Learners' Attitudes and Ideologies towards English:
Implications for the teaching and learning of English in Malta

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Abstract: The study investigates the attitudes and ideologies held by adults and children towards English in Malta. Questionnaires were distributed to parents (N= 202) and children (N=357), coming from three school sectors (state, church and independent schools). Four age groups were targeted: adults, 14- to 15-year-olds, 11- to 12-year-olds and 8- to 9-year-olds. The self-reports of language use illustrate that Maltese is the prevalent language used in the home domain. Five constructs emerged from the exploratory factor analysis of the language attitude questionnaire. Multiple regression analyses revealed that language spoken to mother and at school are the most influential predictor variables across all language attitude constructs. The data showed that school sector and age group have a significant effect on most language attitude constructs. The findings make an important contribution by highlighting the role of the languages spoken at home, particularly by the mother, in the development of language attitudes. It also illustrates ways in which language attitudes are shaped by age and school sector in Malta. Such factors should be considered in the teaching of English in Malta, in a context where learners are in contact with English not only at school, but also in their everyday lives.

Keywords: Language attitudes, language ideologies, language use, sociolinguistics and language education

Introduction

This study investigates parents' and their children attitudes and ideologies towards English in Malta. Language attitudes and ideologies enable us to access "indications of current community thoughts and beliefs, preferences and desires" (Baker 1992, p.9). Pioneer research on language learning motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; 1972; Gardner, 1984) has postulated that success in language learning is a function of learners' positive attitudes towards the language and its users. Due the nature of societal bilingualism (Sebba, 2010) learners of English in Malta are exposed to the language not only at school, but also in their everyday lives. This brings about attitudes and ideologies about the way English is used in society and the way it coexists with the Maltese language. Therefore an

investigation into the attitudes and ideologies towards English sheds further light into the social aspects that could influence the teaching and learning of English.

In this paper, I will first provide the theoretical background to the study of language attitudes and ideologies, followed by a description of the data collection procedures. Next, I present the findings in light of the independent variables of interest. Finally, I will discuss these findings and their possible implications for the teaching of languages in Malta and beyond.

Language attitudes and ideologies

Social judgement based on languages takes place in daily interactions, and this is one of the reasons why language attitudes have been attracting the attention of linguistic and psychological research for almost a century (Edwards, 1997). Most definitions of attitudes stress the central idea of an evaluative response towards the subject or situation, as in the following definition: "Attitudes have a subject matter (referred to as the object or target), which can be an object, a person, or an abstract idea" (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018, p.230). According to Romaine (1995), the study of language attitudes can provide insight into intergroup relations since language attitudes play a role in mediating and determining them. A large and growing body of literature has investigated language attitudes from different perspectives. Such research includes research on attitudes towards minority languages (Romaine, 1995; Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004), bilingualism (Baker, 1992), language maintenance and language shift (Crezee, 2012) and codeswitching (Luna & Peracchio, 2005), to mention a few examples.

Following Woolard (1998), language ideology is defined in this study as "a mediating link between social structures and forms of talk" (p.235). They are those collective perceptions that have a social and political dimension, evident in widely-cited definitions of ideologies as "sets of beliefs articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979, p.173). Heller and McElhinny (2017) argue that in essence, people have an interest in language because it has value. Such value is tied to the way resources are produced, circulated and consumed.

The study of language attitudes and ideologies provides insight into the importance of language as a symbol of membership or students' motivations (Kormos & Csizér, 2008; Dörnyei, 2014). Educators should be aware of the influence of the wider social situation upon language learning as this might impact performance in the language (Gardner, 1985; Tódor & Dégi, 2016).

Attitudes towards English in Malta

Santello (2015) emphasises the role of the local context in the study of language attitudes and ideologies of bilinguals as "[a]mong bilinguals, there may be dimensions of language attitudes that are to be considered idiosyncratic, that is, localised in a specific context" (p.3). The presence of English in Malta can be traced to the British rule which lasted for more than 150 years (1800-1964). Today, Maltese and English are widely spoken throughout the Maltese islands. The Constitution of the Republic of Malta recognises Maltese as the National language and grants co-official status to English. Although widespread, bilingualism is said to manifest itself to varying degrees. In present-day Malta, an accurate representation of the domains in which each language is used is a complex endeavour as both Maltese and English are present in most domains, and also code-switching is a ubiquitous practice (Vella, 2013).

Several language attitude studies have been carried out throughout the years. The following studies with secondary school students provide insight into the way English has been conceptualised. For instance, Said (1991) argues that although none of the participants express negative attitudes towards English, she reports a clear tendency for students from professional and middle classes to express a more positive attitude towards English when compared to students from skilled manual and unskilled manual working classes. English is valued more than Maltese for instrumental purposes. This is corroborated by Micheli's (2001) study which consolidates that English is valued for utilitarian purposes. Similarly, Scerri's (2009) study indicates that students are aware of the benefits of being proficient in English for utilitarian purposes. Brincat (2007) corroborates this as the majority of participants view English as a means of monetary gain, in terms of instrumental motivation.

Caruana (2007) states that all in all attitudes held by university students in his sample were more favourable towards Maltese than towards English. Attitudes towards Maltese were significantly more favourable among participants coming from families in the lower socioeconomic bracket when compared to subjects coming from the higher socioeconomic status group. He also discusses how participants hold instrumental attitudes towards English. While there was no significant effect of hometown on attitudes, both socioeconomic status and community language yielded significant differences.

Bagley (2001) adopted an indirect approach using a matched-guise technique to determine the social value of Maltese and English. It was concluded that the use of English was associated with status and sophistication; English is associated with the more prestigious domains. Similarly, in her qualitative study, Bonnici (2010) argues that at times Maltese nationals who speak English are linked to snobbery. The label English-speaking refers to Maltese-English bilinguals who

use and/or align with English more than Maltese, and reside in areas known to be traditionally English dominant. On the other hand, those who find difficulty in expressing themselves in English are associated with lower socioeconomic groups and with low levels of education. Vella's (2018) mixed methods study also illustrates ways in which participants link English to a sense of prestige and high social classes, while it is deemed vital for educational prospects. However, she also highlights the multifaceted nature of these language ideologies which should be viewed as a repertoire of language ideologies in their completeness, rather than in isolation.

To summarise, language attitude studies in Malta have posited English as being valuable for utilitarian purposes and related to prestige. The question is whether there are age-related differences in these attitudes, as well as differences based on school sector, employment and locality. In the following sections, ways in which this was investigated will be outlined, starting with a description of the research methods adopted, followed by the key results and implications for practice.

The Research Questions

The study sought to explore the language attitudes and ideologies of parents and their children. The design, data collection procedures and data analysis were guided by the following research questions:

1. What are parents' and children's language attitudes and ideologies towards English?
2. How do social factors, such as age, locality, employment and school sector relate to language attitudes and ideologies?
3. How do participants differ in their language attitudes and ideologies towards English, based on the language used at home?

The quantitative study reported here formed part of a larger study that investigated the attitudes and ideologies towards both Maltese and English. For the purpose of this paper, the results pertaining to English will be discussed. The questionnaire was constructed based on an exploratory qualitative study that took place before the quantitative one (c.f Vella, 2018). Four versions of the questionnaire, targeting adults, 14-15-year olds, 11-to12-year olds and 8-9-year olds were created. The aim was to target a wide spectrum of school aged children and their parents.

The first section of the questionnaire elicited use of language in the home domain, at work (or school for children). The second part of the questionnaire dealt with attitudinal factors, based on a five-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements, by ticking one of the responses on the scale ranging from one to five

which corresponded to "Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree". In the third part of the questionnaire the participants' biodata were elicited.

The parental questionnaire was constructed first and the other questionnaires were adapted from it. These were simplified in content and in language use to cater for each target age group. The questionnaire was first constructed in English and then translated to Maltese. Participants could choose from either version. De Leeuw (2011) emphasises that children's questionnaires should be tailored according to the cognitive and social development of the intended age group. Theories of development of children discuss how at the age of seven children go through a major cognitive turning point (Piaget, Tomlinson & Tomlinson, 1973, De Leeuw, 2011). As a result, it was decided that the youngest age group for the questionnaire would be eight.

A final piloting stage was carried out with 45 participants. The Cronbach Alpha values (Cronbach, 1951) for the adult questionnaire was .743, for ages 14-15 questionnaire it was .758, for ages 11-12 questionnaire .798 and for ages eight to nine questionnaire it was .702 indicating that the questionnaires were reliable in their measurement.

Participants in the study

A total of 559 participants (202 adults and 357 children) took part in this study. The learner questionnaires (ages 8-15) were distributed in class by the researcher. Parents were asked to fill in the questionnaire at home. The sample was made up of 387 females (69.2%) and 172 males (30.8%). The following table summarises the sample on the basis of age.

Table 1: Sample by age group and gender

Age	Frequency	Percent
Adults	202 (M=45, F=157)	36.1 (M= 22.3, F= 77.7)
14-15	153(M=55, F=98)	27.4 (M= 35.9, F= 64.1)
11-12	96(M= 31, F=65)	17.2 (M= 32.3, F= 67.7)
8-9	108(M=41, F=67)	19.3(M= 38.0, F= 62.0)
Total	559(M=172, F=387)	100.0(M= 30.8, F=69.2)

Note. M=Male; F = Female.

Quota sampling procedures were adopted, based on school sector. Table 2 summarises the sample distribution by school sector in relation to the general student population in Malta.

Table 2: Child sample by school sector

	Participants in sample %(n)	Students in Maltese schools %(N)[a]
State	64.1(229)	66.9 (49,028)
Church	26.9 (96)	23.6 (17,310)
Independent	9.0 (32)	9.5 (6,960)
Total	100.0 (357)	100.0 (73,298)

Note: [a] Source National Statistics Office (2011).

The questionnaire data were analysed quantitatively using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences v23). First, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to explore the latent structure of variables. Regression analyses were carried out to examine the effects of explanatory variables on the response variables. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used to identify differences in language attitudes, between the groups of participants and the effects of age, school sector, employment, locality together with language use on the language attitude constructs. Chi-square tests for independence were computed to examine the interplay of factors. The level of significance was set for $p > .005$. In terms of effect sizes, partial eta-squared (η^2) values below .06 were considered small, below 0.13 medium, and above 0.13 indicating a large effect size respectively.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

In order to identify broader dimensions underlying the attitudinal variables measured by the questionnaire, the items were submitted to a principal component analysis (Field, 2013). The factorial structure of the adult and children questionnaires were analysed jointly as one dataset. A maximum likelihood extraction method was applied and a subsequent oblique rotation was used because the factors were assumed to be intercorrelated. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis (KMO=.89) which exceeded the recommended .6. All KMO values for individual items were greater than .77. A matrix with a simple structure without cross-loadings was adopted. Cattell's (1966) scree test was used to determine the number of factors to be extracted. Based on these analyses, a five-factor solution for English was opted for as illustrated in Table 3 below.

- Factor **E1**: the importance attached to languages for utilitarian motives, such as a better job or better educational prospects;
- Factor **E2** : language and locality, referring to the use of English in different geographic locations in Malta;
- Factor **E3**: nationalist beliefs and use of English;
- Factor **E4**: group membership and use of English, which refers to the use of English to form of part of specific groups or to access various social groups;
- Factor **E5**: attitudes related to social class and the use of English and social capital

Table 3: *Summary of the exploratory factor analysis results*

			Factors		
Items	**E1**	**E2**	**E3**	**E4**	**E5**
1. English is important for Maltese people to be able to travel around the world	**0.62**				
2. The English language is important for the local economy	**0.53**				
3. Knowledge of English can help me get a good job	**0.67**				
4. English is important for my educational prospects[a]	**0.59**				
5. I would like to live in areas in Malta where English is spoken		**0.65**			
6. In my hometown there are many people who speak mainly English		**0.62**			
7. I would be accepted in my hometown if I were to speak English		**0.73**			
8. The English language poses a threat to Maltese culture			**0.39**		
9. The Maltese language is deteriorating because of the influence of the English language			**0.63**		
10. I like it when people speak English in Malta			**0.40**		
11. The English language is an important part of Maltese identity			**0.36**		
12. All people in Malta should be able to speak English			**0.64**		
13. People will respect me more if I speak English				**0.38**	
14. I would like to be like Maltese people who speak English in Malta				**0.32**	
15. I would like to make more friends with people who speak English				**0.63**	
16. I would like to have more opportunities to speak English at school				**0.41**	
17. Maltese people who speak English are well-off					**0.54**
18. Maltese people who speak English are show-offs					**0.55**
19. Maltese people who speak English do so to appear superior to other people					**0.51**
20. Maltese people who speak English are well-educated					**0.68**

Note: Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood, Rotation Method: Oblim with Kaiser Normalization.

[a]*The wording for this item for the adult questionnaire was 'The English language is/was important for my educational prospects.*

In terms of internal consistency reliability, all the coefficients exceed the .70 threshold, which indicates that they had adequate internal consistency.

Assumptions for the analysis of data and statistical analyses

The data were analysed using parametric procedures following procedures establishing that the distribution of results was normal. Accordingly, z-scores for skewness and kurtosis values were calculated.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics, Skewness and Kurtosis values for the attitudinal factors

|	Mean	SD	Md.	Mo.	Z - Skewness	Z- Kurtosis
Instrumental value of English	4.16	0.65	4.30	4.0	-1.36	-1.02
Social class and the use of English	2.50	0.90	2.50	3.0	1.60	1.94
Locality and use of English	2.80	0.92	3.00	3.0	1.75	1.25
Nationalistic ideologies and use of English	3.28	0.86	3.25	3.0	1.49	1.20
Group membership and use of English	3.11	1.02	3.00	3.0	1.38	1.68

Note: Highest mean score possible is 5.

Table 4 summarises the descriptive statistics for the constructs. All in all, participants generally show positive attitudes to English, exceptions being social class and use of English, and locality and use of English.

**Use of language in a bilingual society**

Information about the language use of participants can provide insight into the ways languages are used in everyday life. The data show that the majority of children use Maltese with their parents. The use of Maltese decreases for the adult sample with their children and their spouses/partners. The pattern is reversed for the use of English, with more parents than children, using it in the home domain (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Language used with parents (n=357)
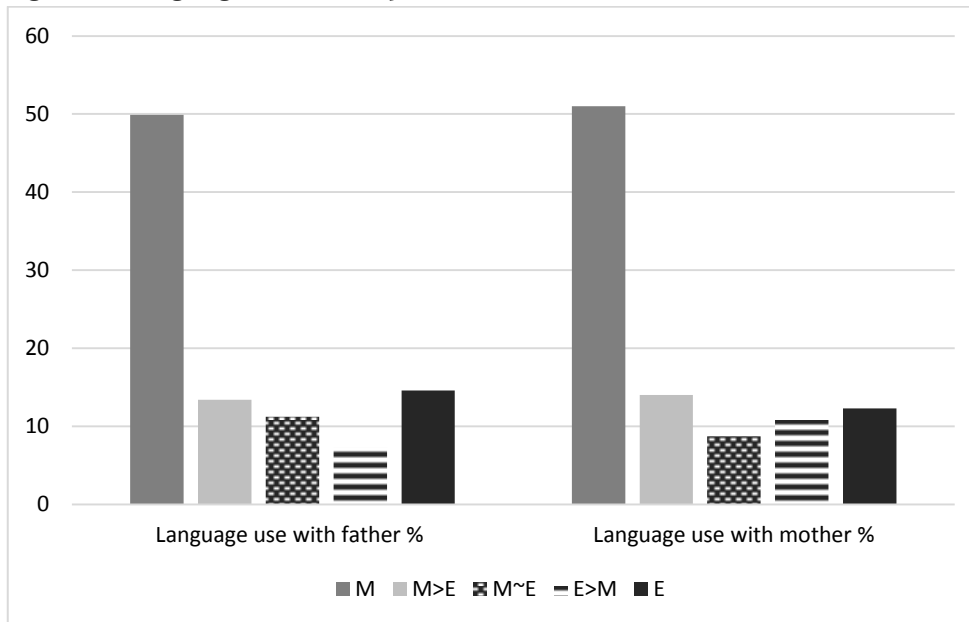
Note. M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English. Other=2.5 % and Not Applicable= 1.1%
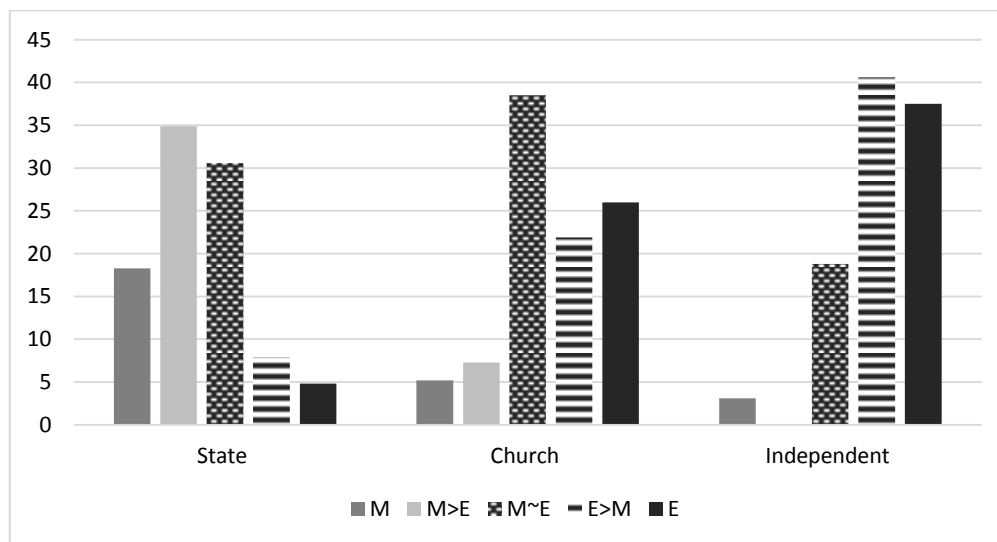
Figure 2: Language used with child (n=202)
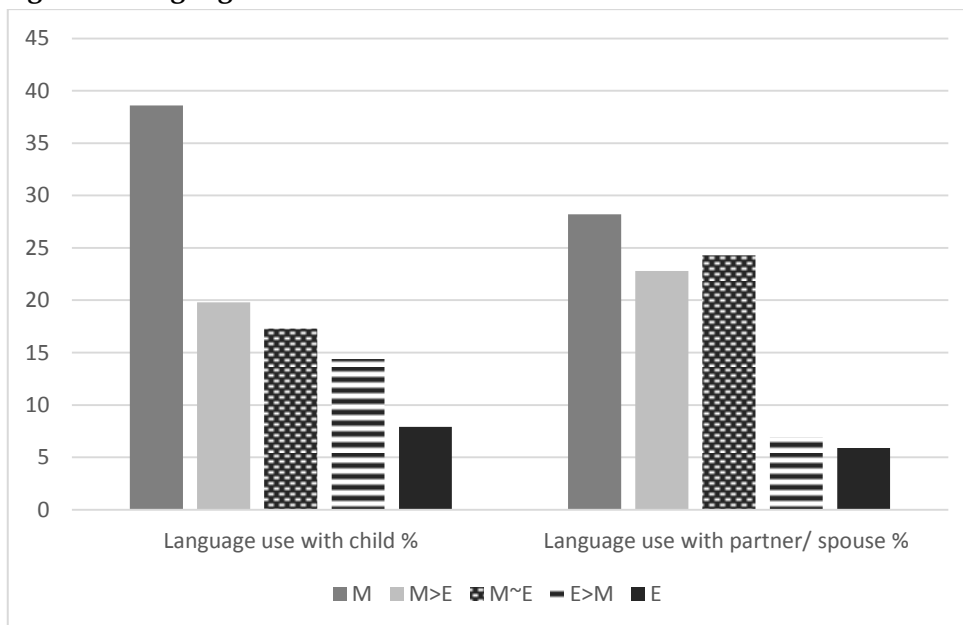
Note. M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English. Other=2.0%

Regarding language used at school, almost a third of the children reported using Maltese and English equally, as evident in Figure 3. Contrary to what happens in the home domain, the use of Maltese only is among the least popular option. When these data are broken down by school sector, more than one-third of children attending state schools claimed to use mainly Maltese which is closely followed by the equal use of Maltese and English. In church schools, the equal use of Maltese and English option is predominant, followed by the sole use of English by more than a quarter of the students attending these schools. In independent schools, the majority of children use mainly English or English only at school.
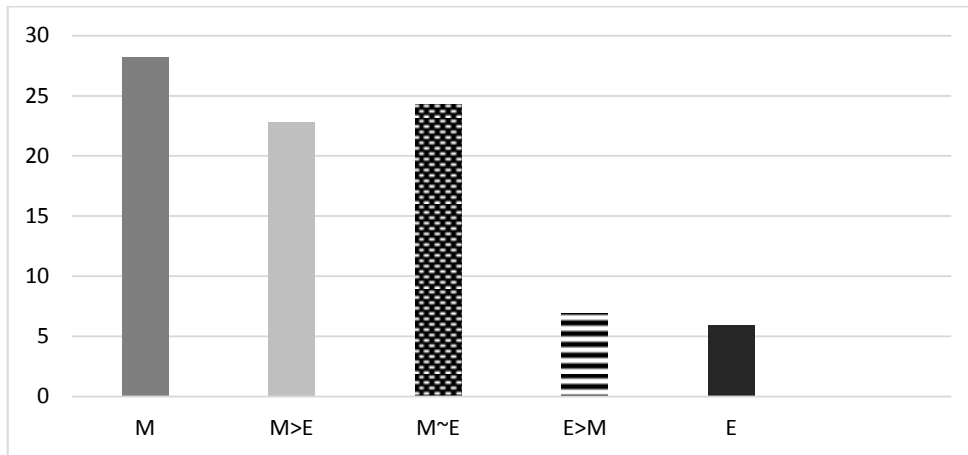
Figure 3: Language used at school by school sector (n=357)

M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English.

With regard to language use at work (Figure 4), a third of the adult participants claimed to use Maltese at work, followed by the use of Maltese and English on an equal basis, by a quarter of the adult population. The least popular option is the use of another language and using English solely.
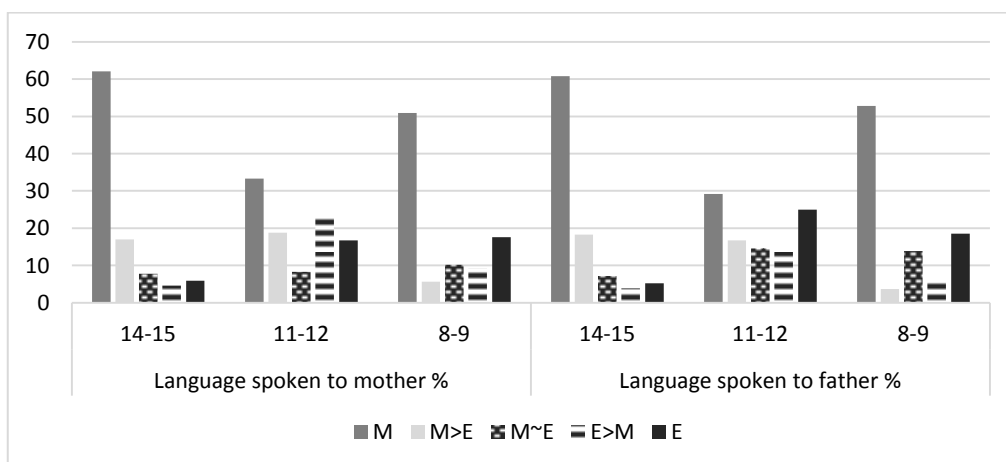
Figure 4: Language used at work (n=202)

Note. M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English. Numbers in brackets = n.

The chi-squared tests for independence for language used to speak to mother ($\chi^2(1)$=52.99, p=<.001, Cramer's V=.417, φ=.589) and father ($\chi^2(1)$=60.75, p=<.001, Cramer's V=.292, φ=.557) by age group were significant as shown in Figure 5. The self-reports show that the use of Maltese is most predominant in the 14- to 15-year-old group, especially when compared with the younger age groups, who tend to use English more with their mothers and fathers. The percentage of 11- to 12-year-olds who use mainly Maltese or mainly English with their parents is almost equal.
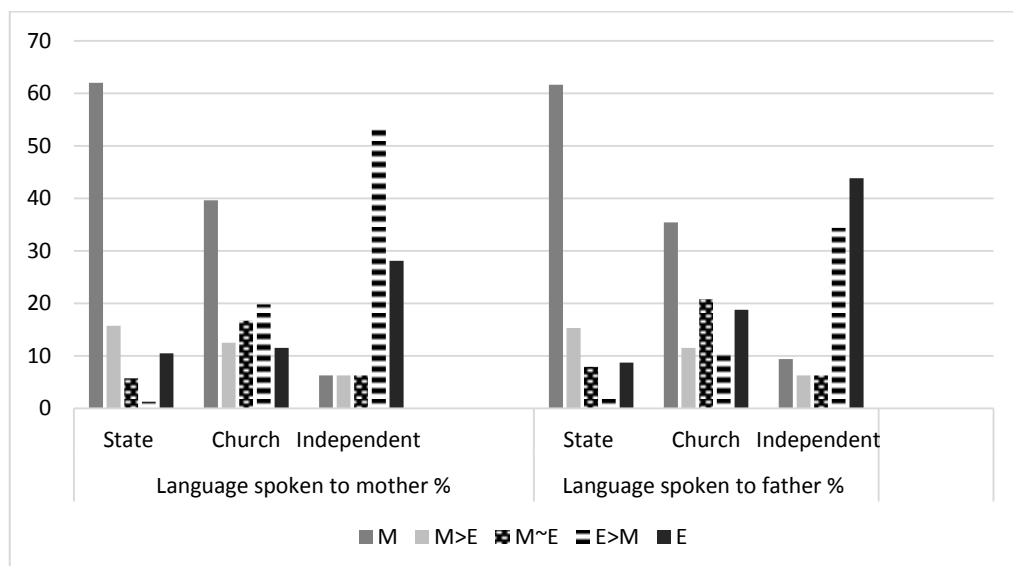
Figure 5: Language used to speak to mother and father by age group (n=357)

Note. M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English; NA=Not Applicable.

The chi-squared tests for independence for language used to speak to mother ($\chi^2(1)$=38.69, p=<.001 Cramer's V=.417, φ=.589) and father ($\chi^2(1)$=49.34, p=<.001 Cramer's V=.394, φ=.557) by school sector were significant (Figure 6). Cramer's V statistic confirms that the association between these variables is a moderate one. The data indicate that the use of Maltese with both parents prevails in state schools, with more than half of the students who attend state schools, speaking mainly Maltese with their parents. At the other end of the language spectrum, almost half of the children who attend independent schools stated that they speak English only, and more than a third of them speak mostly English to their father. A similar trend can be seen for the children who attend independent schools and the use of English with mothers. A more varied picture can be observed for the children attending church schools. While more than a third of these children claimed to speak mainly Maltese with their mother and father, an almost equal distribution can be observed for the other options.

Figure 6: Language used to speak to mother and father by school sector

Note. M=Always in Maltese; M>E= In Maltese more often than in English; M~E= In Maltese & English equally; E>M= In English more often than in Maltese; E=Always in English.
Participants who speak any other language (n=9) or who do not communicate with their mothers or fathers (n=4) were not included in this figure.

Predicting the constructs that contribute to attitudes towards English

A standard multiple regression analysis was run to explore which variables have independent power on the response variable. With regard to the English language attitude constructs, the construct that was found to contribute significantly to all constructs was group membership and use of English.

Table 5: Summary of results of the multiple regression for the child subgroup

		Final model			
		B	**SE B**	**β**	**p**
Social class and use of English	Language spoken to mother	.149	.119	.069	.009
	Age	.003	.057	.002	.964
	School sector	-.483	.08	-.334	<.001
	R^2	.366			
	F for change *in* R^2	13.554			
Instrumental value of English	Language spoken to mother	.808	.145	.309	<.001
	Age	-.041	.07	-.030	.562
	School sector	-.132	.098	-.075	.004
	R^2	.353			
	F for change *in* R^2	12.46			
Locality and use of English	Language spoken to mother	-.275	.131	-.119	.036
	Age	-.003	.063	-.003	.956
	School sector	.255	.088	.163	.004
	R^2	.285			
	F for change *in* R^2	7.772			
Group membership and English	Language spoken to mother	.240	.114	.105	.035
	Age	.619	.055	.518	.061
	School sector	.250	.076	.162	.001
	R^2	.551			
	F for change *in* R^2	38.192			

Multiple regression analyses were also carried out to assess which independent variables best explain children's language attitudes towards English. Dummy coding (Cohen, 2003) was used to transform the categorical variables to fit the multiple regressions analysis. The model (Table 5) proposed that for all constructs, language spoken to mother and school sector are the most influential independent variables. Group membership is influenced the most by these variables: the model explains 55.1% of the variance, followed by the social class and use of English construct (36.6% of the variance).

The effect of age and school sector on the language attitude constructs

Table 6 summarises the results for comparison of the mean values assigned to each construct, across the four age groups and three school sectors respectively.

Table 6: One-way ANOVA results for differences between age groups and school sectors

	Instrumental value of English		Social class and the use of English		Locality and use of English		Nationalistic ideologies and use of English		Group membership and use of English	
Age	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Adult	4.05	0.75	2.78	0.75	2.41	0.69	3.25	0.65	2.57	0.79
14-15	4.17	0.64	2.60	0.75	2.64	0.80	3.90	0.65	2.78	0.94
11-12	4.27	0.51	1.74	0.77	2.91	0.74	3.88	0.72	3.82	0.72
8-9	4.35	0.55	2.53	1.10	2.73	0.98	3.96	0.97	3.99	0.78
F	1.41		35.06		3.19		39.94		102.64	
df[a]	3		3		3		3		1	
	555		554		555		554		353	
p	.238		<.001		.023		<.001		<.001	
η^2	.007		.159		.017		.176		.157	
Sector	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
State	4.15	0.67	2.34	0.88	2.70	0.92	3.18	0.85	3.01	0.98
Church	4.17	0.62	2.67	0.83	2.99	0.85	3.47	0.82	3.22	0.96
Independent	4.29	0.56	1.56	0.66	3.11	0.99	3.49	0.91	3.68	0.72
F	.867		33.51		7.97		7.12		8.73	
df	2		2		2		2		2	
	556		555		556		555		555	
p	.421		<.001		<.001		.001		<.001	
η^2	.003		.107		.028		.024		.029	

Note. ᵃThe two values reported are the between groups and within groups values respectively.

The 4 sub-samples have favourable attitudinal characteristics, except for the social class construct. In general, children show more favourable attitudes than their parents. Parents link social class to the use of English more than their children. As for age-related variations concerning the distinct constructs, the younger age groups (11-12 and 8-9) in general, show more favourable attitudes to the constructs related to the English language than the older age groups (adult and 14-15). Adults show the most negative attitudes to most of the constructs. Of notable interest is the difference between the older and younger groups in the mean scores for the group membership constructs. The effect sizes for most of the constructs were large.

There was a significant main effect of school sector on all constructs except for instrumental value of English. The effect sizes were mainly small, with the exclusion of social class and use of English effect (medium). The mean values for all constructs reveal that participants attending independent schools (both adults and children) view the constructs related to English most positively, closely followed by those attending the Church school sector. It is worth noting that

although the mean score is relatively low (Mean=2.64), those attending church schools mostly agree that English is linked to social class

The effect of language used at home on the language attitude constructs

An ANOVA test was run to examine the effects of language used at home on the language attitude constructs. The examination of results revealed that for the adult group, those who speak English to their children have more positive attitudes towards the constructs dealing with English, although the relationship was not significant. A similar analysis for the child group revealed that those who speak mainly English to their mother show the most positive attitudes to the constructs   (p =<.001). Speaking both Maltese and English equally also seems to be linked to positive attitudes to English as these sub-groups hold the most positive attitudes towards nationalistic ideologies and use of English, and group membership and use of English.

Implications for theory and practice

The starting point in this paper was that language is a socially, politically, and ideologically loaded phenomenon (Pennycook, 2007). As a result, language attitudes influence our reactions to other language users and also influence our language choices (Garrett, 2010). This will affect learners' of English motivation to learn the language.

Language attitudes and ideologies towards English

The exploratory factor analysis' results confirmed that attitudes towards English in Malta can be explained in terms of instrumentality, nationalistic ideologies, ideologies related to locality, social class and group membership. In terms of general attitudes towards English the means (c.f. Table 4) for each construct were relatively high, indicating general positive attitudes. The most positive attitudes were held towards instrumental value of English. This result is not surprising in light thayt English has gained both political power and economic value as a result of globalisation in recent years (Curdt-Christiansen, 2016). In a global context, the use of English as the lingua franca in higher education institutions means that the desire and push for English is not only a phenomenon limited to Malta. Kormos and Csizér (2008) suggest that educators could ask their students to talk about how they see themselves as language users in the future and should explicitly discuss the important role English plays in today's world to promote positive attitudes towards language.

Despite its ubiquity in the studies discussed above, the social class and use of English construct obtained an unexpected low mean score in the quantitative study. This points to the fact that in general, participants do not agree with the

notion that using English will make you more educated and/or more snobbish in Malta. One way of interpreting this is the fact that participants might have been influenced by "social desirability or prestige bias" (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p.8), when faced with a sensitive topic in the questionnaire. In fact, Kanno (2014) argues that social class could be somewhat of a taboo topic in present society. Furthermore, the interaction of socioeconomic status (which was linked to parents' employment) and the attitude constructs, was not found to be statistically significant. One explanation for this could be the conceptualisation of social class in the quantitative study. Social class in Malta cannot be defined solely on the basis of employment. This is in accordance with the claims that social class is more complex than socioeconomic status and can no longer be understood as simply a person's relation to the means of production (Bourdieu, 1991; Block, 2013; Darvin & Norton, 2014).

The standard multiple regression analysis showed that the group membership construct was found to contribute significantly to all constructs. This has a number of implications. Firstly, the use of a quantitative investigation might portray language attitudes as linear and not interrelated. However, the data in this study show that the constructs affect one another, and that participants view these attitudes and ideologies as linked. Secondly, this puts the concept of group membership at the forefront of any discussion on language use in Malta. Therefore linking social factors to language attitudes and ideologies such as those related to nation, locality or social class is in actual fact the act of forming part of a particular group with its own habitus (Bourdieu, 1991).

Language use and language attitudes and ideologies

The results from the quantitative study confirm previous studies that have been carried out in Malta, where Maltese is reported as being the dominant language used in the home domain. There were also participants who use both Maltese and English with their parents or partners. However, it is difficult to qualify exactly what these participants mean by stating that they use both languages. Similarly, Gatt et al. (2016) discuss that during their study on language use with young children, the findings point towards children's daily language input being Maltese-dominant. Yet, they also hypothesise that the participants seemed to underscore the presence of mixing in their language use.

When looking at the patterns in the data suggested by the multiple regression analyses, language spoken to mother and school sector were revealed to be the most important factors in attitudes towards Maltese and English. Again, the pertinence of the group membership construct is highlighted in the fact that it was the construct that was influenced the most by the independent variables mentioned above. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of the language spoken to mother as influencing children's language attitudes and ideologies.

This has implications for the information and advice on language acquisition that should be given to parents.

The role of social factors in the formation of language attitudes and ideologies

The study illustrates ways in which social factors such as age and school sector are linked to language attitudes. Age was found to have an effect on language use at home for the child subgroup. Maltese is predominantly used by the 14- to 15-year-olds, while English is more prevalent in the younger groups. One interpretation for this could be found in the Gatt et al. (2016), where they report that most parents use mainly English with their young children.

In terms of the language attitudes and ideologies held by the child group, the 14- to 15-year-olds show the most negative attitudes to all constructs. This group of children is at an important phase in their schooling experience: that of the end of secondary school and will sit high-stake examinations that take place at the end of secondary school. Efforts are to be made by all stakeholders to address these attitudes in schools, and to ensure that such attitudes do not impact these adolescents' prospects in language learning. Further research could focus on this age group, and the specific reasons as to why they have shown such negative attitudes towards the constructs. Another important point in terms of age-related differences is the adults' attitudes which were more negative than the child groups' attitudes. This is an important finding in terms of the influence that such attitudes could have on their children's attitudes.

Bonnici (2010) and Camilleri Grima (2013) among others, have postulated that the language situation in Maltese schools is changing because of the presence of students from different social backgrounds in all school sectors. However, the data in this study show that there is a link between use of English in independent schools and use of Maltese in state schools, and church schools being a sort of middle-ground, with students favouring English in most cases. When learning English, children are factoring in their own and their significant others' attitudes towards the language. Learners of English in Malta are learning a language which they might encounter in their everyday lives, which coexists alongside Maltese.

School administrators could also evaluate which ideologies are present in their schools, and the way these are being translated into practice by all stakeholders. A thorough examination of the forms of capital that are dominant in the school should take place, and measures to counteract social injustice based on language use should be encouraged. Such schools could ensure that the forms of capital that are being valued in their schools are not impeding students from fully developing their potential in English.

Suggestions for future studies

The data presented here were statistical in nature and also based on self-report data. Furthermore the adults in the sample were mainly females. The questionnaire completion by adults was based on the presumption that they could read and/or write Maltese or English. Future research could include an ethnographic study of language use in families and could explore how this can be associated with language attitudes and ideologies. Such studies could also specifically address the role of the language spoken by fathers on language attitudes, and the way fathers might affect their children's language attitudes.

Finally, in this study, the focus was on Maltese nationals. However, the ever-changing linguistic landscape in Malta, characterised by migration and multilingualism, would indeed be an interesting site for the exploration of language attitudes and ideologies. A suggestion for future research could be a comparison of attitudes and ideologies of Maltese and non-Maltese participants, to investigate the role of the local context in their formation.

Conclusions

The results support the link between language use in the home domain and at school and positive language attitudes. The role of language spoken to mother and school sector were found to have an overall effect on the language attitudes of participants. In a postcolonial context and a rapidly globalising world where people, information and economies are increasingly in contact, ideologies surrounding language are shaped by postcolonial history, together with existing local societal ideologies and the current role of English, or particular varieties of English in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu, 1991).

The study's findings call for a more critical approach to the teaching of English in Malta. At times within the local context, the teaching of English takes place as if in a social vacuum. The textbooks and materials used in classrooms rarely refer to the fact that English is used in Malta, as well as being a global language. Mirhosseini (2018), writing specifically about English language teaching contexts, proposes an inclusion of ideology in the teaching of English. He calls for critical socio-political and ideological awareness as part of its pedagogy. Critical language awareness sessions could also enable students to understand the affordances of learning English, together with Maltese and other languages in Malta.

The present study brought new evidence regarding the interplay of language attitudes and ideologies towards English, and the effect of social factors on them. To conclude, the results highlight the importance of considering the specific characteristics of different groups in Malta, when implementing social, linguistic

and educational policies. The teaching and learning of English should take into consideration not only the pedagogy and resources for its success, but the attitudes and ideologies of its learners.

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