multilingual MANCHESTER

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An Analysis of Multilingualism across restaurants in Manchester

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Introduction and Outline

In our analysis, we looked at some examples of multilingualism in Manchester, most notably the differences between inner- and outer-city restaurants. We largely looked into the employees of three different restaurant franchises and compared the multilingualism between them. For the purposes of anonymity, our three chosen restaurants will hereon be referred to as P, L and N. We had to change these from our initial plan, as we felt that the names upon which we had initially decided were inappropriate. All three franchises have restaurants which provide sit-down meals with waiting staff rather than fast food outlets or buffets; they were chosen due to our knowledge of both an inner- and outer-city restaurant for which we could compare levels of multilingualism, bilingualism and code switching.

We felt it important to choose this type of restaurant as such a job requires a better understanding of English, therefore we were more likely to find significant results to some of our questions, such as: 'how important is knowing and speaking English to you?' As quoted by Singh and Han
"In the world's multilingual knowledge economies, the English language plays multi-dimensional functions as a commodity, and it has done so for a long time."[i] This supports our view, highlighting the importance of communicating in English within the working industry particularly in restaurants, where communication is most crucial.

The Restaurants

We decided on all three of the chosen restaurant at random; however a common feature is that they have restaurants in both Manchester city centre and at least one of its suburbs. The outer-city L restaurant is in Rusholme, the Curry Mile and is therefore likely to attract many tourists and a wide range of nationalities and cultures. There have been multiple previous studies into this area in particular, due to its multicultural nature.[ii] We looked at a study focussing on Rusholme and the Curry Mile, as well as Chinatown, in the city centre, which tells us that the diversity of customers in the curry mile is very common and thus we expected to see similar results with our investigation. In this restaurant, especially, therefore, we were expecting to see a great amount of multilingualism and code switching. L is a much smaller franchise than the others, with just the aforementioned two stores presently.

N's suburban franchise is in Fallowfield, in South Manchester. As a very popular student area, we didn't expect to find a large foreign demographic of customers, though we thought there may be in terms of employees. N is an international franchise established over 20 years ago and is thus more likely to have stringent recruitment policies than L in particular. Although this restaurant is of Portuguese origin, we did expect to see a wide range of multicultural employees as well as customers, due to its internationality.

As for P, the chosen outer-city restaurant is in Didsbury, a suburban area neighbouring Fallowfield. Due to its location in a particularly affluent area, we expected to find a good mix of nationalities and cultures for us to examine. P was established nearly 50 years ago and boasts over 400 restaurants worldwide, setting it as comfortably the largest and most developed of our three chosen restaurants.

Hypothesis

In our project, we expected to find that, both in terms of employees and customers, that there would be greater diversity in the inner-city franchise than the suburban. However, we did expect to find that, the further away from the city centre the restaurant is, the greater the occurrence of native tongue usage from the staff when addressing customers from the same country of origin (if not an English-speaking country). Since all of our chosen restaurants boast a foreign menu - they specialise in the cuisine of a particular country or region, we therefore expect to find a large amount of both staff and customers from these places.

Method and Data Collection

We have chosen a domain analysis approach as this seems to be the most appropriate way to collect as much information as possible in a short space of time. We had intended for our research method involved three things: a questionnaire on language use, one-on-one questions, and our own observations of the staff. The one-to-one questions aspect of our research was intended to mainly be following up from the questionnaire answers and be noted in the final results. However, in the end, we discovered that our first two data collections methods were sufficient and so, while we did ask a few follow-up questions to our surveys, the original one-on-one interviews did not take place.

In conducting our experiment, we went into the restaurants in pairs or small groups at quiet times, mostly at opening times, so as the staff had more time to fill in our questionnaires, or, in some cases, at a time pre-arranged with the manager. Firstly, we asked to see the manager, and, upon meeting them, introduced ourselves and explained a bit more about our study. We gave out the leaflet with all the information and the consent part to sign and agree and possibly give a time and day when we could go back to get the data *(Appendix 1).* We gave out a questionnaire to the manager of the restaurant *(Appendix 2- table of results)* and to a small handful of foreign employees, with the exception of restaurant N in Fallowfield- as we discovered they only had one overseas employee, and then gave them a different questionnaire *(Appendix 3- table of results).* We, in a few of the restaurants, managed to observe instances of the staff speaking in their native tongues either to colleagues or to customers of the same country of origin. After speaking to the manager and at least two of the waiting staff, we successfully acquired a total of 17 questionnaires (in most cases 3 from each

participating restaurant, the aforementioned outer-city N restaurant being the exception) as well as our own observations.

In dealing with the managers, we conducted a short interview mainly asking about their views on multilingual employees and what they expect from them regarding their language use, and whether they have particular language proficiency requirements when considering a potential applicant for a job. Following on from this, we asked the manager what approaches they take towards an employee's use of their native language when dealing with a customer. We felt that an interview would be a better approach with the managers, as we can ask open questions and therefore get more detailed answers, and also elaborate upon answers if we sense there may be the potential for further information. We then provided the managers with an informative leaflet briefly explaining the nature of our investigation in order to highlight our motives and to emphasise the confidential nature of the study. The leaflet also had attached consent form *(Appendix 1).*

For the one-on-one interviews, we asked questions that are slightly more specific and personal than those in the questionnaire. We came with the questions prepared beforehand and recorded the interview using a Dictaphone, with which we verbally documented the participants' consent. We also wrote the participants' responses ourselves, as a contingency plan in the event of our recordings not being clear enough audibly. In the making of our casual observations, discretion was a key factor to consider when collecting our data. Therefore, we briefly transcribed any discourse that we deemed to be relevant using memo applications on our mobile phones, rather than writing notes on paper which may intimidate the employees, thus avoiding any potential observer's paradox. Once we had obtained the results from all 18 of questionnaires, we compiled the results into a number of tables, from which we could then analyse the results. We have presented our results in the form of a variety of mathematical charts in order to display the findings in the most comprehensive way possible *(see appendices 4-7).*

Potential Problems and the Contingency Plans we had in Place

The most prominent issue that we expected to hinder us in our study was the participants' ability to speak and read English to a necessary degree. In order to avoid the negative effect this could have had on our results, we made sure to ask all participants how confident they are with speaking English prior to giving them the questionnaire. We did this by simply asking them to rate their English on a scale of 1-10 (10 being extremely confident; fluent) and should their answer have been 5 or less, we were to assist them in their questionnaire by asking the questions verbally, in person, to ensure they fully understood. As it turned out, this was not a problem in any of the six restaurants that we visited.

As part of our data collection, we made general observations and taking note of any instances of members of staff not speaking English either to fellow employees or customers. Due to ethical issues, we must inform all employees that we will be observing their language use. However, we were concerned that this may have caused issues with respect to the observer's paradox; if the staff were aware that we were monitoring their language use, they may have altered their speech, which could, therefore, have jeopardised the validity of our findings.

We were also concerned about a potential rejection from managers of a restaurant/chain that may not want their staff being interviewed on their multiculturalism or being distracted from work. Had this been the case, we knew of various other restaurants that had both an inner-city and a suburban restaurant to which we could have changed, in the event of such a rejection. However, we did not find any problems of this nature and all managers were happy to help.

Problems we did Encounter

It is worth noting that in the collection of our results, we had to go back to the N inner-city restaurant six times before we finally received the previously-given questionnaires completed, in addition to the four occasions we had to return to P. The manager of inner-city N requested that we leave the questionnaires with her to have a look at; however, each time upon our re-entry we found a different manager there. Despite an assurance that we would be contacted shortly, after each visit, we did then not hear back from any of the restaurant managers for almost a week.

On some of the occasions on which we were sent away, it was because we had, despite our best efforts to go in at convenient times, not done so. On one occasion, we went into one of the restaurants on a bank holiday and found the waiting staff and manager too busy to help at that time but were asked politely to return at a less busy time.

Upon one of our visits to the outer-city L restaurant, we discovered that they had two managers, one of whom spoke much better English than his colleague. The foreign manager did not seem to understand for what we asking his collaboration and we were asked to come back at a time when the other manager was on duty so we could speak to him instead.

Results

Having successfully collected 18 question and answer surveys from our restaurants, we have gained largely positive results. Unsurprisingly, we found that most of the managers we interviewed were of English origin, born and raised locally. However, both L restaurants had foreign managers – Pakistani in the inner city and Jordanian in the outer-city, however all six managers informed us that English proficiency was important for

prospective employees. The manager of the P restaurant, though, did concede that it was more important for front-of-house waiters to have a good understanding of English, than for backroom staff such as chefs and porters.

Across the board of the eighteen interviewees, we found examples of seventeen different languages being used in Manchester, including Urdu, Punjabi, Yoruba, Persian, Wolof, Fula, Jola and Bangla. For the full list, see the appendix below. While most of the interviewees whose native tongue was not English said that at home, they primarily use their native tongues, a lot more people than we had anticipated said they used nothing but English at work, even with colleagues of the same nationality. One example of this was the Pakistani waiter at the inner-city N who admitted that while English was not his first language, and there were other Urdu speakers on the workforce, he would only speak English to his colleagues during work hours. He did concede that, should an Urdu-speaking customer enter the restaurant, however, he would not be against addressing them in their native tongue, though he would always start off conversation by introducing himself in English.

One of the things that was common to all twelve of the front-of-house staff that we interviewed was that, on a scale of one to ten, with one being the most important, when asked how important a good understanding of English was in their respective professional life, only one interviewee gave a number higher than a three, and seven of the twelve gave a one: very important. The employee that said a five: English is quite important to my professional life, was a waiter in the outer-city L restaurant on the Curry Mile, Rusholme. As previously mentioned, Rusholme is a particularly ethnically diverse area in which there are many non-English speakers; therefore it was not surprising that an employee from this area of Manchester found English to be less important than people who work in the city centre or other suburbs.

Analysis of results – was our hypothesis correct?

The key point of our initial hypothesis was that we expected to find a greater variety of languages and, thus a higher level of multiculturalism, amongst the staff of the inner-city restaurant, as opposed to suburban. The gulf between the two separate sets of data was not as significant as was initially expected; however an important point of note is that the outer-city restaurant of N, located in Fallowfield, contained just the one overseas employee, while all the other participating restaurants contained at least two for us to interview.

As Appendix 3 shows us, almost all of the migrants who would go on to work in outer-city restaurant restaurants could already understand and speak English prior to coming to this country. In countries such as India and Nigeria, where English is considered one of the country's national languages, this is hardly surprising; while the Jordanian waiter at the outer-city L restaurant admitted to having learnt English while at school. Appendix 3

also shows us, however, that only half of the interviewed employees at city centre restaurants came to England with prior knowledge of the language.

This information seems to support our hypothesis in that an immigrant without an initial understanding of English, upon coming to the country, feels more comfortable in the city centre than in a suburb. This may be because they think themselves more likely to meet a compatriot in a city centre, an area with greater multiculturalism, or it could be that they see it as the best possible way to immerse themselves in their new culture and to acquire the language faster.

We had indeed expected to find that inner-city employees are much more likely to think English more important to understand and speak because they are much more likely to need it than someone who works on, say, the Curry Mile, in a restaurant specialising in *Indian* cuisine which is much more likely to attract Indian punters. An Indian waiter, therefore, less feels the need to assimilate. "To the assimilationist view of immigration, it is better for the immigrant group and better for the receiving society, that the immigrant group assimilates to the ways, customs and practices of the dominate group in the receiving society as quickly as possible, One of the ways this is achieved is through learning the dominant language" (Blackledge, 1984) [iii]

Conclusion and Potential for Future Study

While we think our investigation to have been successful in that we have collected some important information regarding the levels of multiculturalism in inner- and outer-city Manchester, we believe that there is still much further research to be done into this area. Our scope has been fairly limited in that we have only collected results from eighteen different people.

Using self-reported questionnaires is a good way of starting off a study like ours, however, it has disadvantages, as it could be very time consuming, which we indeed did find. Also, the results from these are raw, and cannot be turned into quantitative data to make it comparable. However, for a small study such as ours, this method is very sufficient, as we were able to get basic, unbiased data, which we gathered directly from the primary market.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Leaflet and consent form

The University
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Multilingual Manchester:

An Analysis of Multilingualism across restaurants in Manchester.

Information Leaflet and Consent form

University of Manchester Linguistics and English Language

All the information provided by you and your staff will be kept completely confidential, and we guarantee the anonymity of each participant and the name of the restaurant itself.

When would be most convenient for us to drop in?

Date: _____

Time: _____

We assure you that it won't take up much of your time or that of your employees.

Many thanks in advance,

University of Manchester Linguistic students.

 (Darian Flowers, Katy McGarty, Stefanie Jones, Kate Rudnicka, Lana Ali, Laura Gallagher & Matt Naylor)

Contact information:

Email: ManchesterLinguisticStudents@hotmail.com
Tel: 07714582328

We are a group of Linguistics and English Language students from the University of Manchester, hoping to explore the use of different languages across Manchester.

We have chosen to ask you to take part in this study because we believe the following:

- Your establishment promotes multiculturalism
- You have both inner and outer city restaurants
- Your staff are professional and courteous

By choosing to take part in this study, you will be agreeing to the following;

1. Allowing us to give 2 of your non-native a short questionnaire to complete (approximately 2 minutes)
2. Allowing us to follow up the questionnaire with 4 short questions (approximately 2 minutes)
3. Completing a short manager's interview (approximately 2 minutes)

Appendix 2: Table of questionnaire results- manager's questionnaires
Appendix 3: Table of questionnaire results – employee questionnaires

INNER CITY	P	L	N
Managers Questionnaire			
Where were you born?	England	Pakistan	England
Where were you raised?	England	England	England/Germany
What language/s do you speak?	English	Urdu Punjabi English	English German
How important is profiency in English for hiring employees?	Must have communication English for front of house, back of house must have basic level	We require all our employees to know at least basic to medium level English	Very They need a high understanding to speak with customers

Does your company have a policy for only hiring people who can speak English?	No Just to understand basic English	Yes	Yes
What language do you use when speaking to your staff?	English	English	English
When at work, what language do you think your employees use?	Their native language aswell. They use both depending on who they are speaking to and what language they speak.	English alone	Their native language aswell
Employee Questionnaires			
Where were you born?	India	India	Pakistan
Where were you raised?	India	India	Karachi, Pakistan
What language/s do you speak?	English Hindu Teluga	Hindi English	Urdu, English, Punjabi, Hindi, Spanish
Did you already know English before moving to this country	Yes	No	Yes
How important is knowing and speaking English to you? Very 1 - Not at all 10	1	3	1
How well do you speak English? Poor 1 - Very Well 10	8	4	1 (confusion with the questionnaire?) Mean 10?

| What languages would you use if a customer from your same country of origin came into the restaurant?	English	English	English and Native Language
What language/s do you use at home?	Native Languages	Native Language	English and Native Language
What language/s do you use with your colleagues?	English	Native Language	English
Have you understood the questionnaire?	I understand pretty well	Yes, very well	A couple of questions should have been more precise
Employee Questionnaires			
Where were you born?	Venezuela	Bangladesh	Brazil
Where were you raised?	Venezuela	Habigonj (Bangladesh)	Brazil
What language/s do you speak?	Spanish and English	Bangla Urdu English	Portuguese
Did you already know English before moving to this country	No	Yes	No
How important is knowing and speaking English to you? Very 1 - Not at all 10	1	2	1
How well do you speak English? Poor 1 - Very Well 10	6	5	2 (again, confusion with the questionnaire?)

What languages would you use if a customer from your same country of origin came into the restaurant?	Native Language	Native Language	English and Native Language
What language/s do you use at home?	Native Languages	Native Language	English
What language/s do you use with your colleagues?	English	Both English and Native	English
Have you understood the questionnaire?	Yes I did thank you	yes	No questions
OUTER CITY	Pizza Express	Lal Qila	Nandos
Managers Questionnaire			
Where were you born?	England	Jordan	Trafford
Where were you raised?	England		Manchester
What language/s do you speak?	English (GCSE French)	Arabic	English
How important is profiency in English for hiring employees?	Must know basic English to be able to understand customers	?	Important but we support those learning whilst at work - a basic to medium level minimum is required
Does your company have a policy for only hiring people who can speak English?	No, just basic abilities	Yes	No

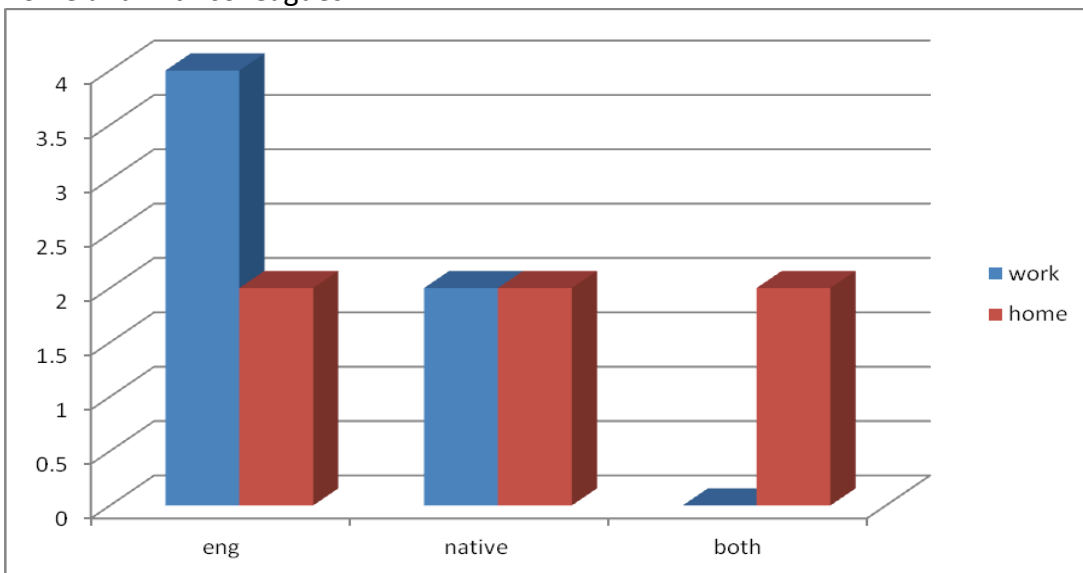|			
What language do you use when speaking to your staff?	English	English	English
When at work, what language do you think your employees use?	English alone. Depending on if some speak same languages	Native Language as well	English alone
Employee Questionnaire			
Where were you born?	Nigeria	Afghanistan	Swansea
Where were you raised?	Nigeria (moved to England when 14, aged 22 now)		Wrexham
What language/s do you speak?	English Yoruba	Persian	English Welsh
Did you already know English before moving to this country	Yes	No	Yes
How important is knowing and speaking English to you? Very 1 - Not at all 10	1	5	1
How well do you speak English? Poor 1 - Very Well 10	10	6	10
What languages would you use if a customer from your same country of origin came into the restaurant?	English	English	English
What language/s do you use at home?	English and Yoruba We mix between the two	Native Language	English

What language/s do you use with your colleagues?	English	Native Language	English
Have you understood the questionnaire?	Yes		
Employee Questionnaires			
Where were you born?	Spain	Jordan	Gambia
Where were you raised?	Spain		Gambia
What language/s do you speak?	Spanish English	Arabic	Wollof Fula English Jola Mandin
Did you already know English before moving to this country	Yes, a little bit	Yes	Yes
How important is knowing and speaking English to you? Very 1 - Not at all 10	3	2	1
How well do you speak English? Poor 1 - Very Well 10	7	4	4
What languages would you use if a customer from your same country of origin came into the restaurant?	Native Language	English	
What language/s do you use at home?	Native Languages	English	Both English and Native

| What language/s do you use with your colleagues?	English	English	Both English and Native
Have you understood the questionnaire?	Yes		Yes

Appendix 4: Chart showing **inner** city employees responses to their language use at home and with colleagues
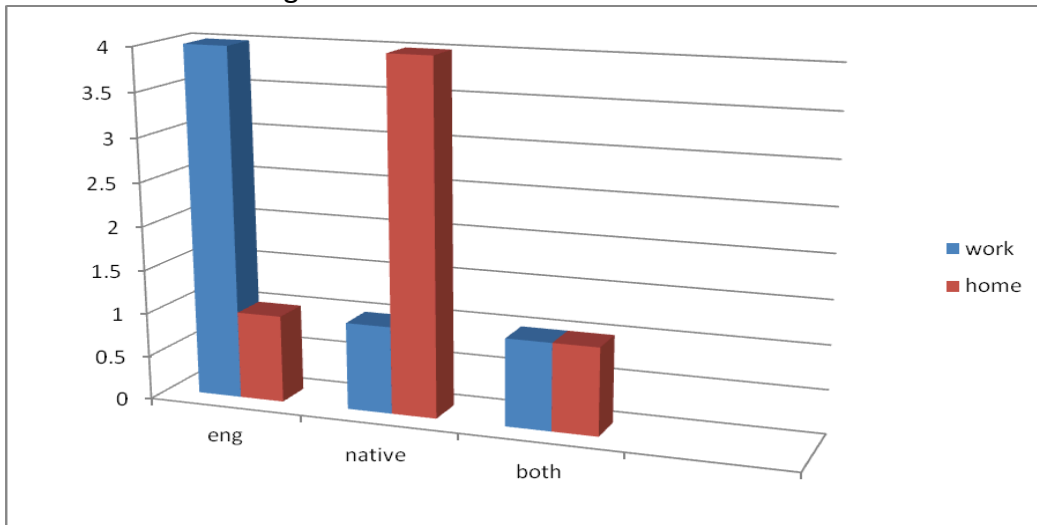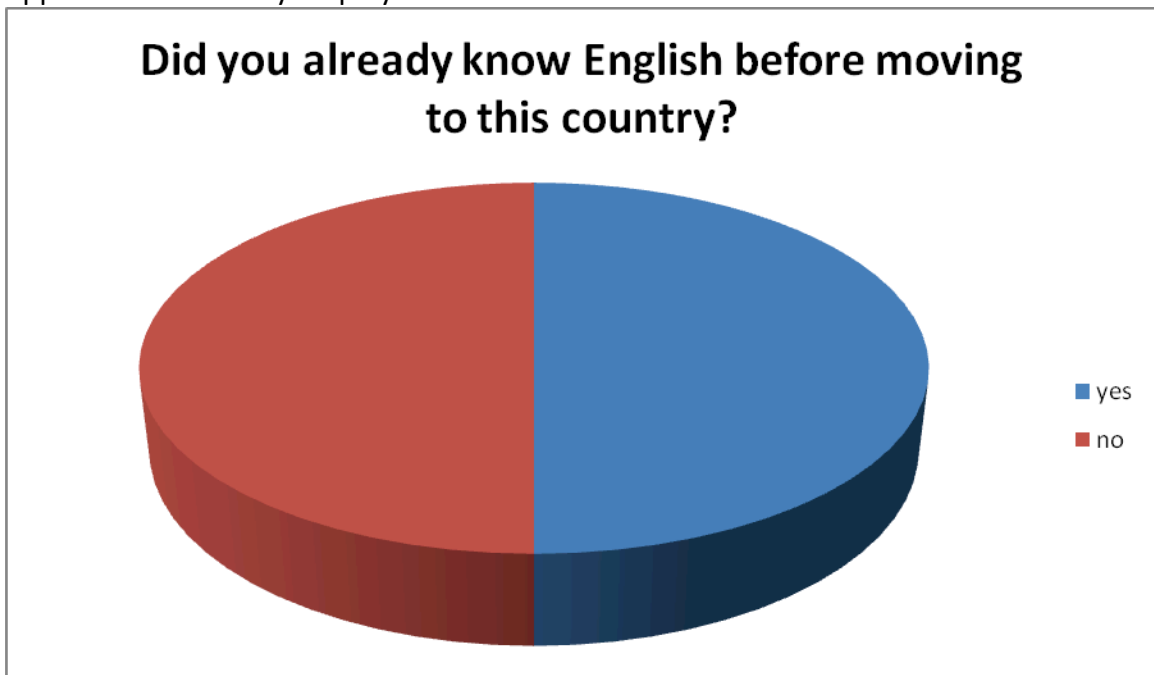

Appendix 5: Chart showing **outer** city employees responses to their use of language at home and with colleagues

Appendix 6: **Outer** city employees

Did you already know English before moving to this country?

- yes
- no
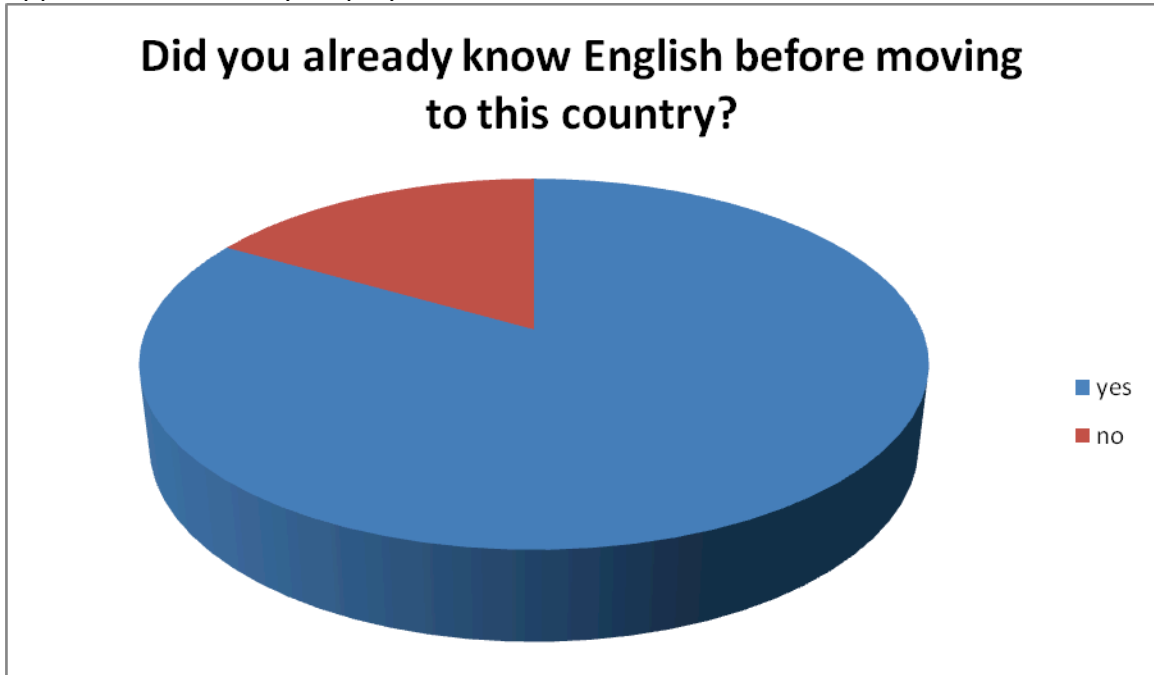
Appendix 7: **Inner** city employees

Did you already know English before moving to this country?

- yes
- no

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References

[i] Singh, M. and Han, J., *The commoditization of English and the Bologna Process*: Global Products and Services, Exchange Mechanisms and Trans-National Labour. In '*Language as a Commodity'* p 205

[ii] Multilingual Manchester, '*Multilingual use, and provision, in restaurants within Manchester'* (2011). School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures at the University of Manchester: http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/reports/Multilingual%20use,%20and%20provision,%20in%20restaurants%20within%20Manchester-print.pdf <Last accessed on 16/05/2012>

[iii] Blackledge,A. (1984) . *Disocurse and Power in a Multilingual World*. North America, Philadelphia. p56-57