



## Report

2015



The University of Manchester

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**A Study of Language Provision in the North  
Manchester Libyan School**

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## **1. Introduction**

The North Manchester Libyan School is a supplementary school which is held in the Abraham Moss High School. The school is open on Saturdays and Sundays 10am-5pm, and teaches children between the ages of 5 and 18 the Libyan curriculum. The school comprises of around 900 students and 60 staff. The majority of enrolled students are Arabic, however they welcome all nationalities, and teach one class of non-Arabic speakers.

### **1.2 Literature Review and Research Questions**

Purdon et al. (2010) surveyed 301 supplementary schools. The main findings showed that 85% of schools provided teaching in culture and heritage and 79% taught mother tongue languages. Furthermore, 68% of schools offered teaching in National curriculum subjects. These findings led us to form our first research question: What does the North Manchester Libyan School aim to teach?

In addition, the case studies from Purdon et al's study (2010) also highlighted the significance of being taught by teachers who share a similar heritage and culture to the pupils. As such, one of our research questions is: Does the similar heritage and culture of the teachers and pupils aid teaching?

Walters (2011) performed a study of a Bengali supplementary school in Eastville. Walters noted that the method of teaching was largely that of standing in front of the class and encouraging copying and memorisation. As a result of these findings, one of our research questions is: What is the method of teaching in the North Manchester Libyan School?

Another important finding of Walters' (2011) study was that the school was very conscious of the English schools which their pupils attended, despite not having any official links with the schools. Consequently, a further research question is: Does the North Manchester Libyan School have any official links with English schools?

Strand (2007) surveyed 772 pupils from 63 supplementary schools across England, to explore their attitudes towards the schools. Strand concluded from the responses to questionnaires that pupils were positive in their attitudes towards supplementary schools. Strand also suggested that the pupils appreciated the support from the supplementary school in terms of academic improvement, a greater knowledge of their heritage language and culture. Subsequently, we devised an additional question which is: Do the pupils of the

North Manchester Libyan School have positive attitudes towards the school and is the academic support from the school important to them?

According to Fishman (2007), within one generation heritage languages are likely to become limited to oral conversations with older generations within the home. Fishman proposes that language shift often takes place within one to two generations. As such our research question is: With whom is the heritage language Arabic spoken and with whom is English spoken?

## **2. Methodology**

In our fieldwork plan we decided to combine three different data collection methodologies. Our primary choice of methodology was questionnaires because they provide concise and direct answers, eliciting both qualitative and quantitative data. We planned to produce one questionnaire suitable to distribute to 10 pupils, 10 parents, and another for 10 teachers. However, given the significant difference between the number of students (900) compared to teachers (60), the number of questionnaires we aimed to collect was not a justified choice. Therefore, it was more appropriate to aim for 40 responses from students and 20 responses from parents.

We hoped to give the questionnaires to students aged between 16 and 18 because we believed that they would be more likely to give informative answers than the younger students. We were able to retain answers from students aged 15-18 who attended the high school. We elicited 34 responses from the students. We were unsuccessful in collecting parent responses as students all made their own way to the school, therefore no parents were available and we were unable to visit the school on a second occasion as it had closed for the summer.

We aimed to support these questionnaires by following up with an interview with the Headteacher of the school, in order to allow for more detailed questions to be asked. We reformulated the questionnaire for the teachers into an interview guide combined with relevant questions that we had prepared for the Headteacher and aimed to conduct 3-4 interviews with staff. On the day we interviewed 2 teachers and the Deputy Headteacher during their teaching breaks.

We also directly observed a class, in order to gain an informal insight into how lessons were taught, instead of relying on self-evaluation from the teachers. We initially hoped to observe a class of both younger and older pupils to see if there is any difference in teaching style between the two groups, however we were only able to observe one year 6 Arabic class.

All participants who took part in our research were debriefed and provided with a consent form which explained the aims and method of our study, including their rights as participants; comprising of the use of a pseudonym to maintain their anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study at any point.

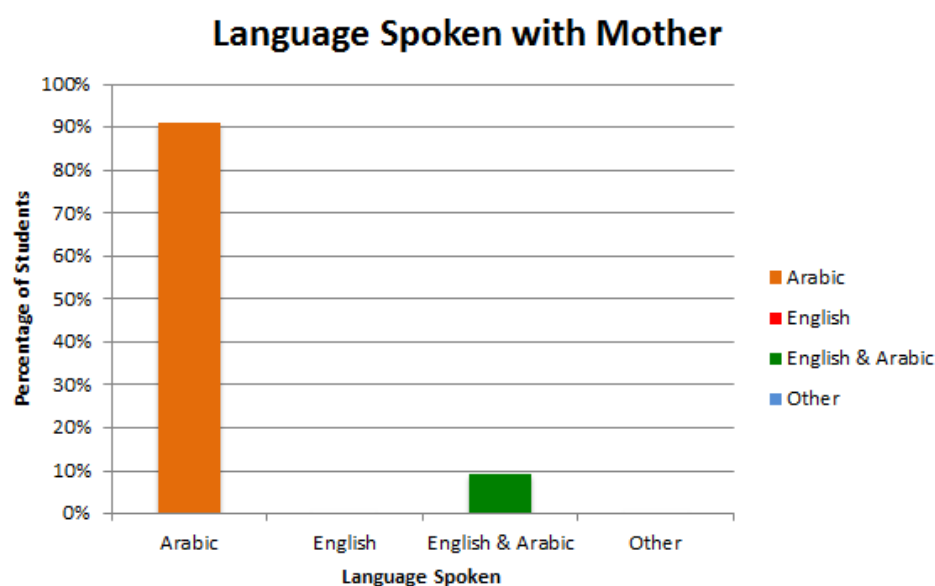
### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1 Languages Spoken with Mother, Father, Siblings, Grandparents and School Friends

##### 3.1.1 Mother

	Arabic	English	English & Arabic	Other	n
<b>Mother</b>	91%	0%	9%	0%	100%
<b>n</b>	31	0	3	0	34

Table 1



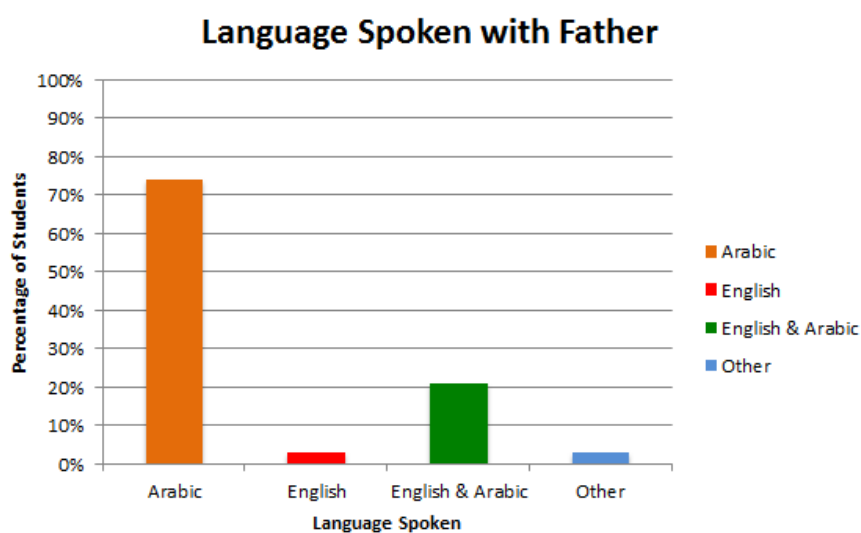
Graph 1

As shown in Graph 1, the questionnaire responses showed that 91% of students speak Arabic with their mother, while only 9% of students speak English.

### 3.1.2 Father

	Arabic	English	English & Arabic	Other	n
<b>Father</b>	74%	3%	20%	3%	100%
<b>n</b>	25	1	7	1	34

Table 2



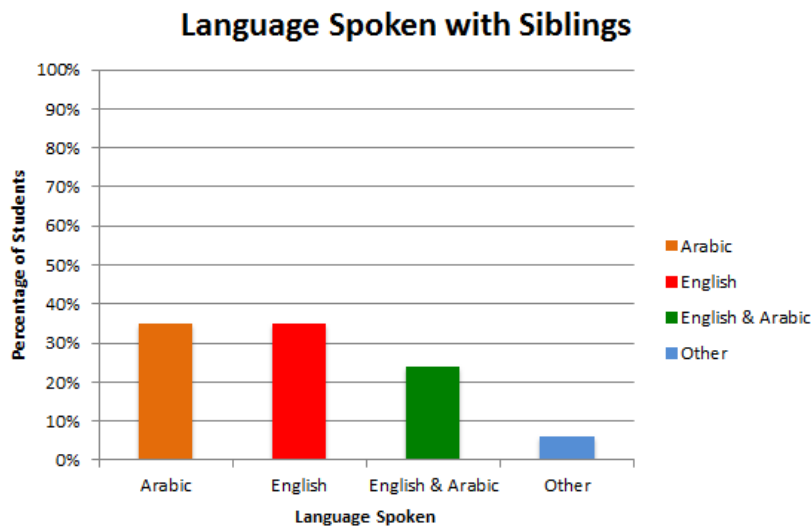
Graph 2

74% of students spoke Arabic with their father, while only 3% speak just English with their father. 21% speak both English and Arabic. These results show a difference in language use between parents, with English being spoken more frequently with the father than the mother.

### 3.1.3 Siblings

	Arabic	English	English & Arabic	Other	n
Siblings	35%	35%	24%	6%	100%
n	12	12	8	2	34

Table 3



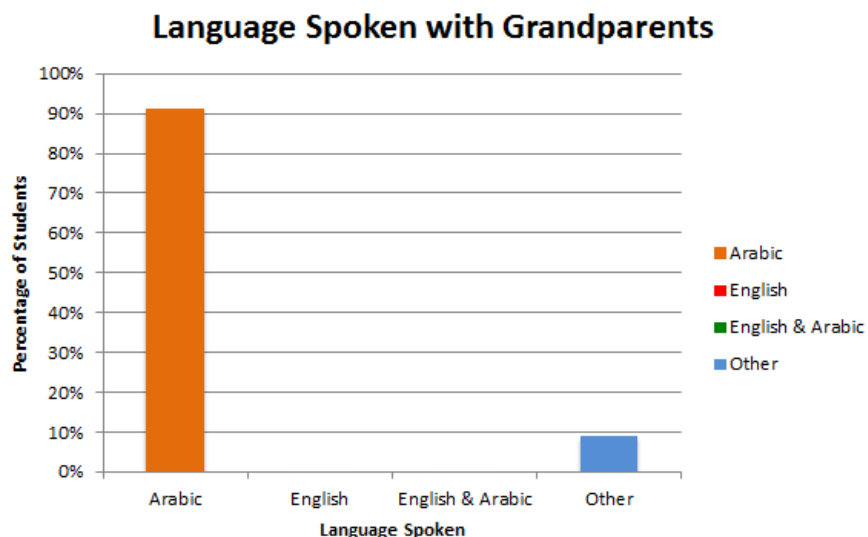
Graph 3

24% of students said they spoke both English and Arabic with their siblings, while speaking Arabic or English in isolation contributed to 35% of responses. A possible reasoning for the equal usage of Arabic and English separately could be, as suggested by Fishman (2007) that within 1 to 2 generations language shift takes place. This means that the younger generations use English the same amount as their heritage language, due to their connection with the English language in domains such as English mainstream schools. Within the Libyan community of the North Manchester Libyan school it's clear that this shift towards English isn't fully complete.

### 3.1.4 Grandparents

	Arabic	English	English & Arabic	Other	n
<b>Grand parents</b>	91%	0%	0%	9%	100%
<b>n</b>	31	0	0	3	34

Table 4



Graph 4

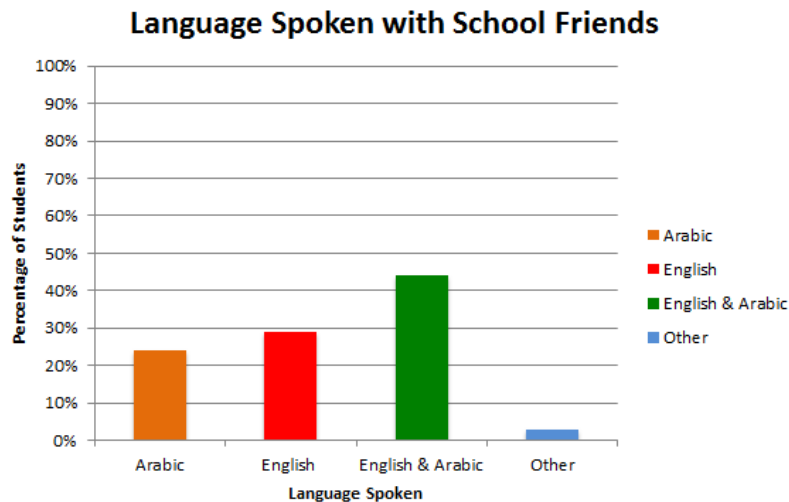
91% of students spoke Arabic with their grandparents, with only 9% of students reporting that they spoke another language with their grandparents. None of the students speak English with their grandparents which further supports Fishman's claim (2007) that heritage languages are likely to be limited to conversations with older generations.

### 3.1.5 School Friends

	Arabic	English	English & Arabic	Other	n
<b>School friends</b>	24%	29%	44%	3%	100%
<b>n</b>	8	10	15	1	34

Table 5





Graph 5

44% of students speak both English and Arabic with school friends, while 24% speak only Arabic and 29% speak only English. This further demonstrates how Arabic is used less with younger generations. This also seems to be affected by in which school the conversation takes place.

*In Arabic school I speak Arabic, but in college I speak English. (Student)*

### 3.2 Organisation and funding

#### 3.2.1 Funding

The school receives funding from the Libyan community in England, situated in London. This funding only covers the rent of the Abraham Moss High School and does not account for any other costs.

*The Libyan community pay for the rent of the Abraham Moss High School directly. (Deputy Headteacher)*

The school also receives donations from the parents of pupils attending the school. Purdon et al. (2010) found that this is a common source and funding and it is not unusual for supplementary schools to receive more than one source of funding.

*Parents give donations, which we use to give gifts or bonuses to the teachers at the end of the year because they don't get paid. (Deputy Headteacher)*

### **3.2.2 Fees**

Unusually, the Libyan School does not charge fees to the parents of the pupils. This is due to the fact that it is their right as Libyan citizens to attend a Libyan school and be able to get the required education.

## **3.3 Teaching and learning**

### **3.3.1 Teaching staff**

#### **i. Employment Type**

The majority of the teachers are volunteers due to the fact that their wages are “not supported” by the Libyan community. Many of the teachers are parents of the pupils who are devoted to securing a future for the school and their children. As such, the deputy head teacher commented:

*This means that the staff are really passionate. (Deputy Headteacher)*

#### **ii. Recruitment and Qualification**

There is no strict recruitment procedure at the Libyan School due to the fact that most of the teachers volunteer. There is also no minimum qualification requirement for their teachers. However, some of the teachers do have degrees and PhDs, whilst some of the teachers are teaching and studying for a degree simultaneously. It is clear that not all of the staff have the same qualifications and experience.

#### **iii. Training**

All of the teachers at the school participated in a teacher training day in March 2015 which was ran by Manchester Academy Training.

*The teachers like doing things like this because they want to improve themselves and when they go back to Libya they will use this to improve themselves. (Deputy Headteacher)*

### **3.3.2 Teaching**

#### **i. Curriculum**

The Libyan Government require that the school teaches the full Libyan curriculum, consisting of Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, English, French, and Arabic. Extra classes for the 17-18 year old students include Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Statistics, Algebra and Geometry. The Libyan School conforms with the majority of mainstream schools studied by Purdon et al (2010) by teaching both National Curriculum and mother-tongue languages. What distinguishes the Libyan school from other supplementary schools is the importance of following the same system and curriculum as in Libya.

*We don't go out of the Libyan curriculum. (Deputy Headteacher)*

#### **ii. Resources**

The school receive their textbooks from Libya which each student has to pay £5 for. The teachers follow these as they contain the content which the exams are based on; however, a Biology teacher informed us that the students often want to know more and go deeper into the topics.

#### **iii. Assessment**

The school has a strict examination procedure, which complies with the exams that take place in Libya, in time and structure. Students must pass every class in order to progress onto the next year in the school, if any classes are failed, the student must re-sit the whole academic year.

#### **iv. Teaching methods**

In the year six Arabic class which we observed, the children worked through a worksheet and exercises in the textbook together with the help of the teacher. The children raised their hands to answer questions, and if incorrect the teacher would then repeat their answer with the correct pronunciation. Like in Walters (2011) study, the teaching style in the Libyan school encouraged copying and memorisation. The style of teaching was very interactive which resulted in high levels of enthusiasm from the students. For all classes, the language of instruction is Modern Standard Arabic, however children will sometimes ask for words to be translated into English, particularly in Science where they don't know the Arabic for the scientific words. For English classes the language of instruction is English.

*It is useful to use both languages. (Biology Teacher)*

## v. Teacher respect

Another teacher which we interviewed informed us that “dealing with the pupils is easy” as they gain “respect from the children because they are known to them”. Respect is therefore gained because the teachers have friends and relatives at the school. She explained that the school is a tight community; neighbours attend the school and teachers know all the children’s mums and dads. This relates to findings by Purdon et al (2010) who highlight the significance of being taught by teachers with a similar heritage and culture.

## 3.4 Parents

At the Libyan school, parental involvement is key to their success. On behalf of student opinions, parents provide the school with feedback relating to the problems within the school which in turn helps the school to improve the education. This agrees with findings from Purdon et al’s (2010) study which found that parents often felt that providing informal feedback made them feel involved with the school.

*The parents support us because if they think that any teacher is not good, they come to the school and complain. They want to make the education better. (Deputy Headteacher)*

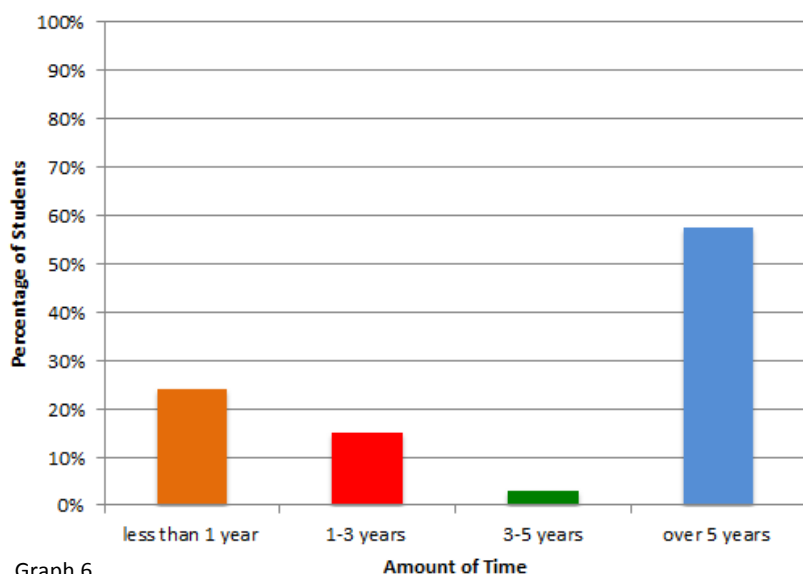
## 3.5 Pupils

### 3.5.1 Length of Attendance

	<b>Less than 1 year</b>	<b>1-3 years</b>	<b>3-5 years</b>	<b>over 5 years</b>	<b>n</b>
<b>How long attended school</b>	24%	15%	3%	58%	100%
<b>n</b>	8	5	1	19	33

Table 6

## How long students have attended the Supplementary School



Graph 6

As shown in the graph above, 58% of students have attended the school for 'Over 5 years'. One explanation could be that the responses are from an older age group, meaning they have attended the school for a prolonged period of time. 24% of the responses show attendance of 'Less than 1 year' which could represent the new enrolments into the school from Libya, as we were informed that some of the students study for half of the academic year in Libya and the other half in England.

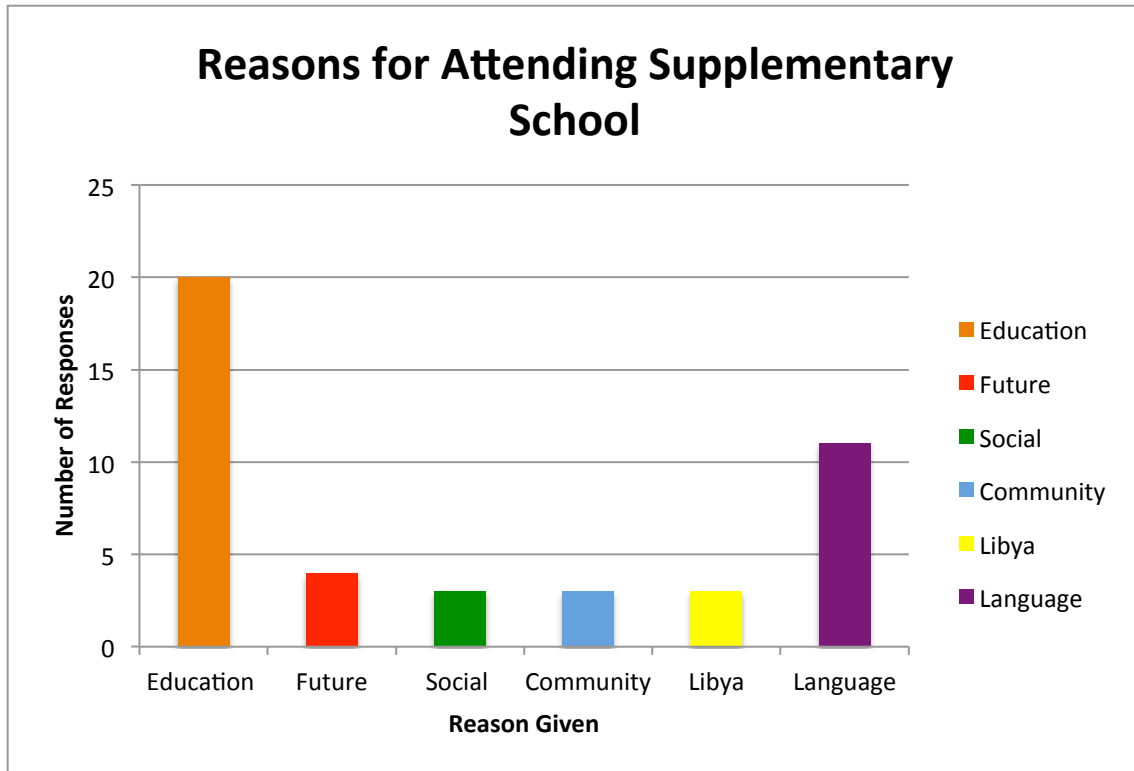
### 3.5.2 Reasons for attending

We grouped students' responses to the question 'Why do you attend the school?' into the following categories:

- 'Education' regarding academic improvement.
- 'Future' regarding higher education and employment.
- 'Social' regarding having fun at the school and being with friends.
- 'Community' regarding being surrounded by the Libyan heritage.
- 'Libya' regarding returning to their home country.
- 'Language' regarding learning/improving their Arabic.

	Education	Future	Social	Community	Libya	Language	N
<b>Amount of Responses</b>	20	4	3	3	3	11	44

Table 7



Graph 7

The most popular reason for attending the school was 'Education'. From this we can deduce that the students highly value the academic support provided by the school. Another prolific reason for attending the school was 'Language' suggesting that students regard learning Arabic as a crucial factor, showing that they seek to maintain their heritage. Both of these results back up findings from Purdon et al's (2010) study, that students appreciate the support from the supplementary school in terms of academic improvement, a greater knowledge of their heritage language and culture.

### 3.6 Supplementary school links with mainstream schools

The Libyan School has no official links with mainstream schools, similar to the Bangladeshi school in Walters (2011) study which also had no official links. However, the Libyan School often communicates with the Abraham Moss High School due to the fact that most of the students at the supplementary school also attend the High School. Meetings between the mainstream school and the supplementary school exist to solve problems, such as workload from both schools. In response to a letter sent from the Libyan School, the Abraham Moss High School also began to give students a one week study break during their exam period at supplementary school.

*All of us are on the same path, we are teachers and they are students and they have a right to study here and there. (Deputy Headteacher)*

#### **4. Conclusion**

In summary, the main findings of our fieldwork report, in light of the research questions are as follows. We can see from our results that the Libyan school aims to teach the full Libyan curriculum, which complies with the mutual agreements between the school and the Libyan government. This conforms to the majority of supplementary schools studied by Purdon et al (2010) who teach both National Curriculum and mother-tongue languages.

In regard to the similar heritage and culture of the teachers and pupils, we have found that it leads to mutual respect between teacher and pupil. This results in teachers finding it easier to communicate with students and provides a good working environment for both staff and the pupils.

The method of teaching in the Arabic class that we observed was very interactive, with the teacher providing correct pronunciations and students copying and memorising, like in Walters (2010) study. In addition, the lesson was clearly structured alongside the content of the Libyan textbooks. However, these observations cannot be applied to all lessons taught at the Libyan School.

The school has no official links with any mainstream English schools; however it seemed apparent that there is communication between the two schools regarding formalities such as exams and workload.

In the questionnaire responses, pupils expressed positive attitudes towards the school in terms of academic support and learning their mother-tongue language. Students acknowledge that the Libyan school is vital to their success both in England and in Libya, confirming findings from Purdon et al's (2010) study.

We found that Arabic is mostly spoken with their mothers and grandparents and although English was spoken more with fathers, Arabic was once again the predominant language used. On the other hand, English had a greater prevalence amongst siblings and school friends. These findings support Fishman's (2007) suggestion that language shift often occurs between 1-2 generations, as seen by the greater use of English among younger generations and the high use of Arabic among older generations.

A new contribution that our fieldwork has offered is how strict the relationship is between the Libyan School and the education system in Libya. A point for further research could be to see the extent to which other supplementary schools follow the same National Curriculum as their native country.

## 5. Appendix



Figure 1: The Abraham Moss High School where the Libyan Supplementary School is run.  
(Libyan School Manchester, n.d)

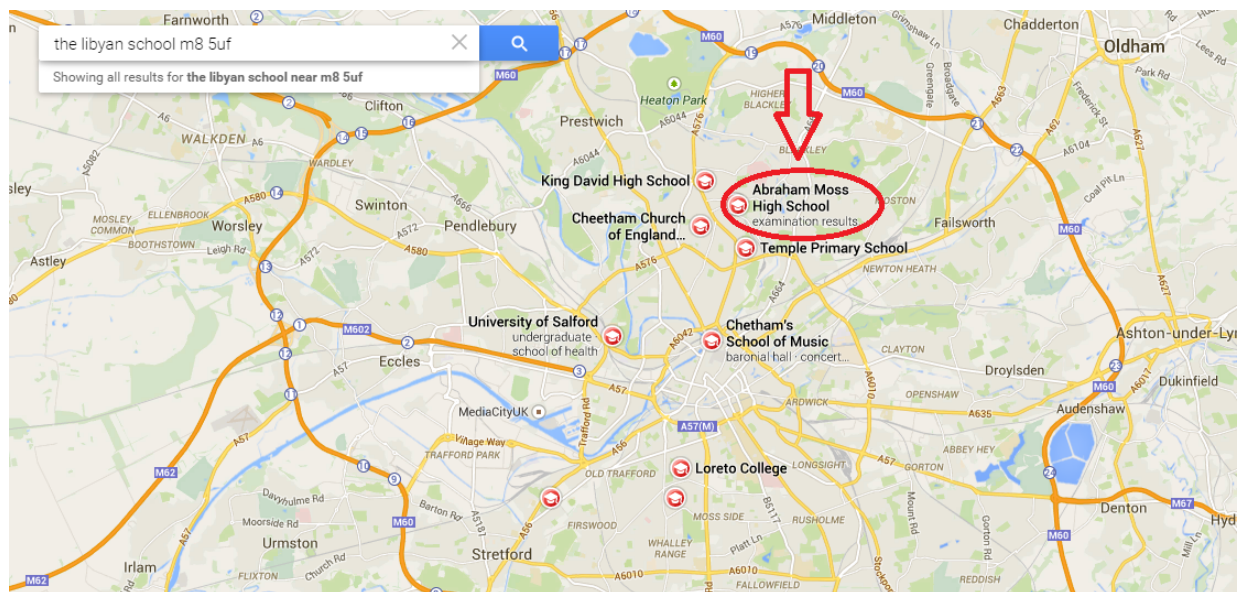


Figure 2: A map showing the location of the Libyan Supplementary School in the Manchester area  
(Google Maps, 2015)





Figure 3: A map showing the precise location of the North Manchester Libyan School (Google Maps, 2015)

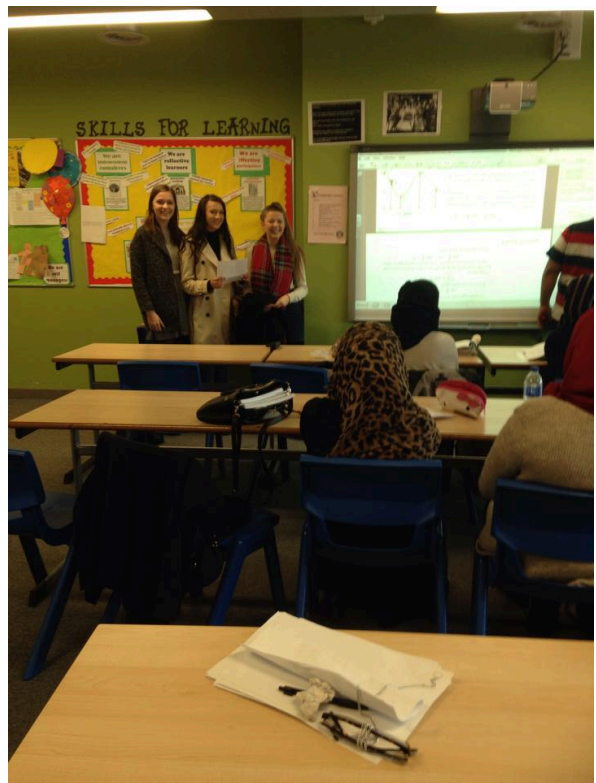
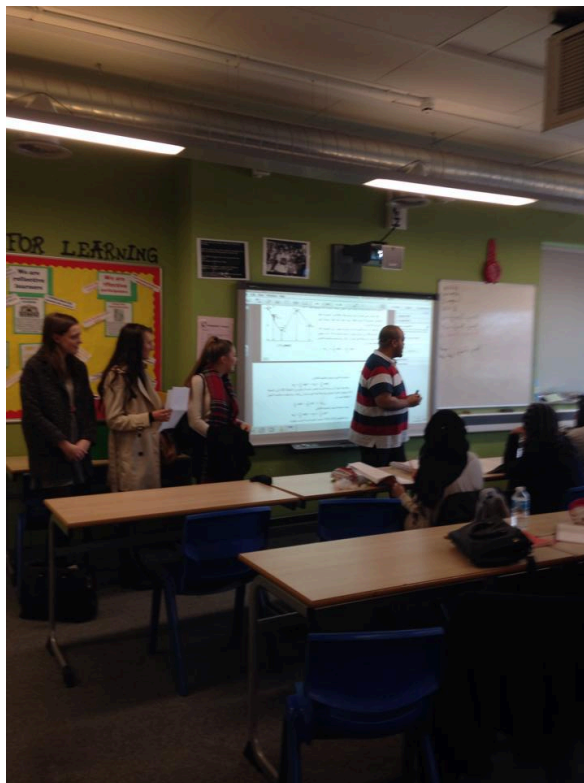


Figure 4: Images of our visit to the North Manchester Libyan School (North Manchester Libyan School, 2015)

## **6.1 Interview guide for head teacher**

Why was the school set up?

When was the school set up?

What are your hopes for the school?

Does the school take place in a borrowed building, or does it belong to the school?

How do you recruit your staff?

What formal qualifications do the teachers need? (Are these recognised in the UK and Libya?)

What are the expectations of staff?

How are teachers trained? (Is there an international agreement with the UK Government?)

Are there any mutual obligations between the Libyan state and the UK state?

What does the school aim to teach and why is that important?

Do you have to make any compromises between the UK and Libyan curriculum?

What is your method of teaching?

Do you strictly follow text books?

What is the language of instruction?

What formal qualifications does the school offer? (Are these recognised in both countries, or just the UK/just Libya)

What are the expectations of pupils?

Are there any other Libyan community centres in the area?

Do you have any official links with primary schools?

Is oversubscription an issue for the school?

## **6.2 Interview guide for teachers**

What are your hopes for the school?

What formal qualifications do you have? (Are these recognised in the UK and Libya?)

What does the school expect from you?

How are you trained? (Is there an international agreement with the UK Government?)

What does the school aim to teach and why is that important?

Do you have to make any compromises between the UK and Libyan curriculum?

What is your method of teaching?

Do you strictly follow text books?

What is the language of instruction?

What formal qualifications does the school offer? (Are these recognised in both countries, or just the UK/just Libya)

What are the expectations of pupils?

Do you have any relatives at the school?

### 6.3 Questionnaire for the parents

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity:

<b>Please circle one</b>	White (UK)	White (Irish)	White (other)
Caribbean	African	Asian	Other Mixed Background
Indian/British Indian	Pakistani/British Pakistani	Bangladeshi/ British Bangladeshi	Other Asian Background
Other Black Background	Chinese	If other please specify:	

Nationality:

<b>Please circle one</b>	British	Libyan	If other please specify:
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What is your native language? \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer any of the following of the questions if they are applicable:**

**Circle the appropriate answer**

What language do you speak with your mother? *English, Arabic,*  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with your father? *English, Arabic, Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with siblings? *English, Arabic, Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with your children? *English, Arabic,*  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*If answer is Arabic, please specify which dialect of Arabic that you speak:*

\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you send your children to the Libyan school? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why is the Libyan school important to you?

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How long have you attended the school? *Less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years, Over 5 years*

Why do you attend the school? (if applicable)\_\_\_\_\_

#### 6.4 Questionnaire for the pupils

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity:

<b>Please circle one</b>	White (UK)	White (Irish)	White (other)
Caribbean	African	Asian	Other Mixed Background
Indian/British Indian	Pakistani/British Pakistani	Bangladeshi/ British Bangladeshi	Other Asian Background
Other Black Background	Chinese	If other please specify:	

Nationality:

<b>Please circle one</b>	British	Libyan	If other please specify:
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What is your native language?\_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer any of the following of the questions if they are applicable:**

**Circle the appropriate answer**

What language do you speak with your mother? *English, Arabic,*

*Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with your father? *English, Arabic, Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with siblings? *English, Arabic, Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with your grandparents? *English, Arabic,*

*Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

What language do you speak with your school friends? *English, Arabic,*

*Other:* \_\_\_\_\_

*If answer is Arabic, please specify which dialect of Arabic that you speak:*

\_\_\_\_\_

How often do you attend the Libyan school?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why is the Libyan school important to you?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How long have you attended the school? *Less than 1 year, 1-3 years, 3-5 years,*

*Over 5 years*

Why do you attend the

school? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6.5 Informed Consent Form for Societal Multilingualism Research

Please read the following information carefully.

Research Project: Language provision in supplementary schools

Researchers: Amie Atkinson, Beth Gargett and Amy Hughes

Affiliation: The University of Manchester

Description: You are invited to participate in a research study that investigates the contribution of supplementary schools in maintaining community heritage languages. You will be presented with a questionnaire and will be asked to read the questions carefully, and then answer accordingly.

Subjects' rights: If you consent to participate in this study, please understand that your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. Your confidentiality will be maintained in the report resulting from the study.

If you are willing to participate in this research, please sign below.

By signing the form, you confirm that:

- You have read the above consent form, understood it and you agree to it.
- You want to participate in the above-mentioned project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. References

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