



Research Institute

Yeled V'Yalda Dual Language Policy

Developed by

Isabelle Barrière, PhD

Director of Policy for Research & Education

Co-Director YVY Research Institute

Assistant Professor,

Speech Science, Brooklyn College, City University of New York

Research Associate

Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society,

Department of Linguistics, City University of New York

Approved by Early Head Start and Head Start Directors
& Policy Council

August 1st, 2009

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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to:

Garey V. Ellis, MD, Director of Health Initiatives and Family/Community Partnerships and Co-Director of YVY Research Institute for facilitating YVY projects including the development and implementation of this policy.

All the YVY professionals and parents who have contributed to the Research Projects conducted by YVY Research Institute since 2006 and have thereby helped establish the foundation for this policy and for formally and informally providing feedback at various stages of the development of the policy.

Prof. Mary Debey, PhD /Chair of Early Childhood Education/Brooklyn College & *Prof. Gita Martohardjono, PhD*/ Chair of Linguistics Department and Vice-Director of the Research Institute of the Study of Language in Urban Society/CUNY Graduate Center for their constant support of the projects conducted by YVY Research Institute and for their input at different stages of development of this policy.

Shanika Phillips and Ludmila Pukhovich, Undergraduate Students in Speech Science, Brooklyn College/CUNY and Research Intern at YVY Research Institute for her help in compiling the bibliography.

The various institutions that have provided logistic and financial support that has enabled the conduct of the research projects and dissemination initiatives that underpin this policy including:

In New York/Higher Education Institutions: Brooklyn College/ CUNY, the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society/ CUNY Graduate Center, Hunter College/CUNY, the University of Columbia, Touro College.

In New York/Funding: the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society/ CUNY Graduate Center, CUNY Research Foundation

In the United States/Higher Education Institutions : Johns Hopkins University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California Los Angeles.

In the United States/Funding: the National Institute of Health and the National Science Foundation.

Abroad/Higher Education Institutions : the University of Montreal, Hospital Ste Justine/Montreal, Bar Ilan University/Israel, Tel Aviv University/Israel, CNRS-University Paris 5, Biomedical Center Saints-Pères/Paris, France, University Stendhal/Grenoble, France, Birkbeck College, University of London/United Kingdom.

Abroad/ Funding: the Institute for Advanced Studies/University of Jerusalem, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Dual Language Policy

I. Introduction

“Head Start has had a long tradition of sensitively working with families of diverse cultures and languages. The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act 2007 plainly states that programs must have a plan to meet the needs of children and families with Limited English Proficiency. The Head Start Program Performance Standards are clear that programs are expected to actively find ways to support and expand the home language of the child and stresses that programs of excellence strive to assist children’s progress toward acquiring English. These standards further emphasize the importance of fully integrating parents into virtually every element of the Head start experience, being respectful of their language and culture.” (extract from *Framework for Creating and Strengthening Language Policies and Procedures in Head Start Programs- 09/08 Draft by AED/TAC-12 2008 Revisions to be made upon forthcoming HS Regulations based on the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007*)

The mission of YVY is to provide boys and girls from low-income families with a professional preschool education by focusing on the whole child and the family. YVY seeks to be a single source of education, child care and developmental services as well as health and nutritional guidance in an environment that is *culturally sensitive and honors each family’s distinctive heritage*. YVY serves a majority of children (between 60 and 70%) whose home language is not English and is committed to meeting the needs of these children and their family. In order to do so in 2006 YVY established a department that focuses on these needs- YVY Research Institute- that works in close collaboration with all the other departments of YVY. YVY recognizes that it must have *“plans to meet the needs of Limited English proficient children and their families, including procedures to identify such children, plans to provide trained personnel, and plans to provide services to assist the children in making progress towards the acquisition of the English language.”* (Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act 2007 641 (d) (K))

II. Opening Statement

The aim of YVY Dual Language policy is to:

- a) identify and respond to the needs of Dual Language Learners with respect to assessment, best teaching and clinical practice and parenting behavior;
- b) create a learning environment that promotes the successful acquisition of skills that determine subsequent school success for all children including Dual Language Learners;
- c) disseminate research-based information that positively contributes to children’s acquisition of English and of their Home Language to parents, policy makers and service providers (at and outside of YVY) and to institutions that train education and health professionals and researchers.

III. Parent partnership

YVY is committed to:

a) communicating with the parents in a language of their choice by providing interpreters in the majority of the languages used by YVY families:

1. in classes that have a majority of children coming from the same language background at least one education professional (the teacher or the assistant teacher) speaks fluently the child's language (e.g Williamsburg and Borough Park Yiddish-speaking sites and Staten Island Spanish-speaking sites) and is therefore able to communicate with the children's parents in their home-language;

2.a in sites in which a range of languages are spoken and no language clearly dominates a classroom, most of the languages spoken by the children are spoken by at least one education professional, e.g at Farragut Road/Canarsie site Arabic, Farsi/Persian, Hebrew and Spanish are spoken by two education professionals

2.b YVY serves a very large population of children (more than 2,000 including 70% whose Home Language is not English) and does not discriminate children's enrolment on the basis of linguistic background. As a consequence, the linguistic backgrounds of a few families at various sites may a) change from year to year and b) represent a very small and temporary minority at this site. In this context, it is not always possible for YVY to hire and/or train professionals so that they are and/or become fluent in the child's home language. In this case, YVY involves family and community members when necessary in order to meet the family's needs and to the extent that it is possible honors the family cultural and linguistic heritage through appropriate teaching; practice and access to culturally and linguistically appropriate resources;

3. Speech and Language pathologists who serve Dual Language Learners have bilingual certifications in the relevant/appropriate language;

4. Parents' workshops that respond to specific needs such as the prevention of obesity, the improvement of parenting behavior (including the prevention of abuse) and the increases understanding of children's cognitive and language development involve the use of education staff who speak the preferred language of the parents and/or the distribution of material in the parent's preferred language.

5. Each site's lending library has books in the Home Languages of the children (when those languages are written) to support/foster best home literacy practices.

b) sharing with parents research-based evidence that demonstrates the importance of parental support in the home language as the child's exposure to English increases:

YVY Research Institute is directed by I. Barriere, PhD whose areas of expertise lies in the acquisition of different languages by monolingual children and Dual Language Learners and whose work is published in the peer-reviewed literature who punctually delivers workshops to parents as a response to needs identified by YVY education professionals and clinicians.

c) helping parents improve their literacy in their home language, their proficiency in English and their access to college/higher education: YVY will continue to provide classes and workshops that meet the needs of parents and contribute to improving the child's language input that is tied to parental literacy and education.

d) seeking the feedback of parents in the improvement, development and use of culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments of Dual Language Learners: YVY Research Institute will continue to seek the feedback of parents at the Policy Council and other venues regarding the improvement, development and use of assessments adapted to Dual Language Learners.

e) keeping parents informed of the feedback of program reviewers and research committees on the activities of YVY Research Institute including the implementation of the Dual Language Policy through the publication of YVY Newsletters and relevant announcements at the Policy Council. .

IV. Commitment to language-rich environments

Curriculum

The core curriculum implemented in YVY EHS and HS program is the *Creative Curriculum* and the home-based EHS program uses *Partners for a Healthy Baby and Learning Games*. The *Creative Curriculum* that fosters a language-rich environment has been used by YVY teachers and assistant teachers for more than ten years and has been supplemented by materials created by education professionals that are adapted to the language and cultural background of each particular class and site.

Setting for Infants and Toddlers

Home-based programs

Home visitors in the home-based programs are assigned their caseload so that their linguistic and cultural backgrounds match those of the families they serve. The value of fostering an environment that promotes the acquisition of both English and the home-language is emphasized by the family workers who explain and model language and communication behaviors in the Home-Language and English that positively contribute to the child’s socio-emotional, language and cognitive development. In the home-based EHS programs the amount of use of the Home-Language and English reflect that of the family.

Center-based programs

Education professionals in the center-based programs are assigned classes so that their linguistic and cultural backgrounds match those of the children they serve and children are grouped in classes according to their competence in English and in their Home-Language to maximize their opportunity to develop both languages.

In classes that have a majority of children coming from the same language background at least one education professional (the teacher or the assistant teacher) speaks fluently the child’s language (e.g Williamsburg and Borough Park Yiddish-speaking sites and Staten Island Spanish-speaking sites). If children do not understand English at the beginning of the school year (i.e. if they have been solely or mainly exposed to their Home Language), during the fall the education professionals use the Home Language and slowly introduce English once routines have been established and are understood by the children. English is used as both a subject of instruction (during tasks that promote sub-skills that determine literacy such as phonological awareness tasks

and during literacy activities) as well as medium/mean of communication. The Home-Language is used as a medium/mean of communication in all classes and as a subject of instruction, in some classes that reflects the parents cultural expectations with respect to the use of the Home Language and the education professionals attitude towards children's home language. The aims of the Dual Language Policy are that by the spring a) English be used at least 50% of the time in the EHS program and b) the Home Language be used between 20% and 50% of the time.

In classes in which no single Home-language other than English dominates a classroom, most of the languages spoken by the children are spoken by at least one education professional at the site (e.g at Farragut Road/Canarsie site Arabic, Farsi/Persian, Hebrew and Spanish are spoken by two education professionals; in Borough Park Hebrew is spoken by a few Education professionals). The education professionals introduce the children to English and scaffold this introduction by using a few phrases in the child's Home Language that they learn from the parents until routines are well established. They emphasize the positive value of the child's Home Language by teaching all the children in the class a few words of in child's Home Language. In these classes the Home-Language is not used more than 10% of the time and English is used 90% of the time.

All EHS (home-based and center-based) programs

All the YVY EHS education professionals have been involved in the development and/or distribution of questionnaires that collect information on the child's demographic and linguistic contexts and on the child's use of English and their Home-Language (i.e. MacArthur Communicative Development Inventories in languages in which they exist including Hebrew, Russian, Spanish, Yiddish) that parents complete. Parents systematically complete these questionnaires and sometimes spontaneously comment in writing and/or orally that completing these make them reflect on their language use at home and the language development of their children. The results of the analyses of these questionnaires will continue to be communicated at different venues to YVY EHS professionals and parents and enhance YVY's understanding of the needs of its populations including those that pertain to factors that impact Dual Language Learning.

Settings for Preschoolers- HS programs

In classes that have a majority of children coming from the same language background at least one education professional (the teacher or the assistant teacher) speaks fluently the child's language (e.g Williamsburg and Borough Park Yiddish-speaking sites and Staten Island Spanish-speaking sites) and use the Home Language as a medium of instruction and sometimes as a subject of instruction. In the preschool programs, the assessments of the children are conducted

- in Spanish for Dominant Spanish-speaking children since the ASQ is available in Spanish;
- in Yiddish for Dominant Yiddish-speaking children (thanks to the adaptation of the language sections of the Brigance to Yiddish by YVY Research Institute);
- In English for children whose Home-Language is not the dominant language;

- In the child's Home Language- other than Spanish and Yiddish- if the child is unable to complete them in English, with the help of a parent.

Teachers' observations on children's progress in socio-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development are regularly analyzed by YVY Research Institute and the differences and similarities of the profiles of Dual Language Learners that result from these analyses will continue to be regularly shared with the Education Professionals so that children's pedagogical needs are better understood. The aims of the Dual Language Policy are that:

- a) By the spring English be used at least 50% of the time in the HS program in the three year old classroom and the Dominant Home-Language be used between 10% and 50% of the time;
- b) English be used at least 50% of the time in both the spring and summer in the four year old classes the Dominant Home-Language be used between 10% and 50% of the time;

Policy Implementation

The aim of the Dual Language Policy is to continue a) to improve the assessment and monitoring of Dual Language Learners and b) to increase parents and education professionals' awareness of the benefits of the use of both English and the Home-Language as subjects and mediums of instructions. This will be achieved by on-going

1. monitoring of the percentage of use of the Home Language and the quality of the child's learning environment and interactions with teachers in the Home-Language that will be conducted during the regular visit of the classes by the Site Education Directors and appropriate observation forms adapted by YVY Research Institute will be used;
2. professional development on Dual Language Learning by top regional, national and international researchers and educators in the field- an effort that has been initiated by YVY Research Institute since January 2007- as well by the directors of YVY Research Institute.
3. parents' workshops by YVY Research Institute and other institutions emphasizing the value of different aspects of Dual Language Learning and the importance of Literacy-related activities;
4. design, norming and administration of assessments adapted to the cultures and the languages of YVY populations;
5. analyses of the individual data collected on children's progression (that takes into account Dual Language Learning) and the dissemination of the results to YVY education professionals.

V. Human resources implications

YVY hires education professionals that reflect both culturally and linguistically the population it serves at each site and like the children enrolled in the programs the demographics of each neighborhood.

YVY is characterized by:

- The qualifications of the education professionals: most teachers have Masters Degrees and all Assistant Teachers have high school diplomas (and a few of them have CDAs).

- And the very high retention of education professionals which contributes to the positive cumulative effects of the professional development.

In order to implement the Dual Language Policy, YVY Research Institute will continue to:

- a) organize events that disseminate the Dual Language Policy, including professional development workshops by outside speakers;
- b) share and discuss with education professionals (site directors, teachers and family workers) the results that emerge from the detailed analyses of the progression of Dual Language Learners;
- c) respond to the demands expressed by the education professionals regarding the needs of improved assessments adapted to the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Dual Language Learners.

VI. Commitment to culture

In addition to hiring staff that reflects the cultures of the families YVY serves,

- YVY sites regularly organize events that celebrate the home cultures (including music, dance, puppetry performances, cooking events etc) of the children's families;
- The lending libraries at each YVY site have books that reflect the children's cultures;
- The assessments developed and/or adapted by YVY Research reflect the Home cultures of the children.

VII. Program Guidance

The diversity of YVY Dual Language Learners

Four of the key characteristics of YVY are a) the exceptionally high number of children its serves in its EHS and HS programs- more than 2,000 children, b) the exceptionally high proportion (almost 70%) of children whose Home-Language is not English, c) the exceptionally broad range of ethnic, cultural and linguistic communities that it serves: across YVY population between 10 and 15 languages other than English are used in YVY children's homes and d) the high proportion of children with Individualized Education Plans- about 30% of children in the EHS and HS programs.

Dual Language Learners at YVY include children who have traditionally been distinguished in the research literature and who have different linguistic and pedagogical needs:

1st generation immigrants

First generation immigrants are children of parents who were not born in the US and typically do not speak English. At YVY this is the typical profile of the Spanish-speaking children served at Staten Island and of other children whose first language is Russian, Haitian Creole, Hebrew etc. According to surveys conducted by YVY Research Institutes, these children tend to be exclusively exposed to their Home-Language until they enter YVY EHS or HS programs (Barriere et al, 2006). The different linguistic groups also vary with respect to three other dimensions: a) the level of education of the parents in their country of origins, b) their level of literacy in

their Home-Language (that is tied to at least two factors: the educational level and/or whether the language has a written tradition- e.g Haitian Creole has not had a long written tradition and many users of Haitian Creole do not read or write it, De Graff, Personal communication) and c) their proficiency in English.

2nd generation immigrants

The 2nd generation immigrants are the grandchildren of immigrants and different YVY linguistic groups include children in this category. The amount of exposure they have to English before they enter YVY programs depends of their family and community practices with respect to language use. In this respect, the results of YVY Research Institute surveys demonstrate that these children may be monolingual in English, monolingual in their Home Language, balanced bilinguals (exposed 50% of the time to their Home Language and 50% to English) or dominant in English or in their Home Language before they enter YVY EHS and HS programs. These children vary with respect to parental education and levels of literacy in English and/or the Home Language.

Heritage Language Learners

Heritage Language Learners are children of immigrants whose mother-tongue has been transmitted to the third generation. This definition applies to the vast majority of Yiddish-speaking children enrolled in YVY most of whom are third or fourth generation-ie grand-children or great-grand children of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. A detailed study of this population undertaken by YVY Research Institute has revealed the extraordinary broad range of linguistic and demographic contexts in which Yiddish-learning infants and toddlers are raised (Barriere, 2008). The community they live in has had a tradition of multilingualism for hundreds of year and like the 2nd generation immigrants described above their exposure to their Home Language and to English varies greatly before they enter YVY programs: they may be monolingual in Yiddish, dominant in Yiddish (with 10% to 25% exposure to English), balanced bilinguals (with 50% exposure to English and 50% exposure to Yiddish) or, more rarely, dominant in English (with 10% exposure to Yiddish). The results of the study of this population by YVY Research Institute has demonstrated that effects of percentage of exposure has different effects on different aspects of language acquisition, namely:

- a) it has a gradient effect on vocabulary development- that partly reflects percentage of input to each language;
- b) it does not systematically determine the mapping between concepts and language that are in many cases significantly different in each language which suggest that Dual Language Learners should be assessed in their two languages;
- c) no effect up to 50% exposure on grammatical abilities (with respect to both speed of acquisition and developmental trajectory) which suggests that balanced bilinguals' grammatical abilities should be assessed in the same way as monolingual's age-matched peers;
- d) a delaying effects on grammatical abilities compared to their monolingual age-matched peers when they are exposed to 25% or 10%

- of the time to a language, which suggests that children should not be assessed in the same way as monolinguals or balanced bilinguals in their weak language (see Zurer-Pearson, 2007 for a similar conclusion);
- e) a different temporal relation between the vocabulary and grammatical abilities of the balanced bilinguals in each of their languages: these bilinguals reach the same grammatical milestones as their monolingual age-matched counterparts with half their vocabulary. This suggests that vocabulary tests do not predict grammatical abilities in the same way in monolinguals, dominant bilinguals and balanced bilinguals.
- (Barriere, in press, 2010)

These different types of Dual Language Learners have different levels of proficiency in their Home Language and in English. In addition, the use of English and the Home-Language differs across different communities: first generation immigrant communities tend to be using mostly their home language while the communities of the Heritage Language Learners tend to be using both English and Yiddish.

The research on the acquisition of English oral language and reading skills by Dual Language Learners is influenced by the characteristics of the oral and written forms of the Home-Language. The profiles of YVY population are also complex in this respect since YVY families use languages that belong to different language groups (e.g. African, Asian, Germanic, Romance, Slavic, Semitic languages) and are written either with the same alphabets as English (e.g. Spanish) or different alphabets (e.g. Arabic, Hebrew, Yiddish) or different writing systems (e.g. Chinese).

Finally, YVY serves a large proportion of children with an Individualized Education Plan who include Dual Language Learners. In addition to its education programs, YVY also has Special Intervention and Special Education Departments. The Speech and Language Pathologists who provide services to Dual Language Learners have bilingual certification in the relevant language.

The need for an interdisciplinary knowledge-base

YVY Research Institute recognizes the diversity of the needs of Dual Language Learners and the fact that Dual Language Learning is connected to all areas of children's development- including physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy development. Thus the Dual Language Policy aims at continuing to educate parents and provide professional development for education professionals and clinicians in these different aspects of development in Dual Language Learners. In order to do so, YVY Research Institute recognizes that relevant research-based evidence comes from a variety of sources including cognitive science, early childhood education, health sciences, linguistics, neuropsychology, developmental psychology, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and speech science. Between them the co-directors of YVY Research Institute- G.V. Ellis, MD and I. Barriere, PhD- have received academic training in each of these areas.

Garey V. Ellis, M.D.

Dr Ellis received his BSc in Psychology and Biology from Brooklyn College and his Medical Degree from Ross University School of Medicine. His multi-faceted contributions to community health and education have been rewarded by many prizes including the Vernal G. Cave Humanitarian Award and the Martin Luther King's Fulfilling the Dream Award. Dr Ellis's areas of expertise include wellness education, health policy, public health, the prevention and treatment of attention and memory disorders, eating disorders and the enhancement of the teaching of scientific subjects. Before joining YvY, Dr Ellis served as the Medical Adviser to the Commissioner of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS). Dr Ellis has helped YvY plan several new initiatives to tackle important community issues such as asthma, diabetes and obesity. In addition to his position as co-director of YVY Research Institute Dr Ellis is the Director of Health Initiatives and Family/Community Partnerships at YVY.

Isabelle Barriere, PhD

Dr Barriere has received interdisciplinary training in applied linguistics, developmental psychology of language, early childhood education and neuropsychology at the University of London (UK), Toulouse University (France), the Child Neuropsychology Unit at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris (France) and Johns Hopkins University. Her research has been supported by European (e.g. UK ESRC) and American grant-giving organizations (e.g. NSF) and disseminated in the peer-reviewed literature. It focuses on the acquisition of different languages; dual language learning; early literacy; typical and impaired development; intervention and the link between theoretical research and education policies and clinical interventions. Dr Barriere is currently developing assessment tools in little researched languages used by YYY children and investigating the comprehension of word-combinations by toddlers exposed to different languages. In addition to her position of co-Director of YVY Research Institute Dr Barriere is also:

- Director of Policy for Research and Education at YVY
- Assistant Professor in Speech Communication Arts and Science at Brooklyn College/ City University of New York
- Research Associate of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS), Department of Linguistics/ City University of New York Graduate Center
- Member of the International Association for the Study of Child Language (IASCL)
- Member of New York Neuropsychology Group (NYNG) Bilingual Task Force
- A consultant on the Language Acquisition course developed by the Virtual Center for Language Acquisition (VCLA), an initiative funded by the National Science Foundation.

This combination of positions enables her to contribute:

- a) to the teaching provisions and the curriculum development at Brooklyn College to improve the training of early childhood educators and speech language

- pathologists regarding Dual Language Learners and provide CEU courses to YVY clinicians;
- b) to the supervision of undergraduate students in Speech Science and graduate students in linguistics who work on projects that aim to improve our understanding, assessment and teaching of Dual Language Learners;
 - c) to the dissemination and discussion of her findings at appropriate relevant regional, national and international venues attended by researchers, professionals and policy-makers.

VIII. Resources

- Making a difference: A Framework for Supporting First and Second Language Development in Preschool Children or Migrant Farm Workers, by AED Center for Early Care and Education(TAC-12) <http://www.ece.aed.org/>
- Bilingual Infant/Toddler Environments: Supporting Language and Learning in our Youngest Children- A guide for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Programs, by AED Center for Early Care and Education (TAC-12) <http://www.ece.aed.org/>
- California Department of Education:
 - Preschool Learning Foundations in English Language Development for Ages 3 and 4 <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp>
 - Preschool English Learning- a Resource Guide. Issued by the California Dept. of education. Web link <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/documents/preschoolel.pdf>
- Office of Head Start official website, Early Childhood Learning and knowledge Center at <http://www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov> Search specifically English Language Learners and Dual Language Acquisition"- many good references here.
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- Challenging Common Myths About young English Language Learners, Foundations for Child Development Policy Brief No. 8 by Linda Espinosa. *Advancing PK-3*, January 2008

In addition to these resources, in order to implement the Dual Language Policy YVY Research Institute also makes use of the regular seminars, conferences and courses organized by RISLUS, NYNG Bilingual task Force, IASCL and VCLA.

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