

*St. Lucia
National
Language
Policy*

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Purpose

This policy document establishes an effective framework for the consideration and use of the native languages of the peoples of St. Lucia. It serves to protect and promote the use of local languages and the development of language skills needed to meet national education standards. The National Language Policy appreciates the multi-linguistic nature of our society and supports the participation of all citizens in the life in our nation, regardless of language.

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Introduction

The complexity of the language of Saint Lucia reflects a turbulent past in which the island exchanged hands between the French and the British no fewer than fourteen times. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller report that the British made the first attempts to colonise the island in 1605, but the Caribs who had been living on the island killed many of them and drove the others away. The French were more successful and groups trickled in from Martinique so that by 1745 “there were fairly well-established French settlements in the island and it had been divided for administrative and parochial purposes into quarters.”¹ During the periods of French occupation, a “black creole patois brought in this case mainly from Martinique, to a less extent from St. Vincent, Grenada and Guadeloupe, or taking shape locally on St. Lucian plantations was in use as the vernacular of many conservative, remote, small mountain settlements”. (p. 39). Between 1778 and 1802 there were further exchanges of ownership between the British and French until the British took control in 1803. It was not until 1814 that the Treaty of Paris formally ceded the island to the British. However, by this time, French and French Creole were used in Saint Lucia and the Creole was widely spoken by inhabitants of the island.²

St-Hilaire (2011) reports:

It was acceptable for the Saint Lucian upper and middle classes to speak Kwéyòl, (French Creole) but not at the expense of mastering French. The French considered Kwéyòl a sub-standard dialect of French without independent linguistic status. The black slaves were typically barred from the education and social contacts that would enable them to learn French. Thus, Kwéyòl remained their primary cultural property.³

The British imposed English as the official language and it was the primary language used for education, business and all official matters. However, Kwéyòl remained rooted in the culture of Saint Lucia and, as Carrington observed from the census information (1911; 1921 and 1946), Kwéyòl was spoken throughout Saint Lucia. He notes that “there is no area where it is not spoken.”⁴ Carrington would acknowledge the following in a postscript to his earlier study that “The number of monolingual speakers of St. Lucian (i.e. Kwéyòl) has diminished appreciably since the mid - 1960s; An English–lexicon creolized vernacular is emerging as a third strand in the interaction of languages in the island” (p.166).

The interaction of languages in contact inevitably initiates change in language use and over the decades Saint Lucia has shifted from a community in which the majority of the population were Kwéyòl speakers, to one which is a multilingual community in which there are now fewer exclusive speakers of Kwéyòl; more bilinguals (Kwéyòl and English); more speakers of English and a significant increase in the number of speakers who speak the English lexicon vernacular and who are acquiring this variety as a first language in some areas where Kwéyòl historically was dominant. Saint Lucia’s rich linguistic heritage contributes to the distinctive identity of the country and its people, yet there is awareness that an imbalance in the attention given to the languages has resulted in complications in the education system and contributed to the rate of illiteracy that has been recorded over decades. Carrington noted the following:

The French-lexicon Creole of St. Lucia is far from moribund. Hence, the movement towards formal application of the language in the development of the country cannot be construed as resuscitation of the language so much as a realistic recognition of its continuing importance to

¹ Le Page, R.B. and Tabouret-Keller, A. (1985). *Acts of Identity: Creole-based approaches to language and ethnicity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; pp.56-57.

² Alleyne, Mervyn. (1961) Language and Society in St. Lucia, *Caribbean Studies* I (1): 1- 10.

³ St-Hilaire, Aonghas (2011). *Kwéyòl in Postcolonial Saint Lucia: Globalization, language planning and national development*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins; (p.44).

⁴ Carrington, Lawrence, (1984). *St Lucian Creole: A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology and Morpho-Syntax*. Helmut Buske Verlag Hamburg; p.4.

the population. Regardless of the attitudes that people may have towards the language, there is no doubt that the society cannot function without it. The unacceptably high rate of functional illiteracy in the population would suggest that it is folly to persist with the current educational policy in which English is the sole medium through which literacy can be achieved.

Carrington explains in a footnote that in an earlier article he had estimated “based on the tabulation of the 1970 census for years of schooling in the population, 64% of the population aged 15 years and over could be considered as functionally illiterate” (p.176)

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The Context of Language in Saint Lucia

On the one hand, Saint Lucians take pride in the French Creole heritage and they celebrate French Creole culture elaborately in a month of activities every year. There are several areas of the country where Creole is the language spoken at home but it is also acknowledged that the English lexicon vernacular referred to as SLEV⁵ is widely spoken in rural as well as urban areas. English is the official language of Saint Lucia and the one used for education to the exclusion of French Creole and SLEV. Concern has been expressed about poor performance by students in the various examinations they are required to take from primary school level to the CSEC school leaving examination administered by CXC as well as reports that indicate an unacceptable rate of functional illiteracy among school leavers. This has led to recommendations for curricula at the primary level in particular to give serious consideration to the first or home language which children speak when they come to school and to utilise the first language as a building block for literacy and success in school work.

Mastery of English determines student academic success. Many children come to school speaking Kwéyòl but increasing numbers speak the English lexicon dialect (SLEV) as a first language. The grammar of the dialect is creole influenced and structurally different from English so that children who speak it as the home or first language need to learn English as a second language. The first language is the one children know well. It is the one they acquire as they grow up and learn to speak. The result of ignoring the first language that children speak has contributed to the learning difficulties they experience in school. Saint Lucian educators emphasised the following points as they considered the importance of the child's first or home language in education. "A learner's home (first) language

- represents his/her identity, the sum of his/ her linguistic and cultural experiences and background knowledge about the world;
- serves as a knowledge-based resource which allows him/her to make sense of his/her surroundings, learn and acquire new knowledge, and expand the range of his/her experience."

They argued that valuing a learner's home / first language

- leads to greater self-confidence, increased intrinsic motivation, a greater appreciation for his/her culture and increased chances of attaining higher levels of literacy."⁶

Attitudes towards Kwéyòl as a language for education and official purposes have become more positive over the years and it is now favourably regarded. Simmons-McDonald (2006b) reported that a sample of teachers expressed "more favourable attitudes towards the introduction of Kwéyòl in (education). This was an encouraging finding since hitherto, resistance to the use of Kwéyòl in education came primarily from teachers..."⁷ Saint Lucian educators argue forcefully for recognition of Kwéyòl as a national language of equal status with English. They claim that "In the French Creole-speaking world, Saint Lucia and Dominica remain the only territories where the language does not enjoy the status of official language... The ascension (sic) of Saint Lucian French Creole to official status is not only a language issue, but also an attempt to preserve a way of life, a culture, a unique world vision, a people's history and heritage" (p.2).

The existence of the three language varieties may complicate the teaching of literacy if teachers do not plan carefully. This policy statement provides direction for instruction that will allow for the benefits articulated by the Saint Lucian educators to be realised. The following is a summary

⁵ See Simmons-McDonald, H. (2006a). Vernacular Instruction and Bi-Literacy Development in French Creole Speakers. In Simmons-McDonald, H. and Robertson, I. (Eds.) *Exploring the Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages*. Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press; 118-147.

⁶ Consultations on a language policy for Saint Lucia. P. 3 (ND).

⁷ Simmons-McDonald, H. (2006 b). Attitudes of Teachers to St. Lucian Language Varieties. *Caribbean Journal of Education* 28 (1): 51-84).

list of the cognitive and social benefits they presented for bilingualism and multilingualism which is relevant in the Saint Lucian context. Bilinguals and Multilinguals

- are better able to acquire additional languages... because of their ability to make connections with other languages in their repertoire;
- generally develop greater ... appreciation for and understanding of their own language and accompanying culture as well as that of the other languages they speak;
- have greater opportunities of getting a job, especially in their chosen field.⁸

Descriptions of the grammar of English and French Creole of the Antillean variety used in Saint Lucia exist as well as materials that can be used to raise the awareness of learners to critical differences between SLEV and English. In many instances, the English vernacular is a calqued version of Kwéyòl where the grammar of Kwéyòl is retained with English usage. The following examples illustrate.

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------|
| i. | bwapen-an ja bouwi, mwen ka pwan tjò andan'y
do bredfruit kuk oredii, ai teeking piis in it
'The breadfruit is cooked, I am taking a piece of it.' | (Kwéyòl)
(SLEV)
(English) |
| ii. | ou ni pli had pou lave ankò?
yuu hav moh klooz tuu waash ogen?
'[Do] you still have more clothes to wash?' | (Kwéyòl)
(SLEV)
(English) |
| iii. | pwété mwen penng ou
bohroo mii yoh koom
'Lend me your comb.' | (Kwéyòl)
(SLEV)
(English) |
| iv. | I pa an vil, I ka twavay an haden
hii naat in toun, hii woking in gaadn
'He is not in town, he is working in (the) garden' | (Kwéyòl)
(SLEV)
(English) |
| v. | Ki moun ki pwan lajan nonm-lan?
huu teek do man monii?
'Who took the man's money?' | (Kwéyòl)
(SLEV)
(English) |

A preliminary draft paper, *Literacy Policy and Plan* prepared by St. Lucia's Ministry of Education in the late 1990s presents a series of strategic policies, including broad goals and objectives for the development of literacy in Saint Lucia. The overarching goal is stated in the plan as implementing the *OECS Harmonised Curriculum for Language Arts*. Other strategic objectives include:

- use of the literacy hour / block for literacy;
- broadening the curriculum to include technical and vocational areas across schools and communities;
- developing a preschool curriculum that focuses on emergent literacy and training teachers and parents;
- adapting an approach to reading based on the CCETT "Texas Quilt" (comprehension, fluency, phonemic awareness, phonics and vocabulary);
- developing an awareness of remedial programmes to raise the literacy levels of children with special needs (p.4).

⁸ Consultation Notes, pp. 4-5.

⁹ Examples from Garrett, Paul. (2006) An "English Creole" that Isn't" In Aceto and Williams (Eds.) *Contact Englishes of the Eastern Caribbean*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. Pp. 155-210.

The document sets out other goals under the headings of materials production (with a set of sixteen objectives); monitoring and evaluation (five objectives); training (five objectives); cultivating a culture of participation and establishing a system to sustain the literacy initiative. This paper advocates differentiated teaching to cater to the needs of students with varying abilities, but it does not offer methodologies on the approaches that may be used.

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Achieving Proficiency in School Language

The existence of three language varieties in Saint Lucia may present teachers in certain communities with a challenge if they have to contend with heterogeneous classrooms in which some children speak French Creole, others the Saint Lucian English Lexicon Vernacular (SLEV) and others St. Lucian Standard English. In 1999 the Ministry of Education prepared a concept paper to recommend the formation of a commission to guide language policy and planning in Saint Lucia.¹⁰ The concept paper provides a comprehensive plan for language education, one that embraces both Saint Lucian French Creole / Kwéyòl and English. The paper, however, provides no guidance with respect to how instruction might respond to the English lexicon vernacular. The paper presents short and long term proposals for language education as follows:

- access for all St. Lucian children to the two main languages – English and French Creole;
- making language education needs-specific;
- functional literacy and communicative competence for all St. Lucians in both English and French Creole (this would depend on the level of linguistic development of either language);
- literacy and written competence in at least one foreign language – French, Spanish etc.;
- reduction and eventual elimination of illiteracy among St. Lucians;
- bilingualism among all infant and Primary school teachers in the education system;
- promotion of French Creole in the education system, initially as a language of instruction, and then as a target language;
- designing suitable language teaching methods which cater for learners with different linguistic backgrounds and language competencies. (p.13).

The paper also presents clauses that define a **language education policy for St. Lucia**.¹¹ These are as follows:

- **St. Lucian Standard English** is one of the main **languages of instruction** at all levels of the education system;
- **St. Lucian Standard English** is the **target language** of Infant and Primary Schools. It is the language to be taught in **English Language / Language Arts** classes;
- **St. Lucian Standard English** is to be taught as a second language to French Creole L₁ students, and as a first language, or a first or second dialect for English L₁ students;
- **St. Lucian French Creole** is one of the **languages of literacy** for Adult learners in the Adult Literacy / Education Programme;
- **St. Lucian French Creole** is the language for instruction and communication in some cultural components of the Primary school syllabus, i.e. instruction in St. Lucian folk songs, music, stories, games, traditions, history, festivals, drama, food, etc.;
- **St. Lucian French Creole** is one of the **second languages** taught at Senior Primary, Secondary and Tertiary institutions;
- **French** and **Spanish** are the main foreign languages to be taught in schools.

These principles provide a framework for the inclusion of both languages from early primary to tertiary levels. They are intended to promote some level of equality between both languages and pave the way for providing equal opportunities for achievement for speakers of Kwéyòl whose needs have not been directly addressed in the education system. However, the requirement for

¹⁰ *Concept Paper on Language Use, Language Policy and Language Planning in St. Lucia and Recommendations for the Formation of a Commission for the Development of the French Creole Language.* Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports, July 1999.

¹¹ Bold in the original document.

French Creole to be used only in respect of “some cultural components of the syllabus” will undoubtedly limit the scope for and the rate of development of literacy in that language which is needed to build the learner’s conceptual development and form the foundation for literacy in the school language. Further, it would not result in bilingualism which educators consider an essential outcome of the education process. The use of Kwéyòl with English as languages of instruction in the education system must have as positive learning outcomes, balanced bilingualism and bi-literacy in both languages. The goals articulated by Saint Lucian educators strongly support this. They advocate the following with regard to a language education policy for Saint Lucia:

- i. English and French Creole are official languages; ascribed equal status;
- ii. every child should be bi-literate (i.e. functionally literate and communicatively competent) in French Creole and Standard English by the end of their secondary education;
- iii. English and French Creole are to be used as the media of instruction based on the language needs of learners;
- iv. every child should be bilingual in Standard English and French Creole by the end of their primary education
- v. every child should be communicatively competent in at least one foreign language (Spanish or French or any other) by the end of their secondary education.¹²

All but the last of these strategic goals speak directly to the need for a policy that will actively include the first language of children who speak French Creole. The approach advocated by the educators is supported in current research and has resulted in successful bilingual learning outcomes elsewhere, for example, in the Seychelles where French Creole and English are both used as languages of instruction.

This policy document recommends the use of English and French Creole as languages of instruction in primary schools and the strategic use of the vernacular for purposes of raising awareness of differences between English and SLEV to promote proficiency in language learning and literacy.

Guidelines for approaches that will facilitate this objective are presented subsequently.

¹² Consultations on language policy. P.6. (ND).

Summary of Research Findings on Literacy and First/ Home / Native Language

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. This has been true in Saint Lucia where monolingualism and a monoliterate approach (ignoring the home language in the teaching of Language Arts) has been the dominant practice. It is likely that this approach has been a factor in the high functional illiteracy rate of school leavers, reported to be as high as 64% in 1981.¹³

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 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 (L₂) and did not develop literacy in the home language either. Simmons-McDonald (2014, 126) argued that in the case of Saint Lucia, when children who speak French Creole enter school, they are "immediately exposed to activities that are designed to develop literacy in English. They are introduced to the names and symbols of the English alphabet, and they are (required) to repeat them in an effort to learn them. The problem is that the children have difficulty following proceedings ... because they lack basic communication skills in English." She reported that the instructional activities "are not designed to foster acquisition of English... The focus is primarily on teaching literacy in English and the acquisition of English is a by-product of this." She concluded it was not surprising children in an earlier study she had conducted had only acquired oral communication skills in SLEV after two years of instruction in school. They had not progressed with literacy in English, and the French Creole with which they had come to school was ignored. The result was a subtractive bilingual situation in which the desired learning outcomes of literacy in English were not achieved and the children did not learn how to build a conceptual foundation with the French Creole which they knew well.

Cummins (1994)¹⁴ reported that several studies he had reviewed showed that "the better developed children's L1 conceptual foundation, the more likely they are to develop similarly high levels of conceptual abilities in their L2" (P.38). He also discovered that "positive results of programmes that continue to promote literacy in L1 throughout elementary school can be attributed to the combined effects of reinforcing students' cultural identity and their conceptual growth" (p.39). He further noted that 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. Bialystok (1991) reported that in some bilingual contexts the acquisition of two or more languages had positive effects on the metalinguistic development of the learner.¹⁵ Swain and Lapkin (1991) pointed out that some reports indicated that comparisons of children who had acquired literacy in two languages indicated better performance by these children when they attempted to learn a third language than by monolingual or bilingual children who had not acquired literacy in their home language (cited in Simmons-McDonald, 2014).¹⁶

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.

¹³ Carrington, Lawrence, (1984). *St. Lucian Creole: A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology and Morpho-Syntax*. Helmut Buske Verlag Hamburg. Carrington cited an earlier study (1981) in which he estimated this figure "based on the tabulation of the 1970 census for years of schooling in the population." (p. 176).

¹⁴ Cummins, J. 1994. Knowledge, Power and Identity in Teaching English as a Second Language. In *Educating Second Language Children*. F. Genesee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁵ Bialystok, Ellen, ed. 1991. *Language Processing in Bilingual Children*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶ Simmons-McDonald, Hazel 2014. Instructional Models for a Creole-Influenced Vernacular Context: The Case of St. Lucia. In *Education Issues in Creole and Creole-Influenced Vernacular Contexts*. Robertson, I. & Simmons-McDonald, H. (eds.) Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.

- 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.*¹⁷
- ii. *Many studies have shown that cognitive and academic development in L₁, has a strong, positive effect on L₂ development for academic purposes... L₁ Literacy is considered a crucial base for L₂ literacy development. Many research studies have found that a wide variety of skills and learning strategies that are developed in L₁ reading and writing can have positive transfer to L₂ reading and writing.*¹⁸
- 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...*¹⁹

These statements are pertinent for Saint Lucia where the languages Kwéyòl and English have a different lexical base. The benefits to the learners of developing literacy in the home language are clear. 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 contributes to confidence building and a strong cultural identity. The existence of SLEV and its acquisition as a first language by children also requires that approaches must be used to help learners acquire basic interpersonal communication skills in English and progress to learning literacy in that language also. The English used in text books and for school purposes, which is referred to as “academic language”, is described as being “more abstract and complex, and thus more challenging for students.” Ovando and Collier claim that it takes more years to master academic than social language (p.185). Cummins²⁰ 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.²¹ 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). In order to achieve the goal of language proficiency and literacy development, attention must be given from the early grades to the approaches that will help learners build on their conceptual development and extend their knowledge and abilities to achieve the language learning goals that are desirable.

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 students to master cognitive academic language in English when they do not have basic interpersonal communication skills in that language. Instruction therefore has to be tailored to address the needs of (i) French Creole (Kwéyòl) speakers; (ii) English speakers and (iii) English Lexicon Vernacular (SLEV) speakers. In the case of the speakers of SLEV (as the first / home language), nurturing the child’s language through an awareness approach can contribute to confidence building and a strong cultural identity. In this case, instruction has to be tailored so that the learner becomes aware of the differences between the first language and English as a first step

¹⁷ Ovando, Carlos and Virginia Collier (1998) *Bilingual and ESL Classrooms*. Boston: McGraw Hill. P.88.

¹⁸ Ovando & Collier. P.94.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ Cummins, J. 1979. Cognitive / academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimal age question, and some other matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism* 19, pp. 197-205.

²¹ 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.

towards developing literacy and CALP in English. In the case of speakers of Kwéyòl as the home language, a bilingual approach which builds literacy in Kwéyòl will provide a strong foundation for literacy in English also. In the case of both groups instruction must promote the development of BICS in the second language as a stepping stone to literacy development in that language. As a general guideline, Ovando and Collier recommend as good teaching, the incorporation of “social and academic” language development into every lesson. Activating learners’ background knowledge and prior experience might begin with social language, including many contextual supports through visuals, maps, charts, manipulatives, music and pantomiming...” (p.93).

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Approaches in Creole Influenced Vernacular Contexts

In situations in which the learner's home language is different from the school language, acknowledging the learner's home language helps to build confidence and a healthy attitude towards language learning.

Referring specifically to the Caribbean context, Craig (1999) stresses the importance of awareness programmes for Creole Influenced Vernacular (CIV) speakers in the school context. He advocates approaches for inclusion of the vernacular, 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. Cloud²², for example, notes that "if a learner's present knowledge of the native (home / first) 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."²³ 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

²² Cloud, Nancy. 1994. Special Education Needs of Second Language Students. In F. Genesee (Ed.) *Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²³ Cummins, J. In F. Genesee (Ed.); 1994, p.40.

language. 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 dialect / 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)²⁴ 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 1989²⁵ 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, such as literature that presents good examples of the vernacular to allow for making contrasts with English. 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.

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ Taylor, H.U. (1989) *Standard English, Black English and bidialectalism*. New York: Peter Lang.

Options and Models

Craig (1991) presents six options which have been used in vernacular contexts. He recommends as most suitable options which take into consideration the first or home language of the child. The following Table is an adaptation of Craig's typology and five options are indicated. In the case of Saint Lucia, since a classroom may be heterogeneous and comprise learners with three different languages as their first or home language adaptation is necessary.

	Type	Situation / Context	Characteristics
1	Language awareness	Bi-Dialectal – English and vernacular	Use of both languages to raise awareness of contrasts
2	Literacy in English only	Bi-Dialectal	Use of the vernacular only to help learner understand initially. All other instruction in English.
3	Home Language initially	Bilingual - English and (French) Creole	Use of the creole initially on entry to help learners orient to the school and class environment. Instruction thereafter in English
4	Home language for Aural / Oral purposes	Bilingual -- English and (French) Creole	Use of Creole for aural / oral purposes in early primary grades.
5	Literacy in two languages	Bilingual – English and (French) Creole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Begin literacy in Creole and continue through primary level ii. Introduction to BICS in English and proceed to literacy in English iii. Introduce study of a third language in Grade 5 or 6 and continue in secondary iv. Continue study of the home language as a subject in secondary school

Types 2, 3 and 4 give only cursory attention to the learner's home language, to help them integrate into the classroom. In (2) the learners' home language may be introduced in a discretionary way to foster understanding. This may be done in an ad hoc way and the learners may not be actively engaged in activities that are intended to help them use the home language in a constructive way. This type is not recommended if the objective is to build the learner's conceptual knowledge in the first language and achieve literacy in English. The ad hoc nature of this type would not provide the continued language interaction that is necessary to develop literacy in the home language nor would it lead to the growth of cognitive flexibility which is a desirable outcome in second language learning situations.

Craig describes Type 3 as 'partial bilingualism' in which aural-oral fluency and literacy are developed in the home language only in relation to certain types of subject matter that have to do with the immediate society and culture. Aural-oral fluency and literacy in the school language are developed for a wider range of purposes. He views this as a more equitable approach since some skills would be developed in French Creole but those would be restricted to the immediate society and culture and opportunities for developing a wider range of academic materials in French Creole would not follow naturally from this model. This is a limitation evident in the 1999 Planning document of the Ministry which states: "**St. Lucian French Creole** is the language for instruction and communication in some cultural components of the Primary school syllabus, i.e. instruction in St. Lucian folk songs, music, stories, games, traditions, history,

festivals, drama, food, etc.” The recent objectives articulated by the Saint Lucian educators reject this proposal as they emphasise the following three of five goals promote bilingual education in the Saint Lucian context (rf. p.5 this document).

- i. every child should be bi-literate (i.e. functionally literate and communicatively competent) in French Creole and Standard English by the end of their secondary education;
- ii. English and French Creole are to be used as the media of instruction based on the language needs of learners;
- iii. every child should be bilingual in Standard English and French Creole by the end of their primary education

With these goals in mind, the model that would be most appropriate to achieve this would be Type 5 with Type 1 integrated into the fabric of instruction to raise learner awareness of the differences between the English lexicon vernacular (SLEV) and English and establish the foundation for literacy in English.

FINAL DRAFT

The Policy Model

The policy for Saint Lucia must give consideration to three groups of learners:

1. speakers of French Creole as a first language;
2. speakers of English lexicon vernacular as a first language;
3. speakers of English as a first language.

The objectives of the language programme as articulated by Saint Lucian educators must ensure the following:

1. that all learners must be communicatively competent and functionally literate in French Creole and Standard English by the end of their secondary education;
2. all learners should be bilingual in French Creole and English by the end of their primary education;
3. every learner should be communicatively competent in at least one foreign language by the end of secondary education.

In order to achieve these objectives a bilingual and bi-literate programme will be required from the very early grades. Consideration must be given to (a) good utilization of time; (b) implementation of a programme that will promote bilingualism and bi-literacy; (c) maximizing of resources to achieve the best results. In heterogeneous classroom situations adequate allocation of time and careful planning and management of instructional materials are factors that will directly influence outcomes. In a study in which a bilingual approach was used for French Creole speakers, Simmons-McDonald found that careful allocation of time to ensure attention to tasks in the respective language and a rich instructional programme in English and French Creole were the determining factors that resulted in positive bi-literacy at the end of the study.²⁶

Assuming a five hour school day, the following is a possible model for achieving the objectives set out above in the early grades of primary.

- I. A time block of 1½ - 2 hours for instruction in French Creole for all learners.
- II. A time block of 1½ - 2 hours for instruction in English for all learners.
- III. Language awareness activities embedded in the instruction provided at II through the rich materials, activities and interactions introduced in this period.
- IV. One hour of enrichment activities for groups.
- V. As learners progress through the grades they study content from across the curriculum in both languages as determined by the teaching staff.
- VI. Study of French Creole as a subject continues through secondary school.
- VII. Introduction to a third language (French or Spanish) as determined by the school in Grade 6.

The emphasis initially is to help learners develop BICS in the second language as a springboard for emergent literacy and more focused literacy learning. Early on, prominence is given to the communicative and emergent literacy skills.

A holistic and integrated approach to language should be adopted in both languages and the materials and activities used in both should be interesting enough to engage the learners in peer / pair and group work across the domains. Such an approach would promote bilingualism in both French Creole and English and speakers of SLEV would also learn both languages. The model promotes additive bilingualism and the learner is likely to develop healthy attitudes towards language in general and particular appreciation for the home and school language. The potential for the production of creative expression in the home language finds a foundation in a model of this type. With this approach the teacher should be a good speaker of both the home and school language and should also be familiar with strategies for literacy instruction.

²⁶ Simmons-McDonald, H. 2006. Vernacular instruction and bi-literacy development in French Creole Speakers. In *Exploring the Boundaries of Caribbean Creole Languages*. Simmons-McDonald and I. Robertson (Eds.). UWI. Press. Pp.118 -146.

Some Instructional Guidelines

Materials and activities in both languages would need to be carefully chosen and particular consideration given to the following.

- Integrated approach to language development with materials that are culturally relevant, appropriate, enjoyable and interesting.
- Initiate acquisition of the school language – i.e . BICS - through listening and speaking activities that involve read-alouds, sing- alongs, viewing and peer interaction that encourages conversation in the languages in question.
- In the early grades children are read to every day; they work with peers and in groups. In higher grades they read to each other and discuss what they read, write and view.
- Focus on emergent literacy and literacy in the first language while fostering acquisition of communicative competence in the second, moving gradually to literacy in the second.
- Select materials from across the curriculum to introduce learners to subject matter that they need to know and which broadens their experience with the environment and the world.
- For French Creole speakers continue literacy activities in the first language to Grade 6 and for all learners the language can continue to be studied as a subject in higher grades.

Learners who speak the English lexicon vernacular as the first language will benefit from contrastive exercises during the English lessons as this provides a good context for acquisition of communicative competence in interactions with peers. Some guidelines may include the following.

- A variety of age appropriate materials – songs, poems, stories, rhymes, games – in the school language and with some samples in the vernacular.
- In higher grades engage learners in more focused discussion of the contrasts between samples of the languages – their own utterances can provide a basis for initiating comparisons as well.
- In higher grades focus on explicitly building awareness of contrasts, e.g. pronunciation of words to structural elements.
- Develop a conscious awareness of the differences between the languages in terms of patterns, structural elements and contexts for appropriate use.

In all cases, the syllabus should be developed around a balanced language approach that uses rich socio-cultural material and with learning activities that engage learners as active participants. In this model, learners would experience the benefit of literacy in two languages and have three available for communicative purposes also.

Implications for implementation will involve (a) the availability of suitable materials; (b) teacher competence with the languages in question and (c) teacher familiarity with teaching strategies for integrated and holistic approaches.

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.” ²⁷
First language (L₁)	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.’). ²⁸
Pidgin	A “simplified form of speech” developed through between who do not have a language in common but need to communicate e.g. for conducting trade.
Second language (L₂)	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.

²⁷ Source: Edward S. Ebert II, Christine Ebert, Michael L. Bentley Copyright © 2017 Education.com

²⁸ Source: EFA Global Monitoring Support Team