Multilingual Manchester

Report

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An investigation into multilingualism in small businesses in China Town and Rusholme

Laura Coleman

Rachael Elizabeth Lunt

Victoria Dichiara

María Belén Castelo

Jie Wang

1. Introduction

In our study we wanted to look at the use of languages in small businesses in Manchester. We have chosen to investigate multilingualism in smaller businesses in particular as we frequently visit the towns that we will be studying and have noticed the diversity of them and are interested to see what role language plays in this. The research questions we devised are as follows:

- In what ways is multilingualism used within small businesses in two different towns in Manchester?

- Why do these businesses choose to use a particular language?

- How many languages do they use and why?

- Are language skills a priority when employing staff?

- Do the businesses use advertisements that are in languages other than English?

We originally chose to focus on Longsight and China Town, but when we went to Longsight to carry out our research we encountered some problems. We noticed that there were very few businesses with multilingual signs which were willing to participate, this would have meant changing the questionnaire to cater for businesses that said they did not use multilingualism if we were to continue looking at Longsight, which would have contradicted our research questions and the purpose of our study. Encountering these problems set us back in our time plan meaning that we weren't able to have completed our research by the time we had originally proposed. As a result, we decided to visit Rusholme instead of Longsight as it is demographically similar and geographically close to Longsight as there is only a 1.5 mile distance between the two towns. Data published on the website for National Statistics (2013) shows that there are similarities between the main languages spoken there. After English, the largest language group spoken in both towns is South Asian which includes Urdu, Bengali and Panjabi for example, followed by other Asian and African languages which had similar percentages of speakers. Our research in Rusholme went according to plan, meaning that we were able to have completed it by the end of Easter.

2. Data collection

When collecting our data, we split into two smaller groups and visited the businesses on week day mornings as the business owners had informed us that this was when they were at their quietest, therefore more convenient for them. In China Town, the Chinese member of the group was present at all times in order to help with language barriers. We first introduced ourselves to the businesses and explained the aims of our research and then asked the business owners the questions from our questionnaire (see appendix) whilst recording their responses. After we had collected the data, we coded and analysed the results.

In our investigation we interviewed staff from 11 businesses in each town adding up to a total of 22 businesses overall, the types of businesses that we looked at varied in what service they offered. We had originally planned on interviewing 10 businesses for each town, however, we decided to carry out an extra interview in each town in case when we came to the analysis we found that one of the interviews didn't provide much information. This wasn't the case, all businesses interviewed gave a good insight into their use of language, therefore, we decided to include all 22 interviews in the analysis.

In addition to this, we also decided that it was best to carry out a language survey in both towns rather than just Rusholme, as originally proposed. This is so that we could map the languages used most frequently in each area, as well as seeing whether there are differences in the languages used by residents of the towns and those travelling there for business purposes. Moreover, we think that this could help us answer some of our research questions, for example to see whether there is a correlation between the languages people visiting that area speak and the languages used by the businesses.

3. Results

After collecting data from the questionnaires people had answered, we have found there to be a number of interesting similarities and differences between the towns.

	Rusholme	China Town
Use advertising	73%	55%
Use multilingual advertising	50%	83%
Produce own advertising	57%	80%
Multilingual communication with customers	100%	91%
Customers like and find multilingualism beneficial	100%	91%
Staff need experience	82%	73%
Staff need to speak a particular language	18%	73%
Encountered problems with multilingualism in their business	18%	36%
The neighbourhood allows them to use multilingualism more than another would	82%	100%
They would use the same languages in a different neighbourhood	0%	55%

Figure1. The percentages of people who answered yes to the questions in the questionnaire

As shown by the table, the businesses in Rusholme tend to use more advertising than those in China Town. However, the businesses in China Town use more multilingual advertising than those in Rusholme. In regards to communicating with their customers, businesses in both areas expressed a tendency to use languages other than English whilst every business who said they did this also noted that their customers found it beneficial. When asked about staff recruitment, both expressed a
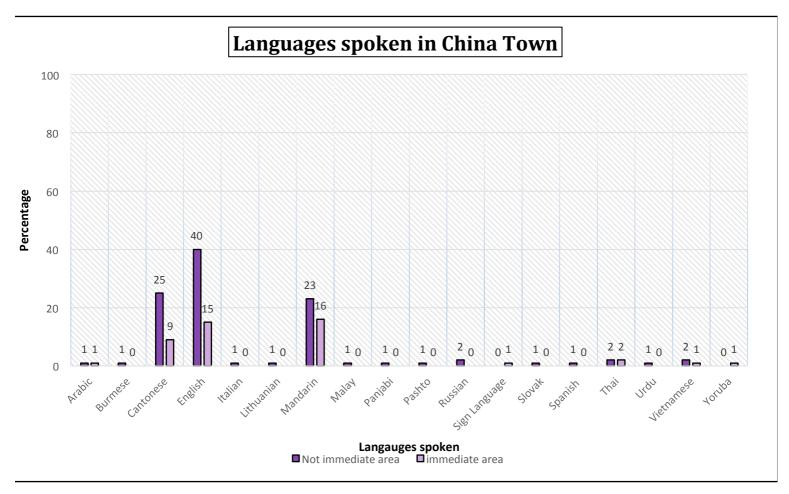
preference for experienced employees. However, there was a large difference between the businesses in China Town who recruited staff based on the fact they could speak more than one language and in Rusholme, where this was not an important factor. Another big difference we discovered between the two towns is that no respondents from Rusholme thought they would be able to use the same languages and amount of multilingualism in their business if they were located in another neighbourhood. Whereas, over half of the business owners in China Town thought they would still be able to make use of the languages they currently use if they were to relocate.
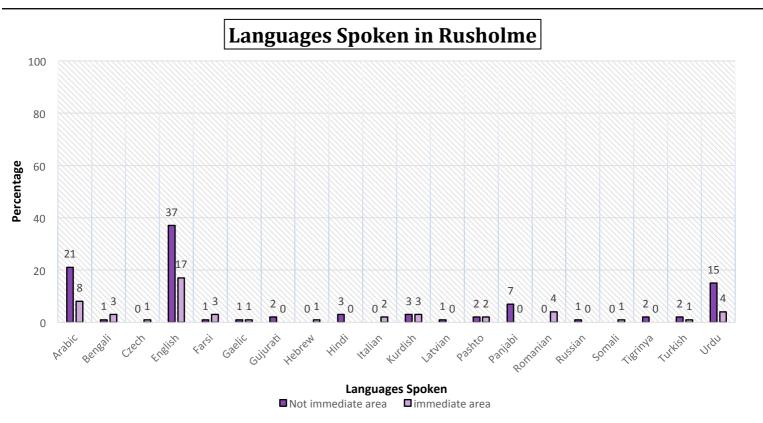
When asked if the use of multilingualism in their business created a problem, the majority of owners claimed that it did not. Though of the ones who claimed that it did, the main problem they experienced was associated with communication. In the questionnaire, we also asked business owners for their view on language policy in Manchester, for which we received a mixture of responses. The majority of responses in both towns were centred around the idea that language diversity is a positive thing, especially in China Town where a lot of people thought it helped maintain their national identity. However, some businesses did think that more needed to be done in relation to language policy in Manchester, for example, more multilingual signs. Furthermore, some of those interviewed in Rusholme were of the opinion that English should be the predominant language in England, thus language policy does not need to be improved.

We also asked customers in both towns their reasons for using that particular business. In Rusholme, language was not a factor in people using the businesses there, it was mainly to do with the services and products on offer. There were similar results in China Town in relation to businesses such as supermarkets, where communication is limited. However, customers using solicitors and accountants firms, in which a higher and more specialised level of language was needed, being able to communicate in their mother tongue was vital.

As mentioned previously, we have carried out a language survey in both towns in order to see whether or not the language choices of the businesses is linked to the languages spoken by people who live in the area or by the people who are visiting. This raises the question 'do the people attract the shops or do the shops attract the people?'. We surveyed 150 people in each town as we thought this would give us a representative sample. We split up into two groups and each went to one of the towns, at the same time and on the same day, so that the conditions were the same and therefore, the survey was fair. We asked people whether or not they lived in the immediate area i.e. a 10-15 minute walk away and what their main language was.

The results of the language survey are shown below.

Languages spoken in China Town

Percentage (y-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

Language	Not immediate area	immediate area
Arabic	1	1
Burmese	1	0
Cantonese	25	9
English	40	15
Italian	1	0
Lithuanian	1	0
Mandarin	23	16
Malay	1	0
Panjabi	1	0
Pashto	1	0
Russian	2	0
Sign Language	0	1
Slovak	1	0
Spanish	1	0
Thai	2	2
Urdu	1	0
Vietnamese	2	1
Yoruba	0	1

Langauges spoken

■ Not immediate area   ■ immediate area

Languages Spoken in Rusholme

Percentage (y-axis: 0, 20, 40, 60, 80, 100)

Language	Not immediate area	immediate area
Arabic	21	8
Bengali	1	3
Czech	0	1
English	37	17
Farsi	1	3
Gaelic	1	1
Gujurati	2	0
Hebrew	0	1
Hindi	3	0
Italian	0	2
Kurdish	3	3
Latvian	1	0
Pashto	2	2
Panjabi	7	0
Romanian	0	4
Russian	1	0
Somali	0	1
Tigrinya	2	0
Turkish	2	1
Urdu	15	4

Languages Spoken

■ Not immediate area   ■ immediate area

4. Discussion

In this section, we will discuss and try to explain some of the underlying factors shaping our data. Firstly, out of all the businesses we interviewed, there was only one which did not communicate with customers in languages other than English, and that was a betting shop in China Town. The owner of this business was English and so this was the only language spoken between staff and with customers. However, he did mention that because the business is located in China Town, he had tried to incorporate Chinese into the signs in order to fit in with the multilingual landscape of the town, even though he could not interact in Chinese. This was an anomaly in the results however, as every other business we interviewed used 'customer-friendly multilingualism' a term introduced by Salverda (2002), who claims that using languages to cater for customers increases profitability. In addition to this, when we asked business owners why they advertised in languages other than English, the majority response was that the languages they used were the main ones their customers spoke. Whilst businesses used languages for all aspects of their business, they placed an emphasis on customer interaction. According to our research the main languages used in businesses in Rusholme are Arabic, Urdu and Panjabi but also Hindi and Bengali whilst in China Town, the main language was Mandarin followed by Cantonese. Interestingly, there seems to have been a shift in the languages spoken in China Town, as previously Cantonese was the majority language and this is something business owners seemed aware of. Phan & Luk (2008) have also acknowledged this, claiming that many China Towns across the world are seeing a change from mainly Cantonese speaking communities to a great mix of languages including Thai, Vietnamese and mainland Chinese. When we carried out our language survey, our results reflected this as there was indeed a mix of languages spoken by people living in the immediate area, and there were almost double the amount of Mandarin speakers as there were Cantonese.

Whilst the majority of the businesses we interviewed did not acknowledge any problems in using multilingualism, there were a few that did, with more cases in China Town. In both towns the problem people experienced was with communication. In Rusholme it was with communicating in languages other than English. We think this is because there is such a diverse number of languages in Rusholme that businesses cannot cater for them all, and there didn't seem to be a problem with English; everybody that we interviewed could speak English to a high standard. In contrast, the problem in China Town was with communication in English, as people didn't seem to have as high a standard of English as in Rusholme. This is reflected by the fact that the majority of interviews had to be carried out in Chinese by one member of our group, otherwise people in China Town were either very reluctant to speak to us or simply could not speak to us, a problem we did not experience in Rusholme.

In relation to this, in Rusholme, communication between staff members is mainly in English but also used alongside other languages. In China Town, staff communicate mainly in Cantonese, whilst Mandarin and English are also spoken but less frequently. This is different to the majority language spoken in China Town, which is Mandarin, as our language survey suggests.

This could possibly be because the businesses have been established for a long time, with staff members traditionally using Cantonese, or it could be related to the area in China where workers have migrated from.

When carrying out our research, we asked business owners whether or not they thought they would still use the same languages in their business if they were located elsewhere. Although businesses in both areas agreed that their area allowed them to use multilingualism more than another would, nobody in Rusholme thought they would still be able to use the same languages if they were to relocate. Interestingly, over half of the respondents in China Town thought that they would still be able to use the same languages elsewhere. One business owner said that Chinese is spoken all over Manchester which could suggest why people think they would still be able to use multilingualism in a different location. In addition to this, China Town seems to be a much less residential area than Rusholme, instead being more of a commercial centre. We found that our language survey reflected this in the fact that seven out of ten people answered that they did not live in the immediate area, whereas in Rusholme, the difference was less marked.

Overall, in Rusholme our language survey did reflect what we were expecting from speaking to business owners, who said that the main languages they use are Arabic, Urdu and Panjabi. English was the majority language spoken here, whilst Arabic also seemed to be largely represented as we were expecting. Urdu and Panjabi however, had fewer speakers than we thought there would be. We have to bear in mind that we only carried out the survey on one day at a particular time and therefore, the results are not a complete representation of what languages are spoken in each of the towns, but more of an indication. We were also able to answer the question 'do the people attract the shops, or do the shops attract the people?', as from our survey there are a much higher number of Arabic, Urdu and Panjabi speakers who do not live in the immediate area in Rusholme, which suggests that it is indeed the shops that attract the people.

In China Town, there were in fact more Mandarin speakers than Cantonese speakers who lived in the immediate area whilst there were more Cantonese speakers than Mandarin speakers who did not live in the immediate area. We noticed that the majority of people who lived in the immediate area and spoke Mandarin were young, which could suggest that they are international students. This backs up claims by business owners that there are more and more overseas students coming to China Town who they try to cater for by using Mandarin. We noticed that there were a particularly high number of English speakers who did not live in the immediate area of China Town. As we carried out the survey at 5pm on a weekday, we think that a lot of these people were passing through China Town on their way home from work, instead of intentionally visiting the town. In hindsight, we would have visited China Town at a different time or at the weekend to avoid this, as we feel it might have had an effect on our results.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, we have been able to answer all our research questions and have found some interesting things from carrying out our study. We have found that both towns use multilingualism in a similar way and that the main purpose of using multilingualism is to interact with customers. We have also discovered that the main languages used by business owners in Rusholme, other than English, are Arabic, Urdu and Panjabi, whilst in China Town there seems to be a shift taking place from a focus on Cantonese to Mandarin. In addition to this, we have realised that both towns cater mainly for people who do not live in the immediate area as reflected by the choice of languages made by the owners, and is something we suspected of China Town but that we have also been able to determine for Rusholme.

References

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Appendix

<u>**Questionnaire**</u>

Name of business:

Town:

Service offered?

Target audience?

Do you use advertising in your business? Yes no

What kind of advertising do you have?

Do you advertise in languages other than English? Yes   no

If yes, which languages?

Why do you advertise in languages other than English?

Do you produce your own advertising or do you pay a company to produce it?

Does the sign maker or translating company specialise in your language or do they cater for different languages?

What aspects of your business do you use language for? (labels on shelves/ communication with other businesses/customers/website) (prompt for answers)

Do you speak to customers in a language other than English? Yes   no

Do your customers like your use of multiple languages?   Yes   no

Do they find your use of multiple languages beneficial?   Yes   no

Would you give us your permission to speak to some of your customers?   Yes no

When you employ someone, what are you looking for?

Do they need experience? Yes no

Do they need to speak x language?   Yes no

What language do you speak to other staff in?

Have you encountered any problems using multiple languages in your business? Yes   no

If yes, what?

Does this neighbourhood allow you to use your language more than another neighbourhood would?
Yes no

Do you think you would use the same languages if you were located elsewhere? yes no

What is your view on language policy and language diversity? (should there be more multilingual signs/ should the council do more in x language?) (prompt)

Finally, would you be interested in having a follow up interview?

Would you be interested in networking with other entrepreneurs regarding the use of language?

Language survey

Do you live in the immediate area?   **Yes / No**

Afrikaans	Malay
Akan	Malayam
Amharic	Marathi
Arabic	Nepalese
Bengali	Pakistani
Bosnian	Pahari
Bulgarian	Panjabi
Caribbean creole	Pashto
Chinese (Cantonese)	Persian
Chinese (Mandarin)	Polish
Chinese (Hakka)	Portuguese
Chinese (other)	Romanian
Croatian	Russian
Czech	Serbian
Danish	Shona
Dutch	Sign language (British)
English	Sign language (other)
Estonian	Sinhala
Farsi	Slovak
Finish	Somali
French	Spanish
German	Swahili
Greek	Swedish
Gujarati	Tagalog/Filipino
Hebrew	Tamil
Hindi	Telugu
Hungarian	Thai
Igbo	Tigrinya
Italian	Turkish
Japanese	Urdu
Kiswahili	Vietnamese
Korean	Yoruba
Kurdish	OTHER LANGUAGES
Latvian	
Lithuanian	