding uses of language" (p.93). Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency begins to be developed from early and development continues throughout the years at school. In order to help learners achieve the level of proficiency for success with academic / school language, teachers must pay careful attention to the approaches used for language and literacy development. It is difficult for learners to master cognitive academic language in English when they do not have basic interpersonal communication skills in that language. A successful instructional programme would have to focus on providing opportunities for students to develop BICS as well as CALP. Ovando and collier recommend as good teaching, the incorporation of "social and academic language development into every lesson. Activating students' background knowledge and prior experience might begin with social language, including man contextual supports through, for example, visuals, maps, charts, manipulatives, music and pantomiming..." (p.93).

#### Language Learning Guidelines: Education Act and language Arts Curriculum

In March 2016, the St. Kitts and Nevis Ministry of Education Curriculum Development Unit published a document: *The Primary School Interim Curriculum – Language Arts*. This is a two part document in which the first part presents an underlying philosophy for "an approach that emphasises the teaching of English as a second language" (p.vi) and the second itemises standards that must be taught in successive school terms. specific teaching points are subsumed under each language domain for each term. The updated version of the document retains the basic rationale which proposes a balanced language approach in the curriculum because of the need to "teach the forms, conventions and functions of the English Language... (as this) would facilitate the English as a second language phenomenon that is needed in St. Kitts and Nevis" (p.vi).

The document delineates standards for three main strands in the curriculum:

- i. Communication – *Access, view, evaluate and respond to print, non-print and electronic texts and resources; (p.1)*
- ii. Reading – *Demonstrate proficiency in applying relevant decoding and recognition strategies to the reading process and use this competence to become fluent in oral and silent reading appropriate to grade level; (p.4)*

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<sup>9</sup> Ovando, Carlos and Collier, Virginia. 1998. *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts*. Boston: McGraw Hill, (p.185).

<sup>10</sup> Cummins, J. 1991. "Interdependence of first-and-second language proficiency in bilingual children" In E. Bialystok (ed.) *Language Processing in Bilingual Children*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (pp.70 – 89).

- iii. Writing – *Write in clear, concise, organised language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes;* (p.16).

The rationale presented for the “Updated Curriculum” is that it addresses ‘gaps’ and ‘vague concepts’ in the existing curriculum which, in the view of the developers, “lacks scope and sequence of concepts” and does not contain sufficient content to meet the needs of primary school students” (p. vi). The document acknowledges the existence of several varieties of English and claims that there ‘is no standard form’. This is presented as one of the reasons for espousing a second language approach. These recommendations offer an appropriate and acceptable approach to addressing the language diversity of students in the school system. However, the situation is reflective of a bi-dialectal situation since neither of the varieties spoken incorporates a lexicon different from English. In this context approaches for bi-dialectal language development would be relevant. The presentation of content in Section 2 of the document does not adhere to the approach advocated in the first as focus is placed on form and function with emphasis on teaching structures. Some additional guidance may be necessary for teachers if an approach that itemizes and dissects the components of language is to be avoided and if learners are to benefit from a well-designed and clearly articulated balanced language approach.

During consultations conducted with officials in the Ministry of Education, the Chief Education Officer and other education officials pointed out that ‘children from the Dominican Republic speak Spanish but there are no systems to support that group.’<sup>11</sup> Noting that the number was relatively small, the CEO emphasized that help was needed for these children. It was agreed that use of second language approaches that focus on language awareness would benefit these learners but further consideration would need to be given regarding school placement and instruction among other things to ensure maximizing resources to deal with language diversity in the classroom. More recent consultations on a policy for St. Kitts and Nevis (April 2018) report concerns and ideas for language and literacy development in the twin island state. The document indicates that “the Ministry of Education, St. Kitts and Nevis is in support of the proposed language awareness approach in the development of a national language policy.” Educators also expressed the “need to educate our children with a mind towards embracing themselves as a Caribbean people” (p.8). These assertions imply that there is acknowledgement that the language with which children come to school can play a vital role in helping them to develop proficiency in English, the language they need for success in school.

#### [Summary of Research Findings on Home Language and Literacy](#)

Traditionally, and before research on second language learning and bilingualism revealed otherwise, teaching English as the mother tongue to students who spoke a different home language was thought to be a good approach to develop literacy and proficiency in English. Studies done in bilingual contexts and situations in which English is the target language - but is not the first or home language of children - have shown that nurturing the child’s home language contributes immense benefits not only to the child’s cultural development but also to the learning and mastery of the second or target language for school or academic purposes. Teaching English as a mother tongue to learners with different home languages did not always result in levels of proficiency in the second language that they needed for

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<sup>11</sup> Consultations with the Chief of Education Planning and other officials from the Ministry of Education and Community College. December 7, 2016.

success in school. In some instances, this approach resulted in subtractive bilingualism, a situation in which the learner did not make progress in the second language (L<sub>2</sub>) and did not develop literacy in their first / home language either. Cummins (1984, 1991) refers to research which shows that there are “consistent cross-lingual relationships between L1 (the first language) and L2 (second language) cognitive and academic language development.” Research by others (Collier, 1991; Cummins, 1991; and Thomas and Collier, 1997) provides evidence to show that “when a student’s cognitive and academic growth in L1 is more fully developed, the student’s proficiency and academic development in L2 will be deeper.”<sup>12</sup> According to Cummins (1994)<sup>13</sup> “when school personnel reject students’ identities... they force students to make an unnecessary and potentially traumatic choice between their two cultures, and the resulting conflict may actually interfere with language learning.” P. 46.

Generally, the findings of studies in situations where the home language is taken into consideration indicate benefits to the learner for literacy learning as well as cognitive flexibility and bilingual development. The following statements from selected studies provide the context for supporting the inclusion of the home language appropriately in language learning and teaching in bilingual contexts.

- i. *The notion that first language “interferes” with second language has been resoundingly rejected by extensive research findings on the positive role the first language plays in second-language acquisition. Cognitive and academic development of a student’s first language provides especially crucial support for second-language development.*<sup>14</sup>
- ii. *Many studies have shown that cognitive and academic development in L<sub>1</sub>, has a strong, positive effect on L<sub>2</sub> development for academic purposes... L<sub>1</sub> Literacy is considered a crucial base for L<sub>2</sub> literacy development. Many research studies have found that a wide variety of skills and learning strategies that are developed in L<sub>1</sub> reading and writing can have positive transfer to L<sub>2</sub> reading and writing.*<sup>15</sup>
- iii. *...(T)he development of home language literacy skills by students entails no negative consequences for their overall academic or cognitive growth, and, in some situations, there may be significant educational benefits for students in addition to the obvious personal benefits of bilingualism...*<sup>16</sup>

In situations where the Creole influenced vernacular / dialect has the same lexical base as the official, second language, English, nurturing the child’s first language - the dialect - can contribute to confidence building and a strong cultural identity. In such situations, particular approaches are needed to utilise the first languages in ways that will facilitate literacy development in the second dialect, the English used for school purposes.

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<sup>12</sup> Cited in Ovando and Collier, 199, p.105.

<sup>13</sup> Cummins, Jim (1994) *Knowledge, Power and Identity in Teaching English as a Second Language*. In Fred Genesee (ed.) **Educating Second Language Children**. Cambridge University Press. P. 33-58.

<sup>14</sup> Ovando, Carlos and Virginia Collier (1998) *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms*. Boston: McGraw Hill. P.88.

<sup>15</sup> Ovando & Collier. P.94.

<sup>16</sup> Cummins, Jim (1994) “Knowledge, Power and Identity in Teaching English as a Second Language.” In Fred Genesee (Ed.) *Educating Second Language Children*. Cambridge University Press. P. 33-58.

Craig (1999) stresses the importance of awareness programmes for CIV speakers in the school context. He advocates approaches for inclusion of the CIV, delineating methodological approaches and syllabus content for instruction. He presents several cogent arguments to support his position and the following represent a sample of these:

*Speakers suffer adverse cognitive and communicative effects if their first language development is curtailed; vernacular speakers need to continue the development of their vernacular while they are being put through school programmes in the official language, English. (p.44)*

*When the learners are CIV speakers acquiring the official language and literacy in it, (there are certain prerequisites to be borne in mind)... the first of these prerequisites is that the teaching programme must make provision for continuity in the learner's cognitive growth. (p.37)*

*The development of language awareness must, in order to be most natural, be based on contrasting 'our language' and English, and can begin as soon as the first English sentences are being taught. (p.41)*

*The development of language awareness should, most importantly, be utilised to get children to recognise the distinction between classroom sessions for 'free talk' and those for 'using English' (p.42)*

*The development of language awareness should... be utilised to get children to become motivated to learn English. Motivation can only develop if it is based on a perception of language contrasts, and an acceptance by students that English has to be used by persons, including themselves, who happen to be placed in certain situations, and who have to function in certain roles... the development in students of a wide, general knowledge about language and its role in the human world can be a major stimulant to the growth of language awareness. (pp. 42-43)*

Studies done in international contexts provide strong support for a language awareness approach that involves the first language. Cloud,<sup>17</sup> for example, notes that "If a learner's present knowledge of the native (i.e. first or home) language and his or her life experiences and background knowledge are limited, this will weaken the development of the second language." (p.249) Cummins also makes the point that "The educational and personal experiences students bring to schools constitute the foundation for all their future learning: schools should therefore attempt to amplify rather than replace these experiences."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cloud, Nancy. "Special Education Needs of Second language students." In F. Genesee (Ed.) (1994). Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community. Cambridge University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Cummins, J. In F. Genesee (Ed.); (1994, p.40).

Ovando and Collier refer to a number of research studies which reported that “Emergent literacy is stimulated through a print-rich classroom environment; sharing oral and written personal narratives, journal writing, and conversational writing with student partners; ... reading aloud daily, using predictable and familiar books; read-alongs and sing-alongs... sharing oral narratives from home, such as storytelling, commenting, questioning, jointly constructing a story, teasing, jokes and riddles.” (p.132)

Such an environment provides a context and a wealth of material for the development of language awareness for speakers of dialect through focus on contrasts between the dialect and the standard variety. This helps them to understand the difference between their home language and the school language, while at the same time building their appreciation for the songs and stories in the vernacular and the school language. Use of contrasts is just one approach that has been discussed in the literature. In the wake of the Ebonics controversy or programmes that should be used for African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in Oakland, California, several articles were written to discuss the pros and cons of instruction to speakers of AAVE. Rickford (1999)<sup>19</sup> refers to three approaches:

- (i) the “linguistically informed approach” suggested by W. Labov, in which teachers “distinguish between mistakes in reading and differences in pronunciation...” ; “present words in contexts that preserve underlying forms, using the full form of auxiliary verbs rather than contractions...” (p. 30)
- (ii) contrastive analysis in which “you draw students’ attention specifically to the differences between the vernacular and the standard language...” (referring to a contrastive approach used by Hanni Taylor in 1989<sup>20</sup> he says) “this process of comparing the two varieties seems to lead to much greater metalinguistic awareness of similarities and differences between the vernacular and the standard and allows students to negotiate the line between the two more effectively” (p.30)
- (iii) introducing reading in the vernacular, then switching to the standard – this approach is discussed with particular reference to a study in which the vernacular was first introduced and in which “Bridge readers were used to transition learners to Standard English” the study reported “6.2 months of reading gain after 4 months of instruction...” (p.33).

Use of any of these approaches would require some teacher training and for the third, special reading material would also be required. What the studies referred to have established is that a wealth of benefits accrue to learners when the language they come to school with is used to help them become proficient in the English required for school work.

It should be noted that the general principles of effective teaching advocated in the OECS Harmonised Curriculum for an integrated, holistic or whole language approach are still relevant. These principles emphasise the following among others: using learner-centred approaches; responding to individual learner needs (i.e. differentiated teaching); catering to the varying learning styles of learners; integrating across the curriculum; and promoting independent learning. With specific reference to second language / dialect contexts, the following would be relevant: nurturing the home (first) language of the learner

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<sup>19</sup> Rickford, John. 1999. “Using the Vernacular to Teach the Standard.” In *Ebonics in the Urban Education Debate*. D. Ramirez, T. G. Wiley, G. de Klerk and E. Lee (eds.). Long Beach, CA: Center for Language Minority Education Research. California State University, Long Beach, pp. 23-41.

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, H.U. (1989) *Standard English, Black English and bidialectalism*. New York: Peter Lang.

through development of literacy in it (L1 / L2); developing language awareness to foster literacy in the second dialect (D1 /D2).

Local research, resulting from the St. Kitts and Nevis Language Policy Consultaion report (SWOT Analysis Summary, April, 2018) provides further insight. In addition to consultations with 3 focus groups (one of which included secondary students), resources from the Early Learners Programme (ELP) were utilized during the course of consultation. Specifically, the Language Literacy Policy Discussion Paper, ELP Power Point Presentation on Home Language and Language Policy, as well as several documents namely: the ELP Report on Reading, the Research Paper on Language Literacy Policy, and the St. Kitts Nevis SRBA Country Report. The following are excerpts from the report (April 12, 2018).

“During the course of the consultation, we chose to utilize SWOT analysis as a tool to aid participants in thinking through the various policy options as well as the implications of each position. The policy development options explored during the course of the consultations were:

Type	Situation	Characteristics
Language Awareness	Bi-Dialectal – English and Vernacular	Use of both varieties to study contrasts
Literacy in English Only (English)	Bi-Dialectal	Use of vernacular only to help learner understanding initially. All other instruction in English

The Analysis Objectives and Evaluation of Objectives follow:

1.

ANALYSIS OBJECTIVE
Home Language and Internationally Accepted English compared, contrasted, and studied in schools.
EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES
The greatest concerns are around (1) the impact of dialect on acquisition of internationally accepted English (2) lack of funding and resources to support transition and (3) Programming might be potentially time consuming for teachers and students. Concerns (1) and (3) can be addressed through teacher and stakeholder education. Concern (2) would have to be addressed through budgetary submissions. Cost projections for policy implementation would need to be carried out and approved along with policy at Cabinet.

2.

ANALYSIS OBJECTIVE
Home Language initially used as a mechanism to facilitate the acquisition of Internationally Accepted English
EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVES
Benefits of Literacy in English and Language Awareness are essentially the same for both approaches. The concerns expressed are the essentially the same: use of dialect impacting the learning of internationally accepted English, and lack of funding <b>and</b> resources. There appears to be feeling that this position is easier to accomplish as it requires a lesser degree of change. Methods to address concerns here are the same as above.

Findings from the student responses indicated that all students readily made the connection between culture and language and how language serves to both unify and differentiate us. Certainly as we move



forward here in St. Kitts and Nevis we want all students educated in the Federation to have an appreciation for its culture and by virtue its dialect.”

### Policy Options

Craig (1991) suggests six possible options from which appropriate approaches can be selected to support policy options for language learning in specific vernacular contexts. Of these, two are relevant to the language situation in the St. Kitts Nevis context. The following table is an adaptation of the Craig typology, showing the two possible options, which are the same options chosen for the local research described above. A summary of the instructional choices that may apply and an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of each is given.

	Type	Situation	Characteristics
1	Language Awareness	Bi-Dialectal – English and Vernacular	Use of both varieties to study contrasts
2	Literacy in English Only (English)	Bi-Dialectal	Use of vernacular only to help learner understanding initially. All other instruction in English

The results of Craig’s research withstood the test of time. As found in the St. Kitts and Nevis stakeholder conversations, of the two options, the second is the least beneficial to the learner as it provides minimal support for the first (home) language and it may not lead to the desired learning outcome of literacy and cognitive academic language proficiency in English. Use of the first language initially will provide some comfort for learners when they first come to school; but lack of nurturing of the language except for perfunctory purposes will convey the message that the language is inferior to English and this may serve to undermine the self-confidence of learners as well as their interest in language generally and their motivation to learn a second language. This option has been the de facto choice in most contexts in the Caribbean and it has not resulted in desired learning outcomes. For this reason, it is not recommended.

St. Kitts Nevis has chosen the Language Awareness policy. This is appropriate for bi-dialectal situations, that is, situations in which the home language and the school language share the same lexicon but the home language has some pronunciation and grammar features that are different from the school language. The language Awareness approach develops awareness of differences in the language varieties in question and it promotes a healthy attitude to language in general (one of the goals stated in the Antigua and Barbuda curriculum document). It also helps learners develop an appreciation for the home language and motivates them to communicate in and learn English for school / academic purposes. A language awareness programme would accommodate one or more of the approaches indicated by Rickford (see p. 7 this document). Implementation of a *language awareness* programme involves a rich menu of instructional activities including the following among others:

- accepting the child’s language; promote interactions using the second dialect, English, to initiate acquisition of this variety for communicative purposes;

- introducing a balanced and integrated approach to language that involves listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and representing;
- building awareness of contrasts, progressing from pronunciation of words and (in higher grades) structural points where relevant;
- developing a conscious awareness of the differences between languages in terms of patterns, structural elements and contexts for use;
- reading to students in early grades every day; setting tasks that allow students work with peers / pairs and groups (in higher grades to read to each other and discuss what they read and wrote);
- using a variety of age appropriate materials (songs, poems, stories, games) in the home dialect and Standard English in which students can hear the difference between the two varieties; in higher grades engage students in more focused discussion of the contrast / difference between the samples in the varieties used.

The selection of material from across the curriculum would provide samples of language and subject matter that, with appropriate discussion and activities, help learners develop oral, written and critical thinking skills. The language focus would help to facilitate code switching in the appropriate situations and contexts. Comprehension strategies, phonemic / phonological awareness and grammar would be learned in context, via exposure and attention to the materials and discussion of the similarities and differences rather than as isolated mechanistic and rote learning of forms and functions. The syllabus should be developed around a balanced language approach that uses rich socio-cultural material and with learning activities that engage the learner as active participant.

#### Learner outcomes with a Language Awareness Approach

Initially, the utterance of learners as they engage in interactions about their experiences and social issues can provide a corpus of material, sentences and personal stories which can form the base for introducing contrasts with English. Activities based on these will allow learners to see how their ideas can be expressed in the two languages. These samples would provide concrete examples that are readily available through oral work in the classroom. Material from literature in the Caribbean (songs, stories) would also provide examples of the vernacular in use to facilitate contrastive approaches. Selection of material from across the curriculum would provide samples of language and subject matter that, with appropriate discussion and activities, would help learners develop oral, written and critical thinking skills. The language focus would help to facilitate code switching in the appropriate situations and contexts. Comprehension strategies, phonemic and phonological awareness and grammar would be learned in context, via exposure and attention to the materials and discussion of the similarities and differences rather than as isolated mechanistic and rote learning of forms and functions. The syllabus should be developed around a balanced language approach that uses rich socio-cultural material with learning activities that engage the learner as active participant.

The general principles of effective teaching advocated in the OECS Harmonised Curriculum for an integrated, holistic or whole language approach are still relevant. These principles emphasise using

learner–centred approaches; responding to individual learner needs (i.e. differentiated teaching); catering to the varying learning styles of learners; integrating across the curriculum; and promoting independent learning.

### Skills of the Teacher

The teacher would need to be a fluent / good speaker of the school language and have the ability to recognise the differences in the pronunciation and grammar of the home language to help learners build awareness of the similarities and differences between the two varieties. “Certainly as we move forward here in St. Kitts and Nevis, we want all students educated in the Federation to have an appreciation for its culture and by virtue its dialect. . . it raises the question, what are we teaching our children about who they and others are if and when they use dialect?” (St. Kitts and Nevis Language Policy Consultation Report April, 2018)

### Summary

The report on consultations conducted in April 2018, educators concluded the following:

*Based on the results of the consultations, recent research, and the information from the student focus group, the Ministry of Education St. Kitts Nevis is in support of the proposed language awareness approach in the development of a national language policy. In looking at the responses of the participants to the Language Awareness Approach and the Literacy in English Approach, we recognize that the concerns and the strategies for mitigating them are essentially the same. The major consideration then, rest primarily with our students and the kind of education system which we which to develop and educate them in. In looking at the information derived during the focus group session it is evident that there is a need to educate our children with a mind towards embracing themselves a Caribbean people.*

*It is expected that this approach will impact the curriculum enhancement activities embedded in the Early Learners Programme and the direction of the curriculum review and reform activities in the area of English Language Arts Instruction which we will undertake later this year.*

The language awareness approach which has been endorsed by the Ministry will serve to achieve the goals articulated in the draft paper and the more recent consultations. It will strengthen learners’ cultural identity, cognitive development and provide the optimal learning experiences for literacy development in English. It will facilitate students’ ability to read the first language and to use it in writing for creative purposes. It will also facilitate code switching by learners between the first / home language and the school language in the appropriate contexts and situations.

## Glossary of Terms

BICS	-	Basic interpersonal Skills closely related to social language development (coined by Cummins to distinguish it from CALP)
Bi-dialectal	-	Use of two distinct dialects which have the same lexical base but may have some structural differences in respect of morphology and syntax.
Bilingual	-	Having control / mastery of two native languages; (e.g. in Saint Lucia many people are bilingual in English and French Creole.)
CALP	-	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency – the language learners need for academic success. Cummins used this to distinguish it from BICS. It is described as “decontextualized”; it uses fewer contextual clues and one must depend on the language itself to derive meaning.
Communicative Competence	-	A speaker’s knowledge of the rules and conventions of a language.
Creole	-	A language that has developed from a pidgin. It is extended in grammar and vocabulary as it is acquired by speakers as a native / first language.
Creole-Influenced Vernacular	-	Refers to local languages spoken in communities as a native language and which have creole features.
Curriculum	-	“The means and materials with which students will interact for the purpose of achieving identified educational outcomes.” <sup>21</sup>
First language (L <sub>1</sub> )	-	The language which a person acquires first (usually in childhood); also referred to as the native or home language)
Home language	-	The first or native language of a speaker – may be the dominant language used in the home.
Native language	-	The first and often the dominant language of a speaker.
Literacy	-	<i>Functional literacy</i> is the ability to use reading, writing and numeracy skills for effective functioning and development of the individual and the community. Literacy is according to the UNESCO definition (‘A person is literate who can, with understanding, both read and write a short statement on his or her everyday life.’). <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Source: Edward S. Ebert II, Christine Ebert, Michael L. Bentley Copyright © 2017 Education.com

<sup>22</sup> Source: EFA Global Monitoring Support Team

- Pidgin - A “simplified form of speech” developed through between groups who do not have a language in common but need to communicate e.g. for conducting trade.
- Second language (L<sub>2</sub>) - The second language that a person acquires or learns. One can acquire a second language simultaneously with the first in childhood. One can learn a second language after acquiring the first.
- Subtractive bilingualism - The learning of a second language at the expense of the first. Often neither the first nor the second language is fully developed for academic purposes.
- Vernacular - A native language of a particular community – comprising forms that are used by the community. Usually not standardised.