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**Does a multilingual adolescent's language proficiency
relate to how closely they identify with
their culture and ethnicity?**

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1. Introduction

Our investigation primarily focused on the potential effect that a young person's social identity, has on their attachment to their Home language. In order to investigate the potential linkage we visited St Paul's R.C High School in Wythenshawe, and interviewed multi-lingual pupils primarily in Year 7, but a few from each year group.

In order to address our research questions, we will make use of the responses that students gave us, in response to the School Language Survey and our two additional questions which related to Social Identity Theory. The two additional questions allowed us to gain qualitative and quantitative data.

To gain insight into the possible relationships between language proficiency and our three independent variables (Age of arrival to the U.K, attitude towards spoken languages and social group membership) we will utilise raw numbers. We are doing this because we only interviewed 40 students, as this is not a representative sample of the population considering the majority of the participants were in year 7, and the sample size is not large enough for the results to be statically or systematically generalised, we have tried not to use percentages as they may be misleading.

We contributed two additional questions of our own to guide our research. Our two supplementary questions were:

- 1) Which of the languages that you speak do you feel most strongly attached to, if any?
- 2) Do you utilise a language other than English at school with peers? If so, when and where is it appropriate to do so?

We created our additional questions to test whether Tajfel & Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979), could explain a possible link between those who indicated an attachment to their Home language, and whether these speaker's friendship groups were made up of those who were also speakers of their Home language, and why that may be the case. In light of Tajfel & Turner's work there is a clear suggestion that social groups can be based on ethnicity and culture, but it is unclear as to whether a common language has the same effect on creating and maintaining group membership. Through the analysis of our data we will be able to decipher whether this is the case.

We also considered the research of Rampton's (2005) study, which illustrated that a speaker's social networks affects the way that they speak. Therefore in our findings we would expect to see that if a speaker's social relationships are made up of monolingual English speaker's primarily, they are likely to converge with the way that the majority of their friends speak.

This is likely to be found because the social groups that individuals belong to, they presumably wish to assimilate to the other members of the group, which connects Rampton's work to Social Identity Theory.

2. Case Study

The school which we visited, Saint Paul's Catholic High School, is situated in Baguley, Wythenshawe. Within the first part of our study we discovered that the people within this district speak a variety of languages in addition to English such as Polish, Arabic, Urdu and Malayalam. This along with the fact that seven pupils within the school took Polish at AS Level, led us to the prediction, that Polish would be spoken by a fair number of pupils as a Home language. This prediction was confirmed in our findings, with 11 children from our interviews being born in Poland and speaking it in addition to English.

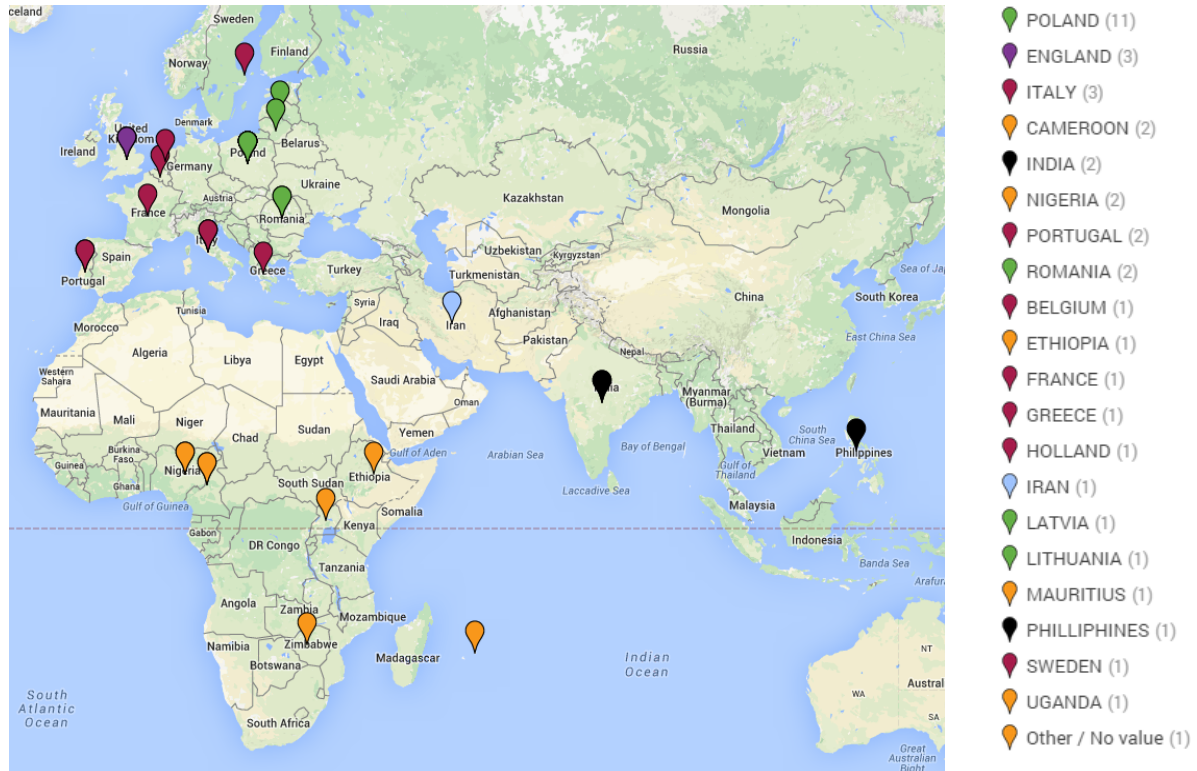
We conducted the survey through one-on-one interviews with the multilingual students. The interview process consisted of meeting the child, explaining what would happen in the interview and then beginning the survey. There were many advantages and disadvantages of the interview process. On one hand it gave us the opportunity to interact with multilingual adolescents in order to gain further elaboration where required. However there were some disadvantages, for example some children were slightly confused over what was expected of them, in particular some suffered from learning difficulties, making it difficult to extract specific answer.

There were some disadvantages to the interview process, some of which we predicted. For example there were times when we were unable to locate pupils, due to absence or incorrect information on timetables. Another difficulty with our study was having to interview students in the hallways, which was at times disruptive as there was a lot of movement during the school day in the corridors, meaning that students may have been distracted or become conscious, therefore this may have affected the results we obtained.

3. Data

Firstly, we have created a Google Maps illustration of the birth places of the participants, shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.



In order to present the place of birth of the respondents we have also created a bar chart (Fig. 2). We have grouped country of birth into the following regions:

U.K.: *England (3)*

Eastern Europe: *Latvia (1); Lithuania (1); Poland (11); Romania (2)*

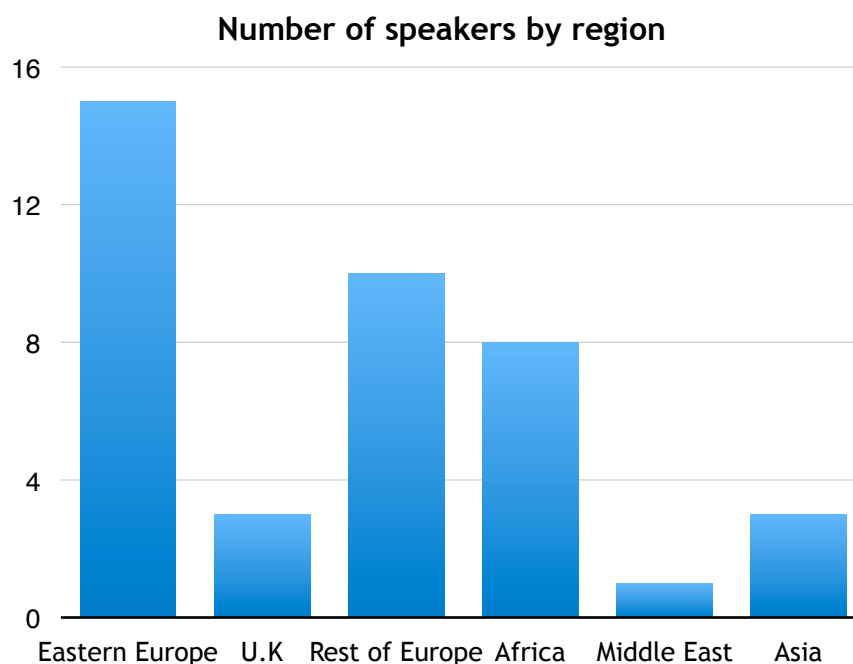
Western Europe: *Belgium (1); France (1); Greece (1); Holland (1); Italy (3); Portugal (2); Sweden (1)*

Africa: *Cameroon (2); Ethiopia (1); Mauritius (1); Nigeria (2); Uganda (1); Zimbabwe (1)*

Middle East: *Iran (1)*

Asia: *India (2); Philippines (1)*

Figure 2. Total participants according to region



The majority of the students we interviewed were born abroad (37 out of 40), whilst three stated that they were born within the U.K. Fifteen out of thirty-seven of those born outside of the U.K were born in Eastern European countries, with Poland being the most common with eleven students being born there. Those born in Poland represent 73.3% of the total Eastern Europe respondents, which is a similar finding to last year's research which found 77.42% (Cann et al. 2014:4). It is however important to note that the number of respondents we interviewed is far fewer than those interviewed in 2014, and this is due to us only having to collect data from new students primarily in Year 7.

The rest of Europe includes a vast expanse, but in general the results observed are that there were less than 3 speakers for each country stated. Speakers originating from African countries were part of the third highest ranked region, with two speakers from Cameroon and Nigeria respectively. Whilst respondents born in other African countries were the only ones stating that country as their place of birth. There was only one respondent from a Middle Eastern country and 3 from Asian countries which includes the Far East.

4. Proficiency of Languages

4.1. Proficiency of English

During our analysis, we found that generally proficiency in English was higher than in the students Home language. This may be due to the duration of time that they have been living in the U.K. Also it is more likely that English is used more and therefore part of the speaker's active vocabulary more in comparison to Home language vocabulary. Figure 3 shows a proficiency graph, demonstrating all the pupils' proficiency in English. Thirty-eight out of forty of the students received a perfect score of twelve, in all areas of the English proficiency test.

By using the School Language Survey, we were able to test how well the students' vocabulary was in their Home language and how well they constructed sentences that sounded cohesive. As the researchers our opinions on how we scored a student's proficiency was subjective, and also biased to some degree considering we are not native speakers of the languages that the participants were speaking.

4.2 Proficiency of home language(s)

Figure 4. Home Language Proficiency (1)

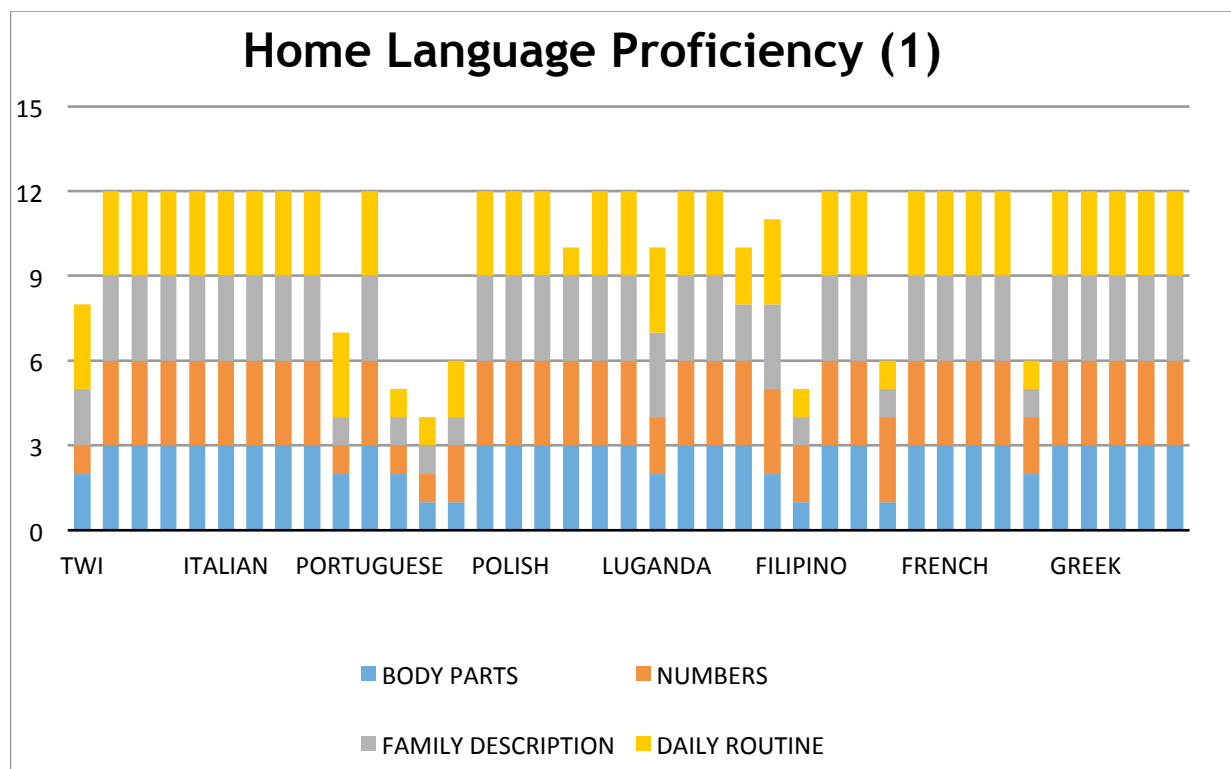


Figure 4 illustrates the variation in proficiency compared to English. Students who scored higher in proficiency of their Home language, were also generally highly proficient in English. Therefore if we monitor that the students who have lived in the U.K. for longer have high proficiency scores in English, do we expect that those who have more recently moved to the U.K would have high proficiency scores in their Home language?

5. Identity

Considering one of our main research interests was on Social Identity and the way in which the languages we speak may affect the social relationships we create and maintain, we contributed our additional questions.

Out of the forty interviews we conducted, one student was not asked the stated 2 additional identity questions, as the student had stated in earlier parts of the interview that the only language they spoke was English.

Identity 5.1 - Which of the languages that you speak do you feel most strongly attached to, if any?

The first question necessarily was quantitative, as from the responses provided to us researchers, we were able to group responses into English; Home language; no preference, see Figure 7. This meant that we were quickly and easily able to gain numerical data. There was also room for our interviewees to expand on why they felt attached to the language they stated, giving us qualitative data as well.

Figure 7. Number of responses to which language a speaker felt most strongly attached to

English	Home language	No preference
23	9	7

The results indicate that there is a general preference and attachment to the English language, over the students Home language. The average age of arrival to the U.K of students who selected English as the language they were more attached to, was 5.4 years old. Many respondents stating English as their preferable choice also discussed that the English language was used in more domains during their everyday life, in comparison to their Home language.

Those stating that their Home language was the one they felt most strongly attached, were averagely 11 years of age when they came to the U.K. see Figure 8. This in comparison to the average age of the students who stated English as the language they were most strongly attached to, shows a 6 year difference in age of arrival to the U.K. Presumably arriving in the U.K at a later age, would mean that many of the student's friendship and familial networks, were made overseas. This explains their preference towards their Home language, which to some degree is related to identity and a sense of belonging. Common reasons as to why students preferred their Home language followed the themes of heritage, family connections and fluency.

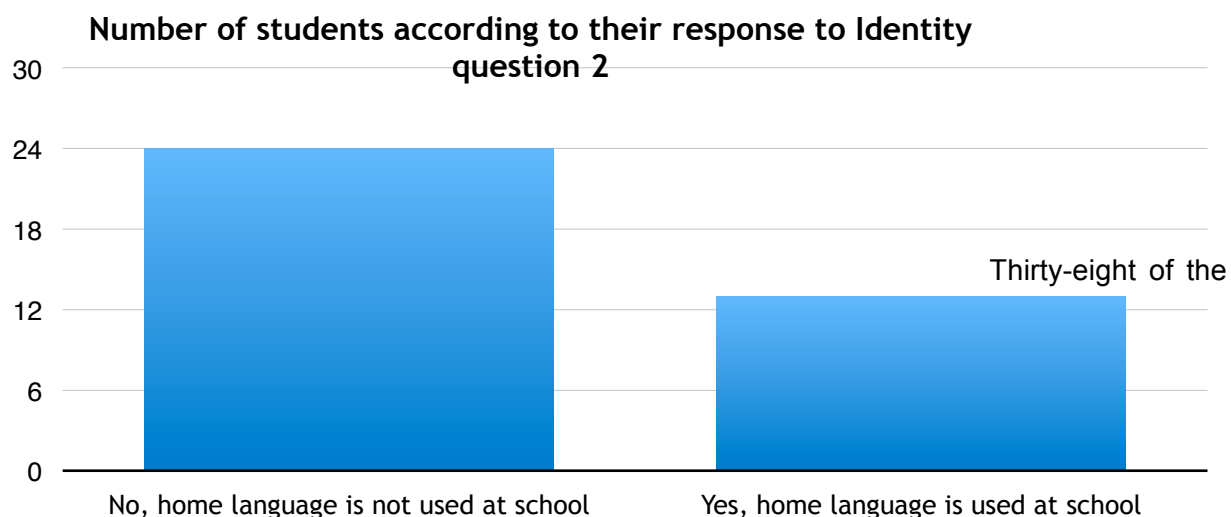
Figure 8. Participants stating home language as the language they were more strongly attached to, according to the age they arrived in the U.K.

Age arrived in the U.K
3
11
5
11
10
14
15
15
15

Overall, there is a general preference for English over the Home language, resulting in twenty-three out of thirty-nine pupils stating they felt more attached to English. Where students prefer their Home language over English, we can see that they have arrived in the U.K at an older age on average compared to those who stated English as the language they felt most strongly attached to. This indicates that an individual's cultural and language identity is affected by the age of arrival to the U.K, therefore affecting language attachment.

Identity 5.2 - Do you utilise a language other than English at school with peers? If so, when and where it is appropriate to do so?

Figure 9. Responses to Identity question 2



forty students we interviewed were asked this question, with one interview cut short as explained earlier. However one other response did not answer the question. Necessarily the analysis is made up of thirty-eight responses. The results can be found in Figure 9.

The majority of students stated that English was the only language they used at school; in fact twenty-four out of thirty-eight stated this. The students who gave this response when they elaborated on why this was the case, the common theme was that their friends were monolingual English speakers.

On the other hand of the thirteen students who made use of another language in school, they noted that they spoke their Home language with friends at school regarding '*private conversations*', when being '*secretive*'. These responses indicate that the students shared gossip with others whom you would assume they trusted and were close with, and it happens that those that they are closest to are speakers of the same Home language as themselves. We can note that the students most intimate and most personal conversations were shared in a language other than English, not only to possibly remain secretive but to reinforce and emphasize group solidarity and to necessarily leave other students out.

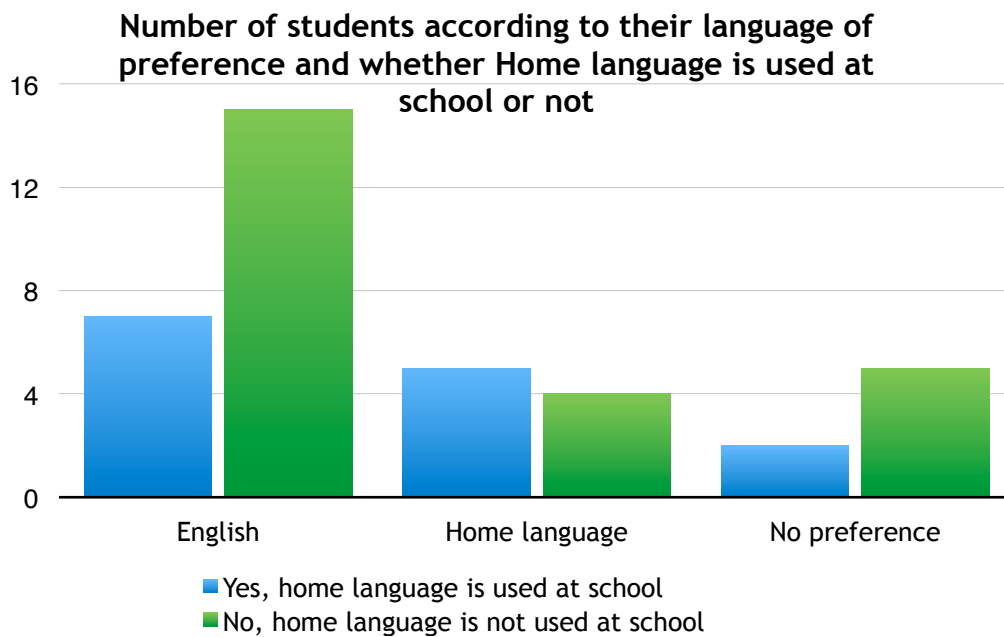
The results from our two identity questions indicate that there is a relationship between students indicating English as the language they are most attached to, and the majority of students also indicating that English was the only language they made use of at school. This preference towards the English language is not a surprising result considering from the

demographics of Baguley, which is the area St Paul's R.C High School is located, 92.6% of residents spoke English as their main language according to the Ward Electoral Registration Summary. This would mean that the overwhelming majority of students at St Paul's R.C would be monolingual speakers of English; we can assume this is the case as the majority of residents of Baguley are also identified as White British. This would support Social Identity Theory and our expectations, because we can see that the majority of the student's we interviewed, shared social networks and friendships with other students who spoke only English (or at the very least English is the common language between their friendship group), meaning that there is a relationship between language identity and social networks. As the language that an individual chooses to use seems to enhance the feeling of belonging within the social network and social group, explaining why many students felt more attachment to English, as their friends were sole speakers of English. Where we do see students indicating an attachment to their Home language, they also are more likely to use their Home language at school with friends. This reiterates the importance of a sense of belonging within a social group is and how it can affect not only our group memberships but also how we feel about the languages that we have at our command. The relationship between language preference and whether home language is used at school is provided in fig. 10 and fig.11.

Figure 10.

Language most strongly attached to	Yes, home language is used at school	No, home language is not used at school
English	7	15
Home language	5	4
No preference	2	5

Figure 11.



To conclude in terms of Social Identity we can deduce that group memberships can affect the likelihood of a Home language being used in school, and that social groups can also in some way affect the language that an individual feels more attached to. Where Home languages are preferred over English, a small majority of speakers also indicate that they make use of their Home language at school verse those who are strongly attached to their Home language but do not utilise it within school. Common reasons for feeling attached to the language that the students chose, were to do with their friends being speakers of that language for both those who made use of a Home language at school and those that did not and only spoke English within school. However of those that did make use of a Home language at school the common reason was to be secretive, which indicates the use of the Home language within school to build upon group memberships, in-turn building group solidarity and by nature out-casting other students who do not speak the Home language. These results closely connect and support Social Identity Theory and clearly indicate that language can create, maintain and solidify social group memberships.

6. Conclusion

In summary, our data is of immense interest into the nature of Social Identity and how the languages that we speak can create and maintain social networks. The results also depict how language can be used as a tool to create in- and out-group members, therefore building solidarity between speakers of the same language. Our report depicts how the influences of social interaction determines a speakers choice of language, but also in what context it is appropriate for the speaker to use a language. We have given a thorough qualitative analysis of the languages spoken, adeptness in English and we have illustrated how long people from abroad have lived in the UK impacts their linguistics experience in both their native language and English.

Our analysis on language attitude and Social Identity Theory has highlighted the importance of language as it molds ones social identity. Multilingual speakers increasingly reported that they used their native languages when addressing older speakers in their homes or friends who spoke the same language as them, yet the majority stated that English was used within school and at home as it was the easier option of language preference and use.

In previous research conducted at St Paul's R.C High School, the reports have focused on saliency and identity attitudes towards the most dominant language spoken, but have dismissed how young people identify with their home language in comparison to English and explored why this may be the case like our research has done. Our investigation suggests that a multilingual speaker's preference in one language over another relates to their Social Identity and social networks/groups.

In future research should include a larger sample size to test whether results similar to the ones we have found would be observed in a larger sample size. This will enable a better description of exactly how language proficiency, Social Identity and language attitude relate to one another for a multilingual adolescent.

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