

# Language Attitudes: The Perception of English Language in a Private English-Medium School in Cyprus

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**Abstract** – Learning and teaching of English language in foreign contexts is usually associated with possible economic gains that it may bring. However, there are other and possibly more immediate implications of such instruction, especially on the way students from Turkish language backgrounds in a private school in the northern part of Cyprus where English is the medium of both instruction and communication perceive English language. The current study investigates students’ attitudes towards this language when it comes to cultural diversity in and outside the classroom. Analysis of the data, which was collected through in-class ethnographic observations, informal chats and interviews with students, showed that students who possessed a higher amount of linguistic abilities in English were also perceived as popular and academically superior by all of the participants in this particular school.

**Keywords** – English-Medium Schools, Language Attitudes, Perception, Cyprus.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The current study aims to explore how English language is perceived by students from Turkish language backgrounds in an English as a medium of instruction (EMI) school in Cyprus and to investigate and understand how they perceive both the language instruction and language itself to better understand their experiences in the context of Cyprus. Many studies have shown that language attitudes have a significant impact on language learning in different contexts. In this respect, being able to use English language well is usually perceived to be a distinguishing element of middle-classes and people who possess this skill are considered to be privileged [15]-[23]. EMI, therefore, is introduced into the curriculum so that graduates can gain from the institutional benefits that EMI brings, such as high prestige and career opportunities.

In order to prepare young people for universities where English is used as the primary medium of instruction, EMI has been adopted by many high schools around the world as an educational model. In such contexts, the choice to obtain a degree from a school that provides EMI, therefore, “reflects the desire for status and access to a network rather than the desire for knowledge” [18]. For this reason, EMI is considered to be both an antecedent to career opportunities and a marker of social status. Students in English-medium schools feel distinguished from students in other schools because of the privileged position that English has in terms of people’s attitudes towards it [23]. Thus, EMI is preferred mostly because it is considered to be an indispensable tool for attaining this valuable skill.

Choice of EMI is not only a matter of economic advancement but also an extension of the socio-economic background of the students and their families [23]. Because of this demand, in the recent years, EMI schools

aiming to teach spoken English and English for passing all kinds of examinations and interviews have rapidly increased in number in Cyprus.

Therefore, the present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What language attitudes do Turkish-speaking students who study at English-medium secondary schools have towards English language?
  - a. What role does English Language instruction play in the formation of these attitudes?
  - b. What impact do students' language performances have on their language attitudes?
  - c. Do students with different language performances have different language attitudes?

The attitudes of people in Cyprus towards English can be said to be quite positive. Phillipson, Kellerman, Selinker, Sharwood and Swain [24] claim that in India, the English language was such an important factor in the modernization of the country that was considered as a force for the purpose of educating a class of Indians who could function as citizens of a modern country and as interpreters between the British colonial power and Indians. Although Phillipson, et al. [24] consider this as a degrading process towards the Indian culture and language, similar perspectives exist with different attitudes in Cyprus. Nagme [23] points out that unlike in India, Cypriots, who were already given English language education before and during the British rule, accepted English language “as a tool to improve - not change - their culture, knowledge and develop their relations with other countries” [23]. Reference [23] claims that most Cypriots are aware of the fact that English needs to be spoken for various reasons and also reports that most Cypriots want to learn English for academic purposes because they believe that the English language is necessary for accessing to the best universities in the world.

The issue of how students view English and why they are learning it for in these schools requires in-depth investigation. It is for this reason that I have carried out this study so that the issue of EMI in Cyprus has been investigated in-depth. What students from Turkish language backgrounds experience in EMI schools in Cyprus will remain unclear unless such an investigation is done.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *A. Language Attitudes*

Reference [9] states that it is by many expected that those with positive attitudes towards the English language would be more attentive, serious, rewarded than those with negative and less favourable attitudes but even so such attitudes might not bring *achievement*. Gardner's theory is the idea that language attitudes influence learners' motivation and in turn their language learning success [7]. Achievement, according to Gardner [9], can also be obtained through 'instrumental' reasons “(reasons which stress the pragmatic aspects of learning the second language, without any particular interest in the language)” [9]. The desire of people to learn languages that they believe will bring them sort of advantage in the future is closely linked with their attitudes towards the target language [28]. People with more positive and favourable attitudes are believed to be more successful than those with negative and less favourable attitudes, especially when learning new languages [9]. Even so, as Gardner [9] indicates, it is with positive attitudes and with the *integrative* reasons or motivation that an individual can learn more efficiently. If one is not interested in learning the English language in order to meet and communicate with members of the second language community and only is with positive attitudes, achievement in language learning

may be limited [9]-[10]-[27]. To be more precise, achievement obtained through *instrumental* reasons may be limited.

### B. *Anxiety, Fear, Perceived Language Abilities*

One's negative emotions such as anxiety or fear may compromise learning potential and academic performance [8]-[14]-[19]. Second language learning anxiety has been defined as “a distinctive complex of self - perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” [14]. The sources of anxiety are due to the students' competitive nature in language performance, understanding of communication and fear of negative evaluation [8]. Second language learning anxiety, therefore, can affect students' success in- class activities, in- class situations and atmosphere, and motivation, confidence, language performances, and attitudes [4]-[19]-[30].

Attitudes of learners toward language learning have been widely explored and the findings suggest that anxiety about the language and the learning situation is an important factor that influences learners' language attitudes [16]. Maftoon and Ziafar's study [20] found that anxiety “inhibits Japanese learners from initiating conversations, raising new topics, and challenging their teachers” [20]. This is because “Japanese language learners are not adapted to the social aspects and patterns of Western teaching practices, which involve individualization, challenging the teacher, and original opinions” [20]. The study demonstrated that Japanese learners “consider their role to be that of a quiet, obedient, and passive learner” [20]. Thus, anxiety is highly related to cultural behaviors, such as shyness, and their perceived values are culture bound. In this respect, it was not surprising to find that culture is another factor that influences the interaction among students. The study by Maftoon & Ziafar [20] found that the third factor that influenced the interaction process is “Japanese culture, which is characterized by valuing indirect speech, face saving, group conformity, reticence, competition avoidance, and preference for teacher dominated classrooms” [20].

Other important factors are use of and familiarity with the target language, the country in which the language is spoken, and the classroom and the teacher. Other learners, the nature of language learning, particular elements in the learning activities, tests and beliefs about learning in general were also found to be significant factors that affect the attitudes of learners in relation to language learning [16]. Language attitudes may also demonstrate what people feel about the speakers of the target language [16].

## III. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative design with an ethnographic approach was adopted [5]-[11]-[1] to collect the data. Such an approach was significant for this study because this design is categorised as being used in orientational, ideological and cultural studies [5]-[11]-[1]. This approach is also “a way of exploring the information and communication practices of people interacting with one another, both face to face and through mediating technologies” [1]. An ethnographic methodology thus enabled us to investigate the attitudes of STBs toward English culture and language by observing them in their natural setting, i.e. the EMI school setting in this case, as well as interviewing them to understand their emic perspective about the issue at hand [25].

The current study will report the findings of the analysis of data collected in one private EMI school in Cyprus, which we will refer to as the Englefield House as its pseudonym. This EMI school was private and had the highest number of English speaking students from England among all the EMI schools in Cyprus at the time of data

collection. While there were some native-speakers of Turkish, majority of the content teachers were native-speakers of English and most students were from English language backgrounds (SEBs). In the context of this school, English as a medium of instruction is used for academic subjects such as history, science and mathematics. Although the school maintains a considerable degree of independence in its operation and curricula, it is registered with the Ministry of Education and complies with certain curriculum and facility requirements mandated by the Ministry of Education in Cyprus. The school is meant to cater for SEBs and offer STBs the opportunity to get qualifications that would ensure their transition to overseas universities of their choice for degree studies. The school, therefore, follows the curriculum required for the acceptance to the universities in the UK. Englefield House was among a few that followed the British curriculum with a few adjustments to allow them to be accredited by the local administration.

The classes that we collected the data in were chosen according to the number of students, i.e., the classes which had the highest number of SEBs and the classes in which the number of STBs and SEBs were equal were selected and observed separately in order to investigate students’ language performances in these two cases. Our focus was only on STBs, more specifically their language attitudes, which included students both from Cyprus, in and outside their English language classes. In total, four different English classes have been observed. The participants’ ages ranged from 12 to 14. The number of students in each class varied from 4 to 20. All of the teachers of English in the observed classrooms were native-speakers of English from England, except for one class whose teacher was a native-speaker of Turkish from Cyprus. Table 1 shows the distribution of students according to gender and linguistic background.

Table 1. Demographic information: Students in Englefield House.

Class/ Variable	Gender		Participants’ Linguistic Backgrounds		Total no. of Students in Class
	Male	Female	Native-speakers of Turkish from Cyprus	Native-speakers of English from England	
Class 1	2	2	2	2	4
Class 2	5	9	11	3	14
Class 3	6	14	7	13	20
Class 4	8	11	10	9	19
Total	21	36	30	27	57

Fieldwork consisted of four months of semi-structured and descriptive observations in English language classes at the selected schools and informal chats with the participants. The primary data collection tool was semi-structured observations using an observation form. Semi-structured observations usually refer to the researcher knowing what he or she is looking for and having a specific aim in recording the data [29]. In the current thesis, these observations were employed to record the language attitudes of the students within the classroom setting. The observation form enabled us to focus on specific behaviors but we also took extra notes that enabled us to record things that were not originally mentioned in the form but appeared to be significant at during the course of the observation. Descriptive observations, “usually means entering the field setting or situation with a goal of recording as much information as possible. Descriptive observations are usually carried out observing everything” [29]. These observations were significant for the purpose of this study because descriptive observations aim to begin to identify the most general features of phenomena within a social setting and more significantly, they may

carry cultural meaning for the participants in the setting. The main reason why we wanted to use descriptive observations beside the semi-structured observations was to collect additional information which we might have left out in my original observation schedule. The data we had from the observations was twenty-five in A4 pages. In addition, 13 individual interviews, designed in a semi-structured manner were carried out with the participating students. While informal chats were an ongoing process and were recorded as part of the descriptive observations, interviews were scheduled, audio-recorded and completed within two weeks. We carried out semi-structured interviews with the participating students and their teachers. We employed this type of interviews because they provided an opportunity for us to understand the respondents' points of view rather than making generalization about their behaviours. It also does not limit the participants or respondents to a set of pre-determined answers. An interview protocol was used only to serve as a guide for the interview. Open-ended questions were used in these interviews.

The current study used the thematic analysis method to analyse the data. This method is primarily used “for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also [...] interprets various aspects of the research topic” [2]. After collecting the data from the field, the information was sorted into categories, and the themes were analysed accordingly. The process of data analysis was based on data reduction and interpretation. The coding procedure was used to reduce the information to themes or categories. The information was then presented in matrices and further re-organised to provide a description of language attitudes.

#### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following themes were identified as significant in understanding the students' attitudes toward English language instruction. STBs appeared to have different attitudes towards the English language with respect to what they wanted to achieve with by studying in an EMI school. Language proficiency in English in this case emerged as an important variable. The results of the analysis demonstrated that those STBs with high language performances had more confidence in their language skills which increased their motivational attitudes toward English language. Lack of confidence, the data presented, played a significant role in motivational attitudes because it increased students' anxiety levels, which discouraged them from interacting with SEBs. Students with low proficiency level in English demonstrated a higher level of anxiety, nervousness and shyness compared to the ones who had better English language abilities. The data also suggested that what students felt about the speakers of the target language played a significant role in shaping their attitudes. Due to STBs' perception of SEBs' attitudes towards them being negative, STBs have developed fear and have lost confidence in using the English language, especially in their interactions with SEBs.

The data in the current study also presented that those with low language performances were negatively affected in English language usage because of their fear of making mistakes and hence exclusion. This exclusion was not only due to students' attitudes towards the English language but also to do with the fact that the context of this school prioritised English language over any other. The following themes were identified as significant in understanding the attitudes among these groups of students.

##### *A. Desire for Academic Success, Lack of Practice*

STBs desired to learn the English language because they believed that it would bring them sort of advantage in

the future. They saw it as a sort of advantage in the future. For example, on several occasions, they raised that English language was necessary for future employment. STBs did not only highlight the significance of studying English for their future career but also believed that the English language learning was necessary for communication purposes and for building linkages with English speaking peers. They were highly willing to integrate with the target group. STBs have shown their high motivation by arguing that the knowledge of English language provides better job opportunities for their future careers, education and job opportunities:

#### *Extract 1*

1 Sertap, Yurdakul and Filiz, for example, believed that studying English would make them 2 better educated people and help them to get good jobs in the future. Sertap said, *“we came to 3 study at this school because we want to go to England. Those who go to England get better 4 education because if you know English, you can get better jobs”*.

It seemed that STBs were interested in English language learning as they aspired instrumental rewards in the form of academic achievements and good future jobs. The result of the analysis indicated similar levels of agreement among students highlighting the importance of studying English to enable them to participate in the activities of the target language group. The analysis of the field notes revealed that there was a genuine desire to become part of the target language community and identify with the dominant group. In all of the classes observed, STBs did not have negative attitudes towards SEBs. These positive attitudes towards the target culture and people made STBs motivated to learn the language, not only for educational or future economic goals, but also for integration with the target community by “making friends” and “learning about the culture:”

#### *Extract 2*

1 Yurdakul said, *“I prefer English as a language of instruction because it helps in 2 understanding the culture. I also want to have more fluent and accurate English speaking 3 skills so that I can make English friends”*. Sertap said, *“I am happy to have English friends 4 around me because we learn more with English students and widen our circle of friends”*

Yurdakul, as the data demonstrates, was motivated to learn the English language and, therefore, had positive language attitudes. The fact that he wanted to have more fluent and accurate English speaking skills (lines 2-3) demonstrated that he had high motivation to learn the language. The fact that this student had many foreign people around him could be seen as an important factor for his motivation. Probably, he wanted to have English friends (line 3) because he was willing to take on features of the target language group and this played a significant role on his motivation towards language learning (lines 2-3). Learners in multi-ethnic settings try to identify themselves with the target language community and this powerful process affects a person’s motivation in a positive way since it encourages individuals to learn and use the language of the target group [6]. He desired to learn English because he believed that it would bring him sort of advantage in terms of making English friends (lines 2-3). This class was dominated by SEBs and was a classroom where almost all students were from English-speaking backgrounds. Probably, the fact that STBs were surrounded by SEBs played a significant role in terms of the formation of positive attitudes towards students from English-speaking backgrounds. It could be said that the students at this EMI school, had many motivational advantages because they were in the environment where the language was used and live. The result of the analysis indicated that STBs wished strongly that they were able

to speak the English language perfectly well (lines 2-3). Students have shown awareness towards English language learning as means for communication because they believed that the English language was necessary for building linkages with English speaking students (lines 1-3).

The EMI nature of this school could be motivational for STBs in terms of learning English for integrating with SEBs but was not so motivational for them in terms of practicing their English with the target language community. STBs seemed to have positive language attitudes and were motivated to learn the target language for integrating with the target community. However, students missed out on opportunities for practice because their lack of self-confidence with their English reduced their motivation to use English for communication with students from English-speaking backgrounds. The analysis of the data revealed that self-confidence played a significant role in the formation of students' motivational attitudes towards the use of English. Therefore, English was not necessarily integrative as the data demonstrated in Extract 2. In all of the classes that were observed, STBs did not have the motivation to interact with SEBs and use the target language since their lack of language gave rise to low motivation. As the extract below demonstrated, there was no interest in using the target language and interacting with the target language group:

#### *Extract 3*

1 Yurdakul pointed out, *“I prefer my friends to be Turkish. I speak Turkish with my friends 2 because it's easier for me to speak Turkish and also I feel more relax with the Turkish 3 language. If I speak with my English friends, we talk about academic issues or we just say 4 “Hi” to each other”*.

In Extract 3, Yurdakul mentioned that he preferred English as a language of instruction and to learn about the culture (lines 1-2). In Extract 4, however, it was significant that he denied the idea of having SEBs as his friends (line 1). The fact that Yurdakul was not motivated to use English for communication with SEBs (lines 3-4) showed that STBs saw English as an instrument, it was not necessarily integrative as demonstrated in Extract 2. Probably, Yurdakul had language anxiety which was negatively related to his self-confidence with his English. Possibly, Yurdakul had self-awareness of his language proficiency and a high level of language anxiety, and therefore, he had no desire to use English for communication with students from English-speaking backgrounds. I observed that STBs, in general, missed out on the opportunity for practice. I observed that “Turkish students speak to each other in Turkish. They prefer their own language to English” (Observations). In most of the classes I observed, most of the students did not seem to show confidence in their English language ability as they never attempted to communicate in the target language. I heard STBs and SEBs discussing academic matters rather than carrying on social conversations. This observation supports what Yurdakul said in lines 3 and 4. When observing the class taught by Sarah, an English teacher from London, we noted that “when STBs are around SEBs, STBs withdraw themselves and sit quietly. They seemed to be afraid that they will make mistakes when they speak English.” When observing this class, we also noted that “the fear of making mistakes negatively affected students' interactions with SEBs.” During another English language lesson in the same classroom, students were reminded a few times to complete tasks together with their partners and then share ideas by talking to each other. Nobody, however, attempted to share ideas or talk to each other. We noticed that if STBs had sat together with other Turkish students, there would have been more interaction in the classroom because this would have provided them the opportunity to speak to each other in Turkish. However, in this particular time, STBs were paired with SEBs, which could be a possible reason for the lack of interaction in the desired way/amount. Another example of this

sort of act was observed in an English language class taught by Zeynep, a Turkish-speaking teacher from Cyprus. We noted in our observations that “whenever students had the opportunity to speak to each other in their native language, i.e. Turkish, they got more involved and engaged in the lesson.” For example, in this lesson I observed, “when students were left alone by the teacher to work on their articles that they were expected to write individually, those passive students, who seemed to feel less confidence in their English language ability, appeared as more active and engaged than they were observed to be before because they had the opportunity to speak to each other in Turkish” (Observations). The above observations showed that STBs lacked self-confidence with the English language which played a significant role on their motivation to use English.

#### *B. Anxiety, Fear and Perceived Language Abilities*

The analysis of the field notes presented many cases where a specific group of STBs had language anxiety which was related to their self-confidence with their English. This specific group of STBs lacked self-confidence because they feared of making mistakes. They looked nervous whenever they had to speak in English with SEBs. Anxiety about a language is thought to be an important factor that influences students’ language attitudes [16]. The results of my analysis revealed that there was a strong relationship between anxiety and perceived language abilities of students. The data suggested that STBs feared using the target language because they believed that they were incapable of using the English language as efficiently as SEBs. Students’ attitudes were influenced by these factors because, as suggested by Muthanna and Miao [22], lack of ability plays a significant role on the attitude of an individual towards the target language. The following exchange, for example, occurred during one of the interviews with one of the participants at the break time:

#### *Extract 4*

1 Sertap (a Turkish Cypriot girl) said, “*I envy English students’ talk. I get anxious whenever I 2 need to talk to them because I fear of making mistakes. I am afraid that other students will 3 laugh at me when I speak English*”.

Sertap’s extract signals that her perceived lack of language skills frustrated the student’s efforts of practicing the target language and this anxiety inhibited her from interacting with the community of the target language, which is readily available to her within the school context. In other words, she was afraid because she thought she was not good enough. Therefore, she missed out on opportunities for practice because of fear of making mistakes. It was not that she had negative attitudes towards the English language or the target language group. It was that she was afraid of losing face. This supports Hashemi’s claim that language anxiety is a concern of face in different cultures. Fear of losing face between students play a significant role in communications [12]. The analysis of the data showed that language anxiety, was an important issue in the development of these fearful attitudes because saving face was considered to be an important issue by STBs. As the extract demonstrates, STBs’ sense of inferiority while interacting with SEBs caused stress and anxiety for them (lines 1-3). Students’ fear and lack of confidence in using the target language appeared to be an important factor that influenced students’ effort of practicing for the development of their interactional patterns. It could, therefore, be said that students’ “lack of [effort] for follow-up improvement indicates failure to fulfil their role in dealing with the challenges” [17]. When observing Sertap, we noted that “she was not keen on communication in L2 situations.” This observation supports what Sertap said in Extract 4, which negatively affected her language performance as well as her class performance, as she did not seem to be involved in the lesson. My observations of students’ language attitudes, in

many of the classes, revealed that anxiety and fear of making mistakes made STBs feel uneasy and anxious which harmed their language performances by reducing their participation both in social and academic contexts.

A significant amount of data suggested that one of the possible reasons for STBs' fear of making mistakes and loss of confidence in using the English language was due to SEBs negative attitudes towards STBs (or STBs' perception of SEBs attitudes towards them as negative). Accent and ability to reproduce the perceived "accepted accent" seemed to be important issues in the development of these fearful attitudes. Saving or keeping face also appeared to be important issues for STBs in such cases. As the extract below shows, STBs believed that they were marginalised by SEBs:

*Extract 5*

1 Filiz (a Turkish Cypriot girl) said, "English students don't like Turkish students. Whenever 2 we have to speak in English, they have this strange look in their eyes. Whenever I don't 3 understand the meaning of words, they exhibit surprised attitudes such as "don't you know 4 the meaning". I feel humiliated. It is, therefore, I fear of structuring wrong sentences. Some 5 English students want to be the British group and don't want to engage with us. English 6 students have Turkish friends but they accept the ones whose English is very good". Sueda (a 7 Turkish Cypriot girl) said, "I wish I could sound like English students because unless you 8 speak smoothly, they don't want to talk to you. They prefer the ones whose English is very 9 good. If you are not able to answer their questions, they ignore you. Accent and how you 10 speak, at this school, are important factors for establishing a good relationship".

The extract above shows that the way STBs thought SEBs perceived them was an important factor that negatively influenced their attitudes. Filiz thought that SEBs had negative attitudes towards Turkish Cypriots (lines 1-2). She thought lexical competence, communicative competence and also knowledge of the right structures were important for the target group and she was talking about STBs' perceived lack of these areas of competence (lines 2-5). Filiz' perception of SEBs attitudes towards STBs as negative played a significant role on her attitudes towards English. For example, she feared of making mistakes (line 5) due to her perceived lack of language skills. This perceived lack of language skills frustrated her efforts of practicing English and possibly it inhibited her from interacting with the target group. Both Filiz and Sueda claimed that English students despised and excluded STBs because they could not speak as fluently as SEBs (lines 6-8 & lines 9-10). It seems that these behaviours of SEBs influenced STBs negatively and gave rise to anxiety and fear (line 5). The way that they thought SEBs perceived them, seemed to be the main factor which formed their attitudes. They were also talking about "sounding" like the target group. Along a strong us-them discourse, they were talking about accent, which appeared to be a gate to membership (lines 8-13). Accent was considered by STBs to be an important factor for building strong relationships with SEBs (lines 11-13) but they also thought that SEBs saw them as inferior (lines 2-3). Probably, within the context of this school, because English was the primary medium of instruction and English was their native language, SEBs had high self-confidence and saw Turkish Cypriots below them. Because STBs had language anxiety and feared of making mistakes, they avoided using the English language. What Kaan said below supports that the negative attitudes of SEBs towards mistakes made by STBs caused feelings of anxiety and fear:

*Extract 6*

1 Most of the students are shy. They think before they speak. Because most of the class is 2 British, they think

*that all English students have similar thoughts on their personalities. They 3 think that the things that they might say will be awkward to English students so they don't 4 want to say anything. This is an English school and most of the students are English so they 5 fear of making mistakes".*

It was clear that how STBs were perceived by SEBs played a significant role on individual behaviour (lines 2-3). The feelings of fear of making mistakes (lines 5-6) and being judged by the dominant group (lines 3-4) made STBs avoid using the English language (line 4), which impacted their academic performances and caused them to be perceived as low ability or passive in class (line 1). The attitudes of SEBs towards STBs, for example, appeared to make them feel inadequate and incomplete (line 1). Yurdakul (a Turkish Cypriot boy) further elaborates on the issue:

#### *Extract 7*

*1 "I don't feel nervous with my English teachers but when I have to speak with my English 2 friends I feel nervous. This is because my teachers know that I am not able to use English 3 language well". Sertap said, "I feel Ok with my English teachers because they correct me 4 when I make mistakes but with my English friends I feel nervous as they exclude us".*

The extract above shows that Yurdakul felt safer with his teachers because he knew that he would not be excluded or humiliated by his teachers. It could be argued these negative language attitudes of STBs would disappear if there was a more supportive atmosphere. It could also be argued that STBs cared about these attitudes of SEBs so that they did not want to feel excluded, and therefore, their actions affected their language attitudes negatively and reduced their motivation.

The attitudes of SEBs towards STBs, as demonstrated in Extract 5, were mostly determined by STBs' abilities to produce the desired "accent". Thus, when they were unable to do so, SEBs presented negative attitudes towards them. It seemed that the lack of confidence in relation to using the English language was the result of these negative attitudes of the target language group towards STBs rather than their attitudes towards English language per se. The above quotes also demonstrate how exclusion and rejection within the school setting had a direct impact on the way STBs avoided using the English language. It could, therefore, be argued that inclusion and power relations in the peer group are important factors that impact language attitudes of young people, even in a setting where using English is the desired behaviour.

The analysis of the fieldnotes and the observational data revealed that students have different anxiety levels towards the use of English language. In all of the classes I observed, I noticed that students with better English language ability seemed to be more confident of themselves when speaking English in comparison to those with lower proficiency levels. I want to expand on the conclusion that students can feel alert or uneasy, anxious or worried depending on their language abilities or performances. The fact that the anxiety level of students is low facilitates their language performances or harms the performances when the anxiety level is high. This may have a positive or negative effect on their class participation because the better their language performances, the higher their participation rates are [21]-[14]. These feelings of fear were not present amongst the other group of STBs who had started school earlier and therefore, had higher linguistic competencies. Therefore, their attitudes towards the English language were more positive than late comers. When observing the class taught by Zeynep, a Turkish-speaking teacher from Cyprus, I noted that "students with better English language ability demonstrated more

confidence than the students with lower proficiency level” (Observations). I also observed that those who seemed to feel more confidence in their English language ability interacted more with SEBs. They were more engaged, active and involved in the lesson as well. This was a common act of STBs with higher linguistic abilities in English in all of the classes I observed. Perhaps because those who did not have as much fluency in English language as others were more conscious of their mistakes in spoken performance, and as a result they were viewed negatively by SEBs, they felt uneasy using the target language [3]. Reference [13] claims that “also low accomplishments, unsound learning environment, lower self-esteem, disrespect and offensive behaviour of others cause high anxiety levels and de-motivate students” (p.137). These claims support what the data revealed in this current study along with the claim made by STBs, in Extract 7. STBs claimed that SEBs exhibited some negative attitudes towards them regarding their English language ability which made them feel uneasy whenever they needed to use the target language. Maybe, students with better linguistic abilities were more motivated and active in the classroom context compared to the ones who lacked similar levels of competence in English because they wanted to show their English language abilities and prove their confidence in their English. It could also be that they wanted to demonstrate their differences from others who were excluded by SEBs. Maybe they saw themselves as equal to the members or as members of the desired group and wanted to position themselves among SEBs by putting forward their English language abilities. Here is an example:

*Extract 8*

1 Sueda said, “those Turkish Cypriots who come from England or those whose English is 2 better than us are more motivated. Both English students and those with better English think 3 that they know everything. Those who are always active in the classroom want to prove their 4 English. They want show English speaking students their knowledge so that they are not 5 excluded by them”.

Sueda claimed that STBs with better English language abilities wanted to identify themselves with the perceived dominant group so that they were not excluded by SEBs. They were more active compared to late comers in class (lines 3-4) and were accepted by the perceived dominant group (lines 5-6).

*Extract 9*

1 In an interview with one the higher proficiency level students, it has been revealed that what 2Kaan said supported Sueda’s claim that those with better abilities were more motivated. 3 Kaan (a Turkish Cypriot boy with high proficiency level) said, “Turkish Cypriots whose 4 English is good are more motivated than English students because we need to prove our 5 English and knowledge. English students, however, don’t want to bother because they are 6 English and English is their native language so they don’t need to prove anything to 7 anybody”. Kaan continued by saying, “my English is very good so I am very happy in my 8 English classes because I love my English lessons”.

Kaan admits that STBs needed to prove their confidence in his English (line 5). What Kaan was saying was very important in terms of STBs’ positioning, not only within their peer groups but also as students in the same classroom. It almost sounded like SEBs did not need to prove anything but they, as students from Turkish-speaking backgrounds, did. Because they needed to prove their knowledge, there seemed to be two extreme ends in this continuum of performance: those with lower levels of competence in English were not only excluded socially but also were afraid of making mistakes, so that they did not actively participate in class. On the other hand, those

with higher competence levels, who still had to prove themselves but were more confident to try and claim that position of “good students”. It seemed clear that Kaan wanted to show the English students he was different from others who lacked similar level of language ability so that he could be accepted by English students and included in the target language group. Kaan also admitted that STBs were excluded by SEBs:

#### *Extract 10*

1 Kaan said, *“English students exclude Turkish Cypriots because their self-confidence is 2 high”*.

This attitude of SEBs towards STBs (line 1) seemed to be the reason STBs needed to prove their English and claim that position of “good student”, so that they were not excluded socially by SEB. Sueda, a lower proficiency level student, in Extract 8, claimed that some STBs with better language abilities tried to act and sound like the perceived popular group not only because they wanted to be members of the desired group but also needed to prove their English and knowledge. Also, they were more confident to try and claim that position of “good students than those with lower levels of competence in English.

The extract below has shown that fear of not being understood affected the interactional patterns of those with lower levels of competence in English. They were not willing to integrate with the target group but this was not because they had negative attitudes towards the target language community. Due to their lack of motivation in English language use, they have developed fear and lost confidence in using the language. The fear of not being able to use the language efficiently made them avoid using the English language:

#### *Extract 11*

1 Yurdakul said, *“I prefer Turkish teachers to English teachers. When I need to speak English 2 with Turkish teachers, I feel more relax because I know that the teacher is Turkish and knows 3 Turkish. When I will have more fluent English, my thoughts will be changed”*.

The extract above revealed that the fear of not being understood and the influence of self-evaluation of language skills (lines 3-4) reduced the language usage, which impacted their interactions even with their teachers within the classroom setting. Yurdakul avoided using the language may be because he feared of being judged by teachers from English language backgrounds. The result of the analysis also suggested that due to the lack of ability, STB have developed fear and the fear of making mistakes caused them to be perceived as low motivated students. We can see this when Yurdakul says:

#### *Extract 12*

1 *“English students have higher motivation. Because English is their own language and 2 culture, they are likely to be able to understand more easily and comfortably”*. Filiz said, 3 *“English students are more motivated than Turkish students because English is their own 4 language and so they are not afraid of making mistakes”*.

The fact that STBs avoided using the target language impacted their academic performance and caused them to be perceived as passive in class. The result of analysis revealed that there was a relationship between the students’ motivation and how well they were able to integrate themselves into social networks that included members of the dominant (target) culture. The data suggested that the target language group and the non-native group need to be equal in terms of linguistic capital and cultural status since equal positions may higher up their motivation.

Otherwise, the groups are less likely to develop interest in each other or mutual friendship. It could be argued that the actual actions of students also affect each other as much as their attitudes since the attitudes towards each other may shift or the motivation may higher itself up depending on the actions of students. The actions of SEBs, therefore, played a significant role on the non-native students' motivation. It seemed that STBs were marginalised by SEBs so that STBs wished they sounded as the native English speakers. This has been highlighted in many interviews with the participants. In other words, the actions of SEBs affected the attitudes of STBs negatively and so, they felt nervous whenever they needed to speak English with SEBs.

## V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the observational data and the fieldnotes indicated that STBs had negative motivational attitudes and high anxiety levels. Furthermore, students with better language abilities showed a higher level of confidence comparable to the ones who lacked similar levels of English language ability. In contrast, students with lower proficiency level demonstrated a higher level of anxiety, nervousness and shyness comparable to the ones who owned better English language ability. The data presented in the current study also showed that inclusion and exclusion were observable among the participants based on language attitudes in this EMI school. Similar to Ryan, Carranza and Moffie's study [26], the current study showed that those who could not acquire the perceived "accent" of the popular group were negatively affected in their peer relationships. It is worth noting that this positioning was not only due to the participants' perceptions of attitudes towards languages that they knew but also to do with the fact that the context of the school prioritised English language over any other. Thus, students with higher linguistic abilities in English, regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, formed the perceived popular groups, shared more socially and were expected to out-perform the rest academically.

Linguistic competence also played a significant role in strengthening the relation between STBs and SEBs. The data highlighted how environment plays a significant role in facilitating students' language performances which increase or reduce their motivational attitudes and anxiety level. Effectual language learning, the data suggested, requires optimistic experience and supportive atmosphere. The analysis of the observational data and the fieldnotes indicated that STBs had negative motivational attitudes and high anxiety levels. Furthermore, students with better language abilities showed a higher level of confidence comparable to the ones who lacked similar levels of English language ability. In contrast, students with lower proficiency level demonstrated a higher level of anxiety, nervousness and shyness comparable to the ones who owned better English language ability. The findings presented in this study shed light on the nature of language attitudes in two different EMI schools in Cyprus. Yet, an investigation of the impact of the teaching materials used in the schools and the attitudes of the community on accent perception may provide us with a better understanding of the effect of language discrimination on attitudes and interaction. The investigation of the attitudes of the teachers towards different groups specifically, will make a great contribution to the field.

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