

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies



**Merve Uysal**

English Language Teaching, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Final International University, Girne, Mersin/Türkiye ORCID ID: 0000-0003-3430-0194.

**ABSTRACT:** In this research, the foreign language education policy of Cyprus, which was under British rule between 1878 and 1960, with a special reference to the English Language and its reflection on the present day were examined. The study on the period in question is based on a qualitative analysis of British archival documents and domestic sources. As the history of Cyprus, it is still possible to see especially traces of the education policy formulated by the British who ruled the island in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the early years, relatively minor attempts at colonialism were made compared to other British colonies, as the British gave the colonies the autonomy to govern their own languages and educational systems. The influence of the colonial power's language, particularly in the Cypriot education system, started to be noticed after the 1930s when the political agenda changed and the British attitude changed. As a result, during the colonial period of the United Kingdom in Cyprus, the British tried to bring the education of the society, which was obtained as a result of education, to a common point by gathering it in a central structure.

**KEYWORDS:** Education policies; English language policy; British colonial period; Sustainability; Cyprus

---

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Language policy holds crucial ethical, political, and legal significance for governing bodies around the world (Patten, 2001, p. 691). According to Spolsky (2004), language policy emerges from the interplay of societal traditions, beliefs, and preferences. These elements, while appearing distinct, are intricately connected. Often, language policy is overt, underscored by official statements, laws, regulations, and constitutional guidelines provided by governmental bodies. However, it is frequently the case that language policy operates subliminally, discernible only through the practical implementation observed on the ground. Furthermore, the decisions shaping language policy in a nation are typically reliant on its bureaucratic framework. These decisions are formulated by governmental entities and enforced through the mechanisms established by bureaucratic authorities (Bamgbose, 2020). The complex dynamics of language policy, influenced by political, social, economic, and cultural forces (Spolsky, 2004, p. 6; Baldauf, 2006, p. 149), become particularly pronounced in post-colonial contexts where language intersects significantly with issues of identity and power (Phillipson, 1992, p. 110). While some post-colonization countries adopt policies to encourage local languages and foster national identity and solidarity, in others, colonial-era linguistic and cultural legacies are maintained to the detriment of local languages (Pennycook, 1998, p. 126).

English, the most respected language of multilingualism today, is the result of the British Empire making it the most widely used language in the world, sometimes at the expense of local languages (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998; Crystal, 2003). In this context, the degree of use of English in the countries that were colonized by the empire and the high rate of use in those countries have been the subject of several studies (Pennycook, 1998; Crystal, 2003; Hadjioannou, Tsiplakou and Kappler, 2011; Heraclidou, 2012; Michieka and Ondari, 2017; Lau, 2020). English has different functions in such countries. The aforementioned functions, which were also considered in the writing of this essay, were put forward as 'instrumental', 'regulatory', 'interpersonal', and 'imaginative/innovative' (Kachru, 1982, p. 41).

Cyprus, situated strategically in the Mediterranean, has been a focal point for various civilizations throughout history. As different powers governed the island, they left their mark on its social, cultural, economic, and political fabric. Two notable influences from this diverse historical governance are multiculturalism, arising from the blending of various cultures, and multilingualism. The ruling authorities of each era implemented changes in Cyprus's administrative and educational systems, aligning them with their national agendas. As a former British colony, Cyprus is noted for its distinct colonial policies, which

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

differed significantly from those applied in other British colonies in Africa and Asia. The unique cultural attributes and political structures of Cyprus have had a profound impact on its educational systems and practices since the British period (Persianis, 1996, p. 45). Zembylas (2002) describes Cyprus as a developing post-colonial nation that is navigating the challenges of reconciling local traditions with global influences. Consequently, the Cypriot education system is closely tied to both domestic and international political changes. This system mirrors the ongoing debates and conflicts inherent in a country marked by diverse ethnicities and external governance, now partitioned into two distinct entities. Education in Cyprus has thus become a pivotal arena where political agendas and interests are prominently displayed (Heraclidou, 2012, p. 47). Given this historical context, it is evident that remnants of the cultures brought by various ruling states still persist on the island today. Throughout Cyprus's turbulent history, particularly during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the United Kingdom's control over the island had a profound impact on its residents through its educational policies. These influences have left enduring marks on the cultural landscape of Cyprus. Therefore, in this research, the foreign language education policy of Cyprus, which was under the domination of the United Kingdom between 1878 and 1960 with a special reference to the English Language and its reflections on today were examined.

The aim of the study is to analyze the reflection of the educational policies formulated by the government on English language education. Since 1878, many legal regulations have been made by the United Kingdom. However, this study focuses on initiatives in teaching English with a focus on foreign language education policy and is based on a qualitative analysis of colonial government publications and empirical studies. In the study, archival records of England and Cyprus, the newspaper titled 'The Cyprus Gazette' published by the Colonial Government, and copyrighted works related to the subject have been used in comparison. The documents obtained from the British archives constitute the main frame of the study. In particular, the education laws enacted by the Colonial Government, education reports, and the internal correspondence of the Colonial Government officials and the mutual correspondence between the Cyprus Government and the Colonial Office constitute the main data of the study. Although English language has always been at the forefront in Cyprus, where English has a very different place in education and society for historical reasons, there are few studies evaluating foreign language education policy in the field of education policy in the Island. For this reason, it is aimed that the aforementioned research will fill a gap in the literature on education policy in Cyprus and its sub-dimension, foreign language education policy.

## 2. LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE IN COLONIAL CONTEXT

English has had varying degrees of importance in the Island's education system. It had an important place in state affairs and was used in all official correspondence since it was one of the official languages until 1960. On the basis of certain historical events, the eighty-two-year British colonial period can be divided into smaller periods in itself.

a) *1. Period (1878-1942): The period from the transfer of the island to the British until the emergence of differences in the policies of the British administration due to the increasing nationalism after World War II.*

On the island, which was under the rule of the British Empire, the language of communication between the Greek and Turkish communities and the British administration was naturally English for eighty-two years. The British government thought that it would raise loyal citizens by making both Turks and Greeks speak English. For this reason, many initiatives and incentives have been displayed to teach English to the communities on the island.

The English School (still existing in Southern Cyprus) founded by the Anglican clergyman and educator Canon Frank Darvall Newham, who came to Cyprus in the same period (1900) to serve as the Education Director of the Island, applied a curriculum that focused on modern languages and commercial subjects such as shorthand, typewriting, and bookkeeping to prepare students for civil service and a commercial career (Orr, 1918; Varnava and Clarke, 2014). The colonial government also needed skilled clerks who spoke English in order to manage the transition of the island to modernity and the bureaucratic system of government. Therefore, the need for schools within the English School system became imperative. The colonial government was prepared to provide financial aid to schools teaching English Language. These schools were classified as subsidized private schools, and received government grants according to a formula that considered four factors. The first factor was the salaries of the English teachers. The British teachers received a higher percentage of the salary. The second factor was the number of courses, which included the number of students studying English as well as the teaching hours for other English languages. The third factor was the success of the students in examinations conducted by the Government. The fourth factor was the overall proficiency of the teaching as determined by British officers from the Department of Education (Weir, 1952). The English School accepted 13 students in its first year of operation. However, it quickly established itself as one of the top English secondary schools in Cyprus, drawing pupils from all the ethnic groups on the island and from all over the world (Antoniou, 2015, p. 29). Rauf Raif Denктаş, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot people, and Glafcos Clerides, the leader of the Greek community, graduated from this school, which provides high-level English education and is under the administration of the British. The school, which was transferred to the Cyprus administration in 1960, has not been able to accept Turkish Cypriot students since 1974. After 2003, it started to accept Turkish Cypriot students again. Today, it still includes Turkish Cypriot students.

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

On November 5, 1914, the British Empire declared that it had annexed the island, without deciding its final future, with an order issued. After the Empire took the island under its sovereignty, it became able to make decisions about Cyprus more easily than before. The government's first move in order to increase the control over education began with the enactment of the Education Law in 1920 for the supervision of schools on the island. The purpose of the law was transparently clear: the government wanted the Greek and Turkish communities to have the same authority over their respective education policies. Many decisions such as schools to be opened with the law, the appointment of teachers or the termination of their duties were subject to the approval of the High Commissioner (Elementary Education Law, 1920). In addition, each community had its own education board, with the High Commissioner leading both boards. The English School Superintendent (appointed by the London government) also sat on two ethnically-based education boards, or commissions. English was taught in schools, but not as a requirement for higher education. In part, this was due to the fact that English was partly because English was employed in courts, various civil services, media outlets, and many areas of public life.

In 1925, when the British Government declared Cyprus a crown colony, the education system on the island began to be debated by the members of the Advisory Committee on Education in the colonies, of which Sir Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, an important figure in colonial history, was a member. In that way, the Colonial Government succeeded in establishing authority over the Education System of Cyprus by following a more interventionist policy within a systematic framework. Meanwhile, the Greek Cypriots expected the Government to take a step towards realizing their demands for both wider constitutional representation and the unification of Cyprus with Greece, both of which the government rejected (Persianis, 1996, p. 56). Another move of the Colonial Government regarding the supervision of the island's education system was the imposition of Education Act in 1929. Believing that education was used as an instrument against the British presence, the government enacted the law in question (for political reasons) to undermine the influence of politicians on education (CO 67/232/1). The British administration believed that especially primary school teachers were guided by anti-Government political circles and that primary schools were the place where these harmful ideas flourished. Thus, with the said law, which came into force in 1929, the appointment of teachers came under the direct control of the governor. In order for the law to be more easily accepted by the society, improvements were made in the salaries and personal benefits of teachers.

The government believed that the existing educational structure was effective on the basis of the opposing actions and views on the administration in the Island. So, he began taking steps to centralize education and control curricula. Therefore, the Education Laws enacted in 1920 and 1929 were two important laws that provided the legal basis for the British administration to establish a centralized administration in Cyprus. These laws made the Government more effective in education by removing the legal and natural leaders of both communities from their work with education commissions.

The most effective final move to establish a centralized administration came with the measures taken after the Greek revolt in 1931. After leaving the Ottoman Empire, Greece's grand goal was to unite the Greeks under one flag and reach the 'Megali Idea'. Undoubtedly, the Greek Cypriots in Cyprus also adopted this goal: the most important indicator of this was the 1931 Greek revolt. With the increasing nationalism feelings among the Greeks, the applications made to England in order to unite with Greece also gained momentum. When their diplomatic attempts failed, the Greeks chose to resort to armed violence, and the rebellion they started across the island on October 21, 1931, reached its climax by burning the Governor's Mansion. The government intervened immediately, deported those involved in the incident and established order in a short time. However, the Government's measures were not limited to these. The British Administration responded by imposing sanctions on the Turkish and Greek sides, above all in the field of education (Güneş, Çapraz and Erdönmez, 2018, p. 119-120). The Government, which did not restrict the education of both communities until the Greek revolt, took a different attitude afterwards. The disturbances of 1931, even though they were spontaneous, were a major turning point in the governance of the island; the main objective was to eliminate the 'Megali Idea' agitation as a condition for political stability, not because the British hated 'Megali Idea', or perhaps even wanted 'Megali Idea', but because they saw it as taking away the peace which was their main objective in the Mediterranean; the years that followed would see the introduction of a succession of authoritarian laws designed to guarantee law and order for the future and to turn Cyprus into an obedient Crown Colony. Since, at the time, it was seen as an imperative that the island should remain British, the Cypriot identity, which had previously been tied to loyalty to Greece or Türkiye, would have to be radically reshaped (Heraclidou, 2012). As Mr. Rappas has recently put it, British colonial politics in Cyprus was a radical program of social engineering, using discipline, punishment, and persuasion (Rappas, 2006).

After the suppression of the Greek Cypriot revolt, the Governor of Cyprus, Storrs, listed the measures to be taken in his letter dated 5 November 1931 he sent to the Minister of Colonies. Among the measures, the second item on education includes the following (CO 67/240/11):

- i. Placing the curriculum and order of all primary schools on the island under the control of the Government
- ii. Supervision of secondary education institutions at the highest possible level (p. 51).

Therefore, starting in 1931 during the British Colonial Period, the impact of English, the language of the colonial authority, began to significantly affect the educational systems of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The colonial government's

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

strategy was aimed at shifting the focus of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots from their ethnic centers to a Cyprus governed by British rule. The government wanted to create an 'Imperial Colonial Citizen' in line with its own ideals through the education system. Hence, the Director of Education at the time, J.R. Cullen, was commissioned by the Governor of Cyprus, Sir Herbert Richmond Palmer, to prepare a new primary education program. Significant changes were recorded in the course subjects and teaching methods and techniques on the basis of the new curriculum (Güneş et al., 2018, p. 122). In addition to the foregoing, the Colonial Government was trying to create a 'third' people other than the ethnic origin of both communities, and it was aimed that this people would have English codes (Hadjioannou et al., 2011). Therefore, the 'Flag Ban' was introduced in 1931 in order to prohibit both communities from using any flags, pennants and similar symbols. Accordingly, flags of countries other than the British Empire and similar symbols were forbidden (The Cyprus Gazette, 1931, p. 1043).

After the suppression of the Greek Cypriot revolt on May 29, 1933, the Cypriot Government implemented what the Colonial Office in London hailed as 'one of the most important acts they have ever passed.' The new legislation granted the Governor complete control over the educational staff and curriculum, effectively establishing a well-organized elementary education system in Cyprus. With the Colonial Office's full endorsement, the law was adopted. A key change introduced by this new law was the reclassification of educational institutions: distinctions were no longer drawn between Muslim schools and Greek Orthodox schools but between Muslim and Christian schools. The legislation specified only the religions of each community, omitting any reference to the nationalities of these groups. With this much accomplished, the intention of the Government was to proceed with the introduction of a new curriculum (Hadjioannou et al., 2011; Heraclidou, 2012). It was an important topic of discussion which subjects would be covered in the programs and with which teaching methods they would be taught. During the British rule, the most radical changes were made in the History and Geography courses as these two courses were the best tools to form a people's identity and it was believed that they were delivered from a very nationalistic point of view. Therefore, they aimed for a curriculum that was free from the history of both Greece and Türkiye and was suitable for the British Empire colony (Heraclidou, 2012, p. 53).

Teaching English in primary schools was another issue of importance to the Government. The United Kingdom was aware that teaching its own language in the communities it ruled was a strategic step to ensure its permanence in the colony. It put knowledge and experience gained in different colonies into practice in the administration of Cyprus. The government's primary goal was to teach English, the lingua franca throughout the island, as the language would facilitate the administration of the indigenous population. For example, the experiences of Thomas Babington Macaulay, the senior British administrator who served in India from 1834-1838, reveal the sensitivity of this issue: "We must do our best to create a class that can communicate between us and the communities we govern. These people are a class that is Indian by race, but lives like the British in terms of language, ideas, morals and culture" (Jones, 2004, p. 237). Furthermore, the materials that would develop a sense of belonging removed from the schools of both communities were replaced by colonial symbols. As part of the upcoming celebrations of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George V's reign (Silver Jubilee), colorful portraits of the King and Queen were hung in schools with English, Turkish and Greek subtitles added (CO 67/258/6, p. 44). On 22 November 1934, Colonial Secretary Philip Cunliffe-Lister sent a letter of thanks to Sir George Francis Hill, sharing his views that hanging portraits would serve to establish loyalty to the British Empire in line with the Government's new policy of education (integration policy) (CO 67/258/6, p. 42).

In 1935, Arthur Mayhew, Chief Education Advisor to the Colonial Minister, concluded that the Secondary Education reforms recommended by the Governor of the Island should be supported, as a result of his analysis in Cyprus as the teachers in the schools had a great influence on the people which did not please the Government at all. Colonial Minister Philip Cunliffe-Lister expressed his opinions on secondary education in Cyprus as follows (CO 67/246/13):

"As I understand it, the situation is that teachers are recruited from secondary schools that are not directly under Government control. Therefore, it seems to me that these secondary schools lie at the root of our problem in Cyprus. The education and general atmosphere of the teacher in high school will be transferred by him to his students in primary school. ... The government should immediately turn its attention to the issue of secondary schools" (p. 20).

These views of the Minister were also accepted by other high-level politicians. For example, Ministry officer Dawe's approach to the issue was as follows (CO 67/249/14):

"There is no doubt that secondary education schools are at the root of the Cyprus problem, as stated by the Minister. The effects of these schools are felt in every part of the society throughout the colony. All of the people who shape the political life of the island, government officials and trade groups graduate from these schools. Teachers are graduating from these schools and impressing less educated people. This is why secondary schools lie at the heart of the issue of the island's future" (p. 11).

The law was passed on September 2, 1935 so that educational programs, school administrations and teachers could come under the direct control of the Government. With this law, the Cyprus Education Director would be informed about the textbooks, curriculum, appointed teachers and course materials if schools wanted to continue receiving financial support from the government. The rationale of this law was to prevent the training of young people with ideas against the United Kingdom. Thus, the young generations who grew up with the identity of 'Ideal Imperial Citizen' would shape the political future of the Island (Güneş et al., 2018, p. 129).

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

Among the efforts to teach and develop the English language, the Victorian Girls' School (its first name was Victoria İslam İnas Sanayi Mektebi-1902), where Turkish and Greek girls studied in English, has a considerable place among the main targets set by England. In order to serve this purpose, Miss B. A. Bullen, a British headmistress, was appointed for the first time in 1935, and Victorian Girls' School principals were always British until 1951, when the pressures subsided (Dedeçay, 1985).

The Ministry of Education announced a school holiday on May 12, 1937, in honor of the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. By this time, it was evident that the government had firmly established its influence in primary education, with Cypriot students generally adhering to the curricula and regulations that were in place for primary schools in England. Reflecting on this period under Governor Palmer's administration, Michalis Maratheftis, a student at the time, attempted to describe the prevailing mood with his remarks: *"The history and geography of Greece was not taught in primary school and I did not see pictures of the heroes of the Greek revolution. But I learned a lot about the history and geography of Britain. We celebrated the birthday of the English king and the Imperial Day. We used to sing the British National Anthem at every festival and raise the British flag"* (Heraclidou, 2012, p. 66).

The English school was followed by the Morphou Teacher Training Center, which was opened in Güzelyurt in the 1937-1938 academic year, where Turkish and Greek male students were boarding. The first principals of the college were British nationals elected by the British administration. There were teachers from three nationalities, Turkish, Greek and English, among the staff of the school (Aziz, 1978). In the college where the language of instruction was English, Turkish for Turks and Greek for Greeks were taught for two or three hours a week. In the following period, Teacher Colleges were opened where Turkish and Greek teacher candidates studied separately. The college, where Turkish teacher candidates were educated, was transformed into Atatürk Teacher Academy with the law enacted in 2000.

b) *Second Period (1943-1960): The period in which the British administration reviewed its education policies and ultimately ended with the transfer of education to the institutions of the two communities*

In daily life, students were prepared for English proficiency exams at 'ordinary level' in High School 2 and 'distinction level' in the last year of High School in order to become a civil servant in British-administered offices or to continue into higher education. In fact, as a result of these, the British managed to create a cultivated middle class (on the basis of English education). During the years of British rule, individuals had three options after completing their high school education: employment in the civil service for those who passed the English proficiency exams, a Teachers' College that trains teachers for primary schools, or the chance for higher education in England or Türkiye (Hadjioannou et al., 2011). Despite the poverty and economic difficulties during the war, the high school graduates of the period had to choose the options that they could continue their life on the island as it was not quite possible to leave there.

Although the British Government had taken many initiatives and provided financial incentives for the society to reach a very good level of English, it is also striking that the number of Turks who could speak English very well on the island, which was under British protection, was not more than two dozen. In this respect, the Shakespeare School, which was opened by Necmi Sagib Bodamyalızade in the 1943-1944 academic year for the purpose of teaching and spreading English among Turkish Cypriots, was one of the first private schools to teach in English with an important function (Özkul and Özsezer, 2017, p. 741). In 1949, English was given priority within the scope of the regulation on primary school curricula. However, English was present not only in primary school programs but also in secondary school programs. The state increased the salaries of English-speaking teachers and increased English teaching hours to support the use of the English language. In addition, knowing English became one of the preconditions of working as a teacher (Weir, 1952).

In 1952, the government continued to set up 'state sponsored' schools to educate both Greek children and Turkish children. The language of instruction at these schools was English, which enabled the rapid spread of English language and culture. Not only was English introduced as a compulsory subject at primary school, but it was also widely taught at many Greek secondary schools. In addition, the Government made it a condition that only schools that taught English could receive government aid. After it became a prerequisite for government subsidies to schools, teaching English also spread widely (Persianis, 1996, p. 58).

The introduction of the young people from Cyprus to British culture was another important aspect of the education policy of the period. The idea of training Cypriots at British universities and colleges was seen as the most effective way to 'build a new tradition of British education' by helping Cypriots gain a 'better understanding' and 'comprehension of the British outlook and character'. Another way to promote British culture was by encouraging primary school choirs to participate in the Royal School Music Examinations and the Gainsborough International Painting Competition.

As a result of all the foregoing, it can be said that during the period when Cyprus was under British rule, English used each of the four functions listed in Kachru (1982, p. 41). The instrumental function Kachru says that English is the language of education. In terms of instrumental function, English served as the language of instruction in all Cypriot schools. English was also the language of national examinations at all levels of education. In addition, the British Government's request to determine the qualifications of various professional groups, especially lawyers and doctors, can be given as an example of an instrumental function. The success of the education system at that time was measured by English proficiency. English has become a symbol of exclusivity and

## **English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies**

modernity for Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. In addition, English has also played a key role in the regulatory function, which represents the use of a language in the legal and administrative system. As an official language, besides Greek and Turkish, English is the language's regulatory function for legal and administrative matters. In addition, since English is the common daily spoken language between Turks and Greeks who do not speak each other's language, it has also functioned as a language of communication by revealing the feature of interpersonal communication. In the same period, English also served the creative function of the language. In addition to being the language of mass media, it can be said that it is also the language of literary creativity. Most of the local literary publications and local newspapers were printed in English at that time.

Since the beginning of the British period in Cyprus, teaching English has been promoted and large-scale financial resources have been reserved to achieve this goal. Indeed, the most important factor in the spread of English onto the island was the British Empire's colonial power. The British governors assigned to the island affected the education system of the Greek and Turkish communities. There was relatively little attempted colonialism in Hong Kong (or any other British colony for that matter) because the British initially left colonial communities to run their own language and education systems. This was because the Island came under British control by default: it was incorporated into the Kingdom without war and with the existence of an education system that already existed for the two communities. Although they did not intend to have much influence on the education systems in both communities, the British administration's intervention in educational institutions did not go way over the line. The British promoted the idea of having two schools for Turkish Cypriot pupils, which meant that each school system tended to focus on the cultural and ethnocentric centres in Türkiye and Greece. However, after the 1930s, there was a shift in the British colony's stance. This shift was due to changes in the British colonies' political strategies (e.g. the aim of consolidating power in the southeast Mediterranean), the proclamation of Cyprus as British crown colony (1925), and the intensification of political clashes between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. As a result, the colonial government's policy was to move the ethnic centers of Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots towards Cyprus under British rule. By introducing new regulations in the field of education for both communities, Turks and Greeks were prohibited from celebrating their national holidays or flying their flags.

The intervention of the British colony in the education system was made through the laws enacted. In this way, British principles and ideals were incorporated into education by preventing Greece and Türkiye from affecting the education system there. In this way, the new generations would be more sympathetic to the British existence and would grow up more loyal to British ideals. However, with the changing laws, English became mandatory in the final two years of primary school education. The English School was founded as a private institution in Nicosia, in 1900. The government took control of the school and changed its mission by re-structuring the curriculum. The school was redesigned to support civil servants and prepare for the London Matriculation Examinations so that students could continue their higher education in London. Moreover, the government established multi-communal schools, including the Teacher's College, where the language of instruction was English. Apart from these, English proficiency was a requirement for the hiring and promotion of teachers, as well as for civil service jobs. The Government also provided financial support for the use of English in schools in both communities.

### **3. THE INFLUENCE OF THE COLONIAL BACKGROUND ON THE CURRENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICIES**

The education policies created during the British period left deep traces on the islanders. Thanks to these traces, they were able to easily establish a connection between their past colonial experiences and the present. In other words, although the island gained its independence and had a British-made constitution in 1960, its colonial past is still ubiquitous today. The English School is the most visible manifestation of this legacy. Located in both parts of the island, the school (named Turkish Maarif College in the Turkish section) is a structure designed by the British administration. These schools are still recognized by the society as the schools with the highest quality education. The schools' academic programs are based on the English secondary school model. For the first three years of study, students follow a comprehensive curriculum to prepare for the general exams and to familiarize themselves with the content of all courses offered. Then, students choose compulsory IGSCCE topics (Antoniou, 2015).

However, because English plays such a vital role in the life of the Cypriots, there is a long-standing tradition of learning and teaching English in Cyprus. Due to the island's colonial history and the role of English as a universal language, English held a special place in the Cypriot lexicon. Learning English is a fundamental part of the curriculum at all four levels of the educational system in Cyprus (pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary). The language of instruction in most of the island's existing universities is English. In addition, although English does not have an official status today, it is widely used in private sector announcements, advertisements and by the government in the public sphere, in addition to Greek and Turkish. Although official languages are a wider communication language, it is seen that English is mainly used in commercial sectors such as tourist areas, shops, real estate agents and in the names of industrial products (Persianis, 1996). Moreover, there is general agreement that English names are more appropriate for businesses.

English plays a very important role for Greek Cypriot and Turkish people, especially as the language of higher education (in the UK). In fact, many Cypriot parents send their kids to study at UK universities because they think they are 'best'. Thanks to the privileges of being a post-colonial country, they have more opportunities to send their children there than other nationals in

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

terms of tuition fees. A good knowledge of English also helps individuals to understand the culture in England and to some extent adapt to life and culture when they study there. In addition, most Cypriots have relatives living in the UK and Australia. This brings a fundamental familiarity with British culture. Considering the practices, lifestyle, cuisine and even language of British culture, it seems to have some influence on Cypriots.

In addition, especially since 1974, the fact that the island is a safer place has enabled some Cypriots who formerly immigrated to countries such as England and Australia to return to their homeland. The fact that the children of the returning individuals were born and raised in those countries naturally allowed them to speak English as their mother tongue rather than Greek and Turkish. In addition, the fact that there are many British citizens living permanently in different parts of the island can be considered as a reason that increases the demand for English education institutions. On the other hand, the degree of communication between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots between 1974 and 2003 was minimal. When the border gates were opened in 2003, the two communities were able to communicate with each other for the first time in 29 years. However, with this came the language problem. The new generation could not speak the other community's language, so English became the lingua franca of the two communities. This sudden change led to English being used as a lingua franca among both communities in Cyprus. It can be said that this is a unique event. After all, Cyprus was a post-colony state at the time. Nowadays, English remains the only lingua franca used by both communities.

### 4. DISCUSSION

The imposition of English by the British Empire in Cyprus has played a pivotal role in the intricate link between language and ethnicity among Greek and Turkish Cypriots. As Karoulla-Vrikki (2004) highlights, both ethnic groups have undertaken efforts to preserve their languages against the encroaching dominance of English. This struggle is not merely linguistic but deeply intertwined with the dynamics of power, control over ethnic relations, and the sustenance of ethnic identity. The persistence of Greek and Turkish languages amidst English's imposition underscores the profound relationship between language and the affirmation of ethnic identity, showcasing how linguistic preferences are emblematic of broader socio-political and cultural allegiances.

In the postcolonial context, English has assumed a hegemonic stance, impacting various nations, including Cyprus, in multifaceted ways. McEntee-Atalianis (2004) notes that while English brings certain advantages in terms of global connectivity and access, it also bears costs that reflect on nationalism, linguistic identity, and globalization. The prevalence of English in Cyprus mirrors these broader global dynamics, influencing social and cultural identities in a nation striving to navigate its colonial past and its present aspirations within the global community. The balancing act between embracing English for global engagement and preserving national linguistic identity encapsulates the complex legacy of English in postcolonial Cyprus. The policies regarding the medium of instruction introduced during the colonial era, which favored English, have left a lasting imprint on Cyprus's educational landscape.

Pehlivan (2018) articulates that the sustained significance of English as a medium of instruction stems not from a residual loyalty to Britain but from a pragmatic desire to prepare individuals for participation in the global arena. This policy decision reflects a broader understanding of English's role in providing educational and economic opportunities on a global scale, highlighting the pragmatic considerations that often underpin language policies in post-colonial societies. Furthermore, the spread and influence of English in Cyprus have sparked concerns regarding linguistic imperialism and the potential marginalization of indigenous identities. Papapavlou (2001) draws attention to the apprehensions surrounding a 'linguistic invasion' by English and the perceived 'suppression' of the Greek language. These concerns are emblematic of the tension between maintaining linguistic heritage and adapting to global linguistic trends. The discourse around linguistic imperialism in Cyprus underscores the challenges of safeguarding cultural and linguistic diversity in an increasingly interconnected world.

#### *Educational Policies: Between Colonial Ruins and Modern Necessities*

The lingering effects of British colonial education policies in Cyprus present a complex panorama of historical influence and contemporary necessities. Introduced by the British, these policies were designed not merely for administrative convenience but also for integrating Cypriot society into the broader British Empire. This strategic promotion of English aimed at cultivating a loyal cadre and assimilating Cyprus into the British fold has had long-lasting implications for the island's educational priorities and social structure (Persianis, 1996).

English, as introduced during the colonial period, has maintained its significance far beyond any loyalty to Britain, reflecting its dual role: from a colonial imposition to a necessity for global engagement (Pehlivan, 2018). This transformation underscores the nuanced transition from being a tool of colonial utility to becoming an essential element for global connectivity, necessary for higher education and economic advancement in the globalized world. Furthermore, the British educational policies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century aimed to foster a more British-aligned society in Cyprus by influencing educational and sociopolitical aspects, thereby embedding ethno-nationalism within the island's cultural and educational frameworks (Özenli Özmatyatli & Özkul, 2013). This has had profound implications for Cyprus's educational system, prioritizing English not only as a medium of instruction but also as a critical component in the professional realm.

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

The role of English as a lingua franca, particularly in facilitating cross-community communication in a post-conflict Cyprus, accentuates its indispensability. It has become crucial in fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding, thereby underscoring its function as a bridge between diverse communities within Cyprus and facilitating the island's engagement with the global community (Fotiou, 2023).

### *The Role of English in Post-Colonial Identity Formation*

The imposition of English by the British Empire in Cyprus has left a multifaceted legacy that continues to influence the island's post-colonial identity, shaping linguistic, cultural, and educational dynamics. Studies by Fotiou (2023), Varela (2006), McEntee-Atalianis (2004) and Papapavlou (2001) provide deep insights into the evolution of English from a colonial tool to a pivotal component of global engagement. Fotiou (2023) expands on the ubiquity of English in Cyprus, highlighting its critical role not just in education, but across various public and private sectors. This widespread adoption underscores English's transition from a symbol of colonial imposition to an essential tool for modern Cypriot society, facilitating not only global business and education but also serving as a lingua franca within the culturally diverse island. Varela (2006) offers a historical analysis of the impact of English on the Greek dialects in Cyprus, illustrating how prolonged exposure to English has led to significant linguistic shifts. This historical perspective is vital for understanding the deep-rooted effects of English on the local language landscape, demonstrating how colonial legacies permeate contemporary linguistic practices and influence the dialects spoken today.

As detailed by McEntee-Atalianis (2004), English in postcolonial Cyprus plays a hegemonic role, affecting national identity and cultural integration. The language's function extends beyond simple communication, intertwining with the socio-political fabric to influence notions of identity and power. This dual role of English, balancing between colonial roots and contemporary global utility, presents a complex scenario where linguistic practices are continuously negotiated within the context of global and local interactions. Papapavlou (2001) addresses the concerns regarding linguistic imperialism, a critical issue that reflects the ongoing tensions between globalizing influences and local cultural preservation. The dominance of English is perceived not just as a practical necessity but also as a potential threat to the Greek Cypriot dialect, raising debates over cultural sovereignty and the preservation of linguistic heritage in the face of global linguistic homogenization.

The collective insights from these studies underscore a complex landscape where English serves as both a bridge and a barrier, offering opportunities for global connectivity while also posing challenges to cultural and linguistic integrity. The strategic promotion of English by the British, intended to embed Cyprus more deeply into the imperial fabric, has resulted in a lasting impact on the island's educational system and cultural identity. This scenario demands a nuanced approach to language policy that recognizes the value of English in global engagement while also advocating for the preservation of Cypriot linguistic and cultural diversity. In grappling with these colonial legacies and the realities of globalization, Cyprus faces the challenge of redefining its linguistic and educational policies to ensure that they reflect both the global importance of English and the rich tapestry of local Cypriot culture. This balance is crucial for fostering an educational environment that not only equips Cypriots to succeed on the world stage but also respects and revitalizes their own cultural heritage.

### *In-depth Analysis of Historical and Contemporary Language Policies*

The quest to develop inclusive language policies in Cyprus sits at the intersection of preserving rich linguistic traditions and meeting global communication needs. The complex challenge of nurturing both local and international linguistic identities has been thoughtfully explored in several scholarly works, each suggesting nuanced approaches to fostering a linguistically diverse society that respects its heritage while embracing global dynamics. Fotiou (2023) expands on this by examining the pervasive role of English across various domains in Cyprus, including education, workplace, and media. Her study underscores how British colonial education policies have profoundly shaped the current status of English, promoting it as a key language for administrative and educational purposes that continue to impact its dominant position in Cypriot society today. Pehlivan's work (2018) delves into the medium of instruction policies among Turkish Cypriots, revealing the enduring influence of English introduced during British colonial rule. This historical context is essential for understanding the present-day significance of English in Cyprus's global educational framework. Pehlivan highlights the dual role of English—stemming from colonial times yet crucial for contemporary global education, suggesting a complex legacy that current language policies must address.

Moreover, Karoulla-Vrikki (2004) explores the intricate relationship between language and ethnic identity under British rule. Her research offers insights into how colonial language policies exacerbated ethnic group dynamics and significantly influenced language use in Cyprus, thereby affecting how different communities perceive and utilize language today. Persianis (1996) provides a focused look at the "Lending" policies of British colonial education from 1878 to 1960, which meticulously adapted educational strategies to the colonial context of Cyprus. Persianis discusses how these policies not only influenced the educational system but also shaped societal perceptions and the utilization of language, embedding English deeply within the socio-cultural fabric of Cyprus.

These studies collectively underscore the need for inclusive language policies that effectively balance the historical dominance of English with the cultural and linguistic diversity of Cyprus. Such policies are essential for fostering a linguistic environment that not only acknowledges English's role as a global lingua franca but also promotes and preserves the rich tapestry



## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

of local languages. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the dynamics of current educational practices and the extent to which they either perpetuate the colonial legacy of English or promote a more inclusive approach. Comparative studies with other post-colonial contexts could also provide valuable insights into common challenges and effective strategies for managing colonial linguistic legacies. Such comparative analysis would enrich the theoretical framework for understanding the complexities of language education in post-colonial societies and help Cyprus forge an educational future that respects its past while embracing the opportunities of the global present.

In conclusion, navigating the legacy of British colonialism in Cyprus requires a nuanced approach to language policy that is sensitive to both global and local linguistic needs. This path involves a multi-faceted research agenda that explores the interplay between historical influences and contemporary societal needs, aiming to develop language policies that are both inclusive and reflective of Cyprus's unique cultural and linguistic heritage.

### 5. CONCLUSION

This research aims to reveal the approach to English language education of the educational policies formulated by the British, who had a say in the education system of Cyprus in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. A review of policy papers and empirical research reveals a multi-faceted approach to how English Language education policies are implemented and the relationship between socio-economic, political and educational imperatives in policy making. Cyprus has been the subject of power struggles throughout history due to its special position in the Eastern Mediterranean. With its history dating back to 5000 BC, although the island was ruled by a number of countries, it has been influenced by the British administration in both social (for example, daily life) and educational context. To sum up, education is the means by which a nation-state is established and a submissive nation-state is constructed. The British supported the development of educational institutions in Cyprus and attempted to develop educational methods based on the theories of prominent education philosophers (e.g. John Dewey). The requirements of colonial machinery necessitated the presence of an English-speaking workforce. This has led to the creation of financially incentivized English language teaching environments to create the workforce. For instance; the reputation of the English School as an elite school continues to the present. These schools produced graduates who went on to study at British universities and went on to return to serve in government and in elite society (Antoniou, 2015).

In conclusion, it can be said that this period was very important in terms of education in the history of the island, because the new generation of people in the decision maker positions were educated under this system. Another point that should be underlined here is that the Education Boards of the communities were separate from each other in this period. In fact, if desired, education could be gathered under a single umbrella with the laws enacted. However, it seems that this was not preferred by British colonial administration. Therefore, after the end of the British administration, both peoples turned inside themselves and tried to develop separate systems in line with their culture and traditions. Indeed, according to Yates (1984, p. 536), the colonial experience has a profound effect on developing countries for better or for worse. Overcoming this influence is much more difficult than contemporary educators think.

### REFERENCES

- 1) Antoniou, M. (2015) 'The prospects for peace education in Cyprus: Exploring the potential for future unified education through the examination of a bi-communal school', *Doctoral Dissertation*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- 2) Aziz, A. (1978) 'Kıbrıs Türk Federe Devletinde öğrenim', *Eğitim ve Bilim*, 3(13).
- 3) Bamgbose, A. (2020) 'A recurring decimal: English in language policy and planning', in Nelson C. L., Proshina Z.G. and Davis D.R. (eds.) *The handbook of world Englishes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, pp. 659-673.
- 4) Baldauf Jr, R. B. (2006) 'Rearticulating the case for micro language planning in a language Ecology context', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 7(2-3), p. 147-170.
- 5) Colonial Office Papers: CO, 67/232/1, CO, 67/240/11, CO, 67/258/6, CO, 67/246/13, CO, 67/249/14.
- 6) Crystal, D. (2003) *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 7) Dedeçay S. S. (1985) *Victoria İslam İnas Sanayi Mektebi ve Kıbrıslı Türk Kadınının Hakları (1902-1985)*. Magosa: Kıbrıs Postası Basımevi.
- 8) Fotiou, C. (2023) English in Cyprus. *English Today*, 39(4), 257-263.
- 9) Güneş, B., Çapraz, H., & Erdönmez, C. (2018) 'Kıbrıs Türk Eğitimine İngiliz müdahalesi (1920-1935)', *CTAD*, 14(28), p. 111-133.
- 10) Hadjioannou, Z., Tsipevanslakou, S., & Kappler, M. (2011) 'Language policy and language planning in Cyprus', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 16(4), p. 503-569.
- 11) Heraclidou, A. (2012) 'Making a British atmosphere in Cyprus, 1931–1939', *The Cyprus Review*, 24(2), p. 47-72.

## English Language Policy in Cyprus under the British Empire Period and its Impact on Current Sustainable Education Policies

- 12) Jones, S. W. (2004) 'The preliminary discourse. A discourse on the institution of a society, for inquiring into the history, civil and natural, the antiquities, arts, sciences, and literature', Harlow, B and Carter, M. (eds.) *Archives of Empire: Volume I. from the East India company to the Suez Canal* (Vol. 1). North Carolina: Duke University Press, pp. 223-238.
- 13) Kachru, B. (1982) 'Models for Non-native Englishes', in Kachru B. (eds) *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pp. 31-57.
- 14) Karoulla-Vrikki, D. (2004) Language and ethnicity in Cyprus under the British: A linkage of heightened salience. *International Journal of The Sociology of Language*, 168, 19-36. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2004.030>
- 15) Lau, C (2020) 'English language education in Hong Kong: A review of policy and practice', *Current Issues in Language Planning*, p. 1-18.
- 16) McEntee-Atalianis, L. J. (2004) The impact of English in postcolonial, postmodern Cyprus. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 77-90.
- 17) Michieka, M. M.. & Ondari, H. K. (2017) 'A comparative analysis of the sociolinguistic profiles of English in Kenya and Uganda', *Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, 8(2), p. 12-25.
- 18) Orr, C. W. J. (1918) *Cyprus under British rule*. London: R. Scott.
- 19) Özenli Özmatyatli, D. & Özkul, E. (2013) 20<sup>th</sup> Century British Colonialism in Cyprus through Education. *History of Education Review*, 42(1), 2-20.
- 20) Özkul, A., & Özsezer, M. (2017) 'Kıbrıs Türk Eğitim Tarihinde Shakespeare Okulu ve Nejmi Sagıp Bodamyalızade', *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 6(3), p. 739-756.
- 21) Papapavlou, A. (2001) Mind your speech: Language attitudes in Cyprus. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural and Development*, 22(6): 491-501.
- 22) Patten, A. (2001) 'Political theory and language policy', *Political Theory*, 29(5), p. 691-715.
- 23) Pehlivan, A. (2018) Medium of Instruction Policies: Turkish Cypriots and their reflections on instructional technologies. *EURASIA Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education*, 14(5), 1683-1693.
- 24) Pennycook, A. (1998) *English and the discourses of colonialism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- 25) Persianis, P. (1996) 'The British Colonial education lending policy in Cyprus (1878-1960): An intriguing example of an elusive 'adapted education' policy', *Comparative Education*, 32(1), p. 45-69.
- 26) Phillipson, R. (1992) *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 27) Rappas, A. (2006) The Management of British Colonial Personnel in Cyprus 1925–1945: Towards a "Metropolitization" of a Profile?, *Journal of the Cyprus Research Centre (Epetiris of the Cyprus Research Centre)*, XXXII, pp. 393–422.
- 28) Spolsky, B. (2004) *Language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 29) The Cyprus Gazette (1931) 30 November. Nicosia: Government Printing Office.
- 30) The Elementary Education Law, 1920 [Online]. Available at: [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/1920\\_1\\_025.pdf](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/1920_1_025.pdf) (Accessed: 5 April 2024).
- 31) The Elementary Education Law, 1933 [Online]. Available at: [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/1933\\_1\\_018.pdf](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/arith/1933_1_018.pdf) (Accessed: 8 April 2024)
- 32) Varela, S. (2006) From colonisation to globalisation: The impact of English on Greek, with particular reference to the dialect of Cyprus. *Odisea*, 7, 203–215. <https://doi.org/10.25115/odisea.v0i7.164>.
- 33) Varnava, A., & Clarke, P. (2014) 'Accounting in Cyprus during late Ottoman and early British rule, 1840 to 1918', *The Cyprus Review*, 26(2), p. 33-55.
- 34) Yates, B. A. (1984) Comparative education and the Third World: The nineteenth century revisited. *Comparative Education Review*, 28(4), 533-549.
- 35) Weir, W. W. (1952) *Education in Cyprus: Some theories and practices in education in the island of Cyprus since 1878*. Nicosia: Cosmos.
- 36) Zembylas, M. (2002) 'The global, the local, and the science curriculum: A struggle for balance in Cyprus', *International Journal of Science Education*, 24(5), p. 499-519.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.