multilingual MANCHESTER

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How Do Multilingual Speakers Adapt Their Language Usage in Different Domains?

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Language, a communicative tool at our disposal, is used differently between contexts and differently within a range of domains, as we have investigated. As multilingual speakers have a choice of language to use, our main research question aimed to explore how they adapt their usage in different domains and possible reasons for such language switching. This, we hypothesised, would reflect the role and importance that language played for the individual, as switching between languages is almost certainly a conscious decision.

Domains, Fishman suggests, 'attempt to summate the major clusters of interaction that occur in clusters of multilingual settings and involving clusters of interlocutors' (1971, in García et al, 2006: 18). From this, we decided that one of our main focuses would be the family domain, to explore generational usage. Another crucial area of interest was the work environment, in which we hypothesised that there would be use of minority languages, as well as a significant use of the English as a lingua franca. We also aimed to discover whether power relations of languages affected usage.

Upon analysis, it was found that English is dominant within a large proportion of the domains investigated, including with children, in the media and in the workplace. However, native languages were used in communication more within subdomains of family, such as with parents and extended family.

Methodology

It was decided that the Curry Mile (map included in appendix 1), as an area dominated by Asian culture and cuisine following a high influx of immigration, would be an ideal location to investigate multilingualism locally. As well as the area being so linguistically diverse, it is also diverse in the type of establishments found, allowing more in-depth investigation into domain-based usage in a variety of institutional types. This, methodologically, was an advantage as it generated a more reliable sample of participants, reflective of not just one sector of the community.

We decided that the best way to acquire data would be to distribute questionnaires (see appendices 2 and 3) around businesses along the Curry Mile. We believed that observing naturally occurring data or conducting interviews would be difficult with the time constraints presented to us and as Meyerhoff stated, 'one of the disadvantages of interviews is that they can take a long time to arrange and conduct' (2006: 34). Also due to the nature of the data we wanted to obtain we concluded that a detailed questionnaire with a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions would provide us with a sufficient amount of information to answer our research question, our decision further reassured in consulting Meyerhoff: 'in order to interpret what the distribution of forms means […] we need solid data on the distribution of forms; but we also have to […] move beyond the numbers in order to evaluate the way in which these distributional patterns are being used by speakers in a particular social or interactional context' (2006: 6). Our chosen method proved to be of maximum advantage in our data collection, specifically because it 'quickly

generates a lot of tokens of a restricted kind' (2006: 36). We based our questionnaire on Choi's (2005) study on bilingualism in Paraguay, as Choi successfully used a questionnaire to obtain data using a mixture of questions on personal information and also a series of open and closed questions on language attitudes and usage.

Our original plan outlined that we would distribute the questionnaires between the 16th and 20th of April, giving us as much time as possible to analyse the results. To make sure that we stuck to these time constraints, two group members initially did a trial walk of the Curry Mile to ensure there would be enough potential businesses for us to approach.

Following the trial run, we established that we would be able hand out twenty questionnaires with ease, five to each of the four following categories of businesses to ensure we received a diverse range of answers:

- Food services (restaurants; takeaways)
- General goods (newsagents; grocers; supermarkets)
- Specialist shops (jewellers; clothes shops)
- Professional services (law firms; estate agencies)

We decided that to optimize our chances of all the businesses being open, we would hand the questionnaires out on a weekday between 11am and 3pm.

On Tuesday 17th April at 11am we began handing the questionnaires out. To save time and also not to seem intimidating to potential participants, we split up into three groups of two. Our initial plan was to introduce ourselves to the participants, explain what the questionnaire was about and ask them to fill it in – but we soon realised that due to the nature of some of the businesses that this would be not possible as they were too busy to fill the questionnaires in on the spot, particularly the food services. We then made the decision to leave the questionnaires with most participants and agree to collect them the next day. Leaving the questionnaires with the participants caused problems in the collection of data, as when we went back to collect them some had been misplaced or forgotten about, therefore we had to make several trips between 17th – 20th April to ensure that we got all twenty questionnaires back. We also saw leaving the questionnaires with the participants over night as an advantage as this avoided observer's paradox, as the participants would not feel pressured to answer the questions based on how they thought they were required to.

Our aims were successful and only a handful of businesses refused to fill in the questionnaires; therefore we had a wide range of businesses available to us and did not have to leave the Curry Mile in search of participants.

Upon receiving all twenty completed questionnaires by Friday 20th April, and keeping within our set time constraints we were then able to spend an appropriate amount of time analysing and discussing the results that follow.

Domain: 'Family & Friends'

As Fishman suggests, 'multilingualism often begins in the family and depends upon it for encouragement if not protection' (1972: 82). From this, a significant pattern of language maintenance in multilingual speakers was predicated, as well as increased use of English among younger speakers, until the use of the native language is lost.

The initial hypothesis was that multilingualism in successive generations would decrease, as native languages are used in increasingly more restricted domains, thus eventually lost. 9 out of 16 participants claimed that, with their children, they used their native language as well as another language (dominantly English, with the exception of one respondent whose other languages included Urdu and German). This is illustrated in figure 1 as 'both' is the clear preference. The mixed use of native and other (mostly English) languages is reflective of 'younger generations … [being] more westernised' (Cameron et al, 2010: 6), but also an attempt to uphold their identity and relation to their native language and origins, in which 'the choice of language is often a significant indication of the group with which they wish to identify' (Herman 1961, in Anderton et al, 2011: 4). Also investigated was differing types of bilingualism, that being additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism, in differing domains. It seems additive bilingualism (both maintaining the use of the native language and developing usage of the second language) is more prominent.

As well as the quantitative research carried out, regarding language usage, language attitude questions were also included to induce qualitative data. Questioned was what language informants would prefer their children to use and it was found that none of the respondents had a preference of their native language for their children. The informants' preference of either another language, which was predominantly English, or both the native language and another language (again, English was the predominant choice), could be, as the informants suggested, because 'we live in an English speaking country' yet the native language is 'our language children should know'. Again, this suggests that the participants feel it is necessary to retain their identity through language use.

Another subdomain within family is parents and extended family. It was found that the majority of informants used their native language in interactions with parents. Specifically, 11 informants from 19 who gave answers used their native language with their parents, and 9 informants from 18 who gave answers used their native language with their extended family. This supports the initial hypothesis that maintenance of a native language will be prominent in communication between second generation and older speakers. In a similar study by Villar et al (2011: 12), it was found that there was a 'tendency for older speakers to speak more in their native language'. This supports our findings in that second generation speakers would be required to use, primarily, their native language for more efficient communication with, in this example, their parents. Although not directly investigated, another reason for this finding is that 'there is no requirement to speak any other language' (Anderton et al, 2011: 4). Relatedly, this could point to the home

environment being a familiar one in which speakers feel comfortable using their native language.

In terms of interactions with a partner, it was found that the majority of speakers use their native language. However, this difference was not found to be significant. Again, this could be reflective of the comfort that speakers may feel in their home, thus they feel it more appropriate to speak their native language. However, it proved difficult to draw a specific conclusion regarding this subdomain without more detailed information about the addressee, such as their partners' nationality and the languages they use. It did not seem appropriate to ask for such details, however, as this wasn't one of the main research aims.
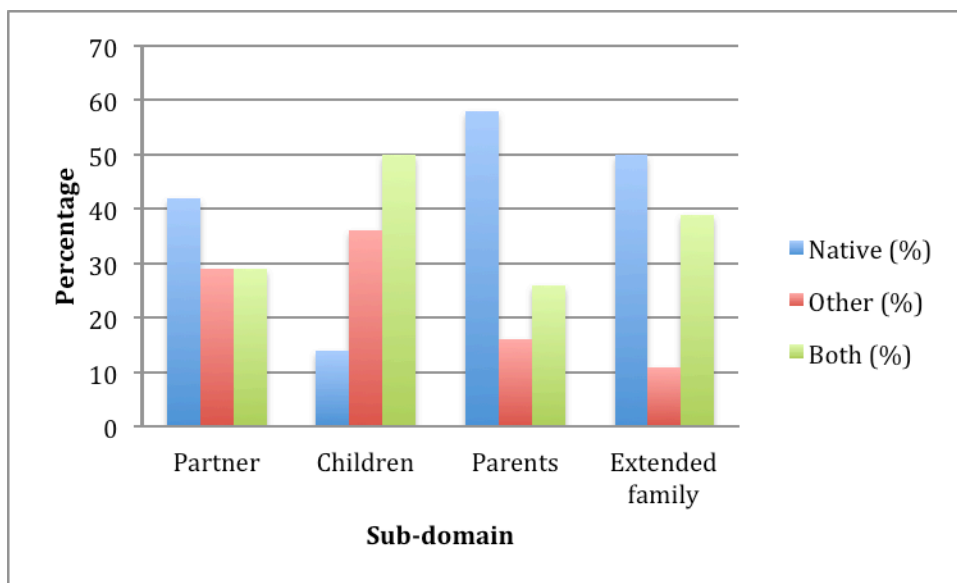

Figure 1. 'Family' domain and subdomains.

Another domain linked to family is friends. Although there was not a particular hypothesis, it was included in case there were any patterns. It was found that 50% of the respondents used both their native language and another language when talking to friends (in comparison to 22% who used only their native language, and 28% who used only another language, that other language being English predominantly). This is expected, especially in relation to length of residence, as it is presumed that they would mix with a variety of people. From this it was concluded that in this domain additive bilingualism is more prominent, that being the development of both the maternal and second language (Lambert, 1975).
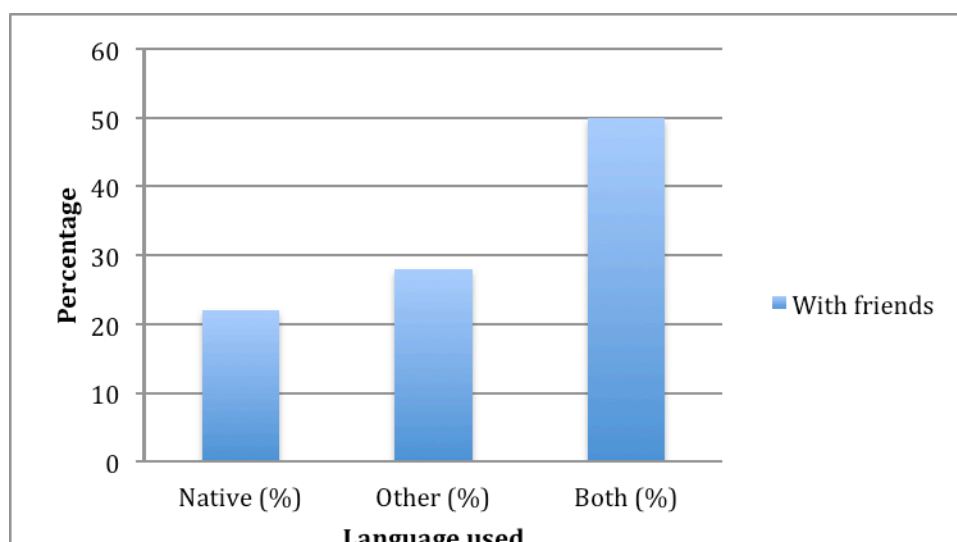
Ultimately, within the family domain, 60% of the language used in communication is native: 'continuous use of minority languages [...] implies a covert prestige as it symbolizes their social unity as a close-knit social group' (Littlefair, 2010: 8).

Domain: 'In the Street'

The domain of 'in the street' is important in research as it illustrates which languages speakers favour in informal situations. 80% of the participants used English when talking in the street. Presumably, this is an issue of respect. Perhaps the respondents feel using English in a predominantly English speaking country is more appropriate. In particular, one respondent stated 'to study [in] an English country you should speak their country language'.
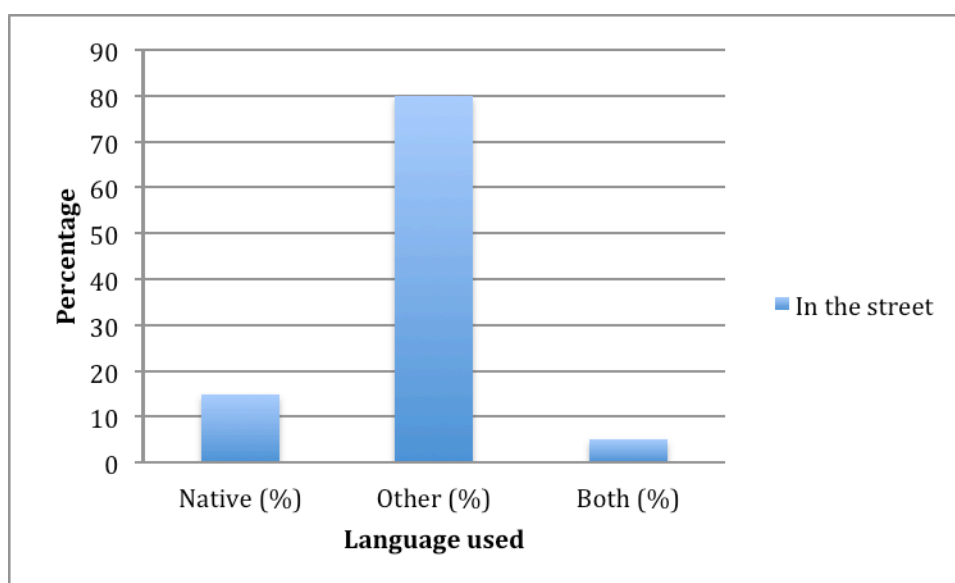

Figure 3. 'In the street' domain.

Domain: 'Media'

From figure 4 (below), it is evident that the role of the native language is diminished within the media. Only 6 tokens were obtained throughout the 20 questionnaires, of participants either watching the TV, listening to the radio or reading the newspaper in their native language. Although this is not completely unexpected, due to the power of the English media and ease of access, the level of dominance is still surprising. Primarily, this was surprising because, whilst having the questionnaires completed, it was noticed that foreign newspapers were readily available and foreign radio stations were played in store.

Perhaps this accounts for a higher percentage of participants utilising the media in both their native language as well as another. The 12 tokens recorded in this category are provided primarily from the TV, with only 4 tokens for the radio or newspapers. However the majority of participants admitted to accessing the media domain in a different language from their native one. In both newspapers and radio

16 out of 19 responses indicated that this was comfortably the preferred form of following the media.

In conclusion, the relative ease of access of the English media appears to influence the amount of tokens collected.
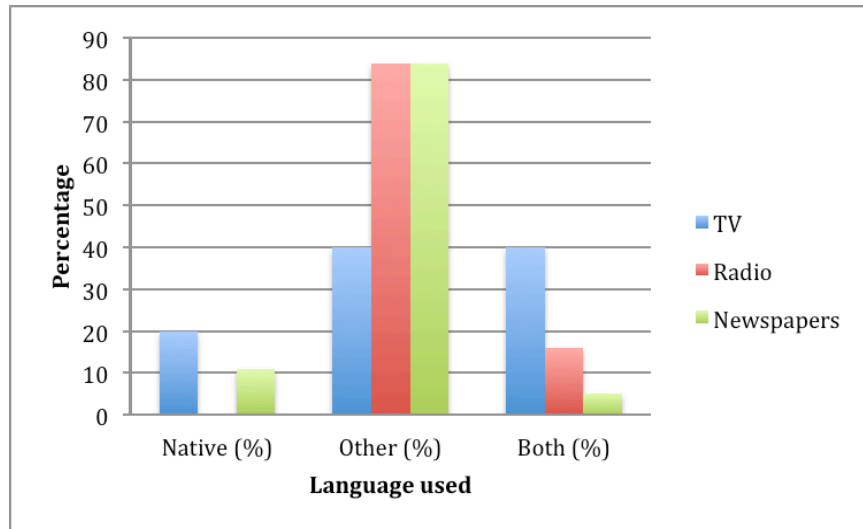

Figure 4. 'Media' domains and subdomains

Domain: 'Work'

The initial hypothesis was that English would be the most widely used language across the domains.

In concordance with Littlefair et al. (2010), the results showed that English was by far the most prevalent language within the work domain followed by Urdu. In every subdomain, English was the preferred language choice, with only 2 out of the 20 speakers not using English and only with their colleagues. This supported our initial hypothesis.

In the other subdomains, every participant stated that they used English. A proposed explanation for this is that they found that speaking in English was the most convenient method of communication, particularly with customers, as they are in an English speaking country. When on the phone, in cases where languages other than English occur, it was deduced that this could be dependent on whether calls were incoming or outgoing. If calls were made by participants, they would already know whether the recipient of the call spoke English or another mutually intelligible language.

Concerning written language, it is shown that English is the only language used. One reason for this could be that as English was already the most spoken language, it would eliminate confusion to use it in writing as well. Also, the other languages are not represented by just one script and participants may only know one type. It is

possible that their written knowledge of these languages is insufficient for their purposes.

Another factor taken into consideration was participants' ages. It was hypothesised that younger speakers would only have manipulation of one language, presumably English, whereas older speakers would use their native language (or another known language) as well as English, depending on how long they had lived in the UK.
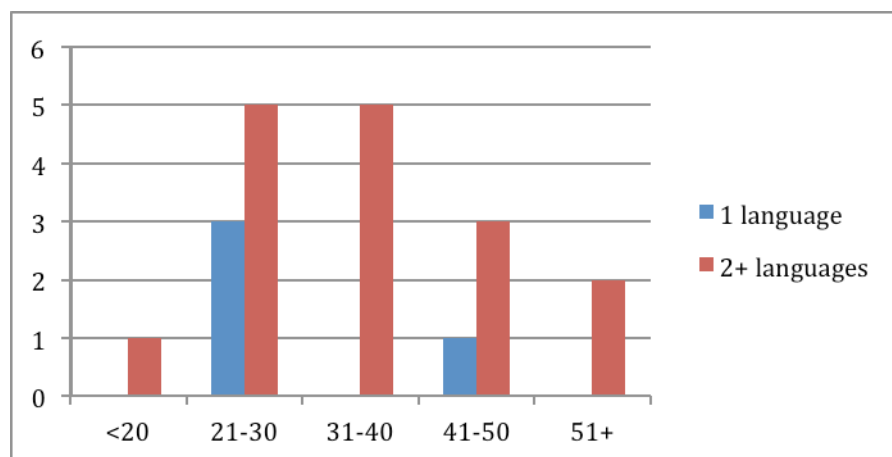

Figure 5. Participants' ages and number of languages they use

The graph supports the hypothesis to an extent, as the eldest age range exclusively uses more than one language whereas three of the eight 21-30 year old participants solely used only one language, which was found to be English, as expected. The age range of <20 can be disregarded here as there is only one participant, thus making it unrepresentative of that age range as a whole. It should also be noted however, that half of the majority of the participants were over the age of 25, which is around the cutoff age we expected for usage of two languages.

Attitudinal questions further explain the results as it was found that language usage was influenced mostly by convenience. Participants felt that as they were in England, English seemed like a natural language choice. There were also a number of key words found in several completed questionnaires. Of the 20 participants, 2 stated that although they used English most, Kurdish was their preferred language as it is their 'mother tongue'. One participant expressed that his love for English is the main reason for using it.

A factor relating to the status of English is power. Initially we planned to investigate power within businesses to find out if employers and employees embrace their multilingualism differently. The importance of knowledge of English was questioned. 89% of participants agreed that knowledge of English is vital. 'Understanding and respect' were two main reasons as to why participants felt that knowledge of English is important. Previous research found results in terms of respect: 'one informant used Spanish to his father because he respected him' (Rubin, 1962: 55). In this case, Rubin found that as the informant respected his father, the father was in a higher, more powerful position similar to managers and higher ranked employees within the workplace. Some participants described English as more 'eloquent' and therefore

thought that it would be more beneficial to them to use it as opposed to their native language. In some regards, they felt that English could be used as a tool to gaining a higher authoritative position within the workplace and in life in general. This is an interesting point to make given the high status of English throughout the world. It is a widely spoken language and is a lingua franca for many different countries.
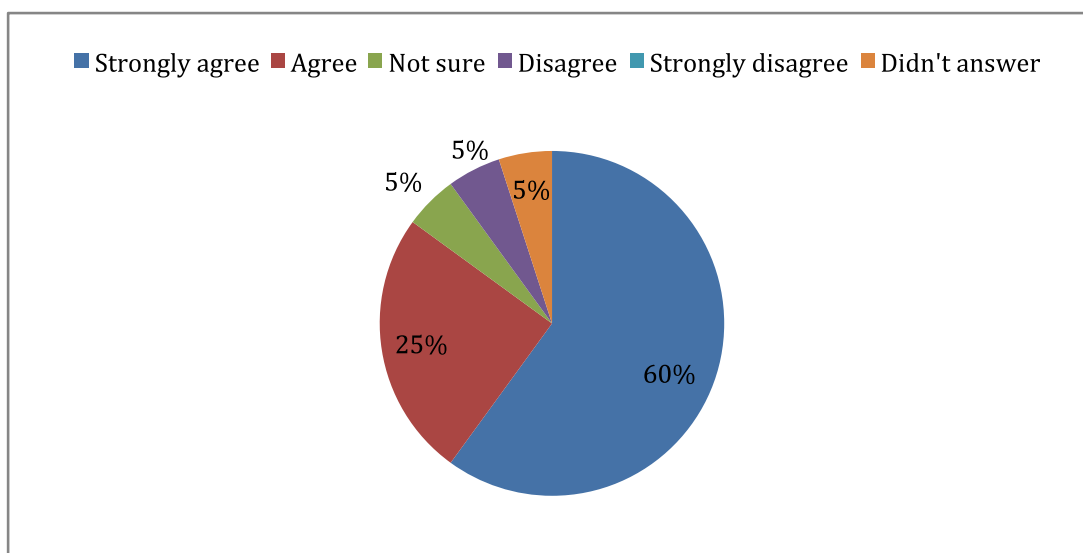

Figure 6. Is knowledge of English needed?

Following this, we also included a question to determine whether participants viewed their native language or English to be more prestigious. Over 50% agreed that English was more prestigious than their native language. In a previous study, Afford et al. found that English is more respected perhaps 'due to its inherent level of prestige' (2011: 8) and its association with high status. This could possibly be explained by the notion of the 'snowball effect', which Hoffmann describes as 'the more widely English is used … the greater its prestige'. Hoffmann also suggests that 'the social and cultural attributes of English are considered to be exceptional' (Hoffman, in Cenoz & Jessner, 2000: 7-12). The fact that participants also felt that English was prestigious is in conjunction with Hoffman's findings. Their increased use of English while in the country could reflect their ideologies of it being the prestigious variety, compared to their own native language.
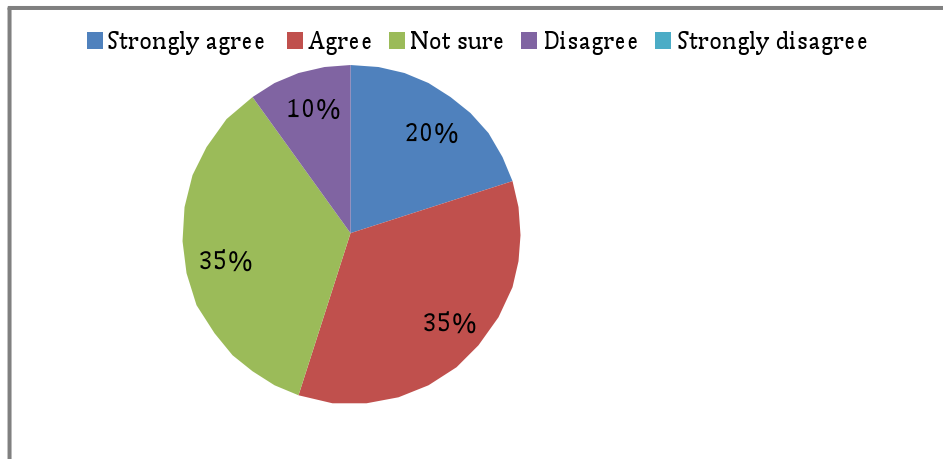
Figure 7. Is English more prestigious than native languages?

In addition preference was also questioned, in order to investigate whether it was reflective of, or determined by, relative levels of power. Of the 20 people asked, 12 did have a preference for a particular language. From our data, however, we did not identify a significant preference for a particular language. Generally though, no reasons stated were relevant to our investigations into power.
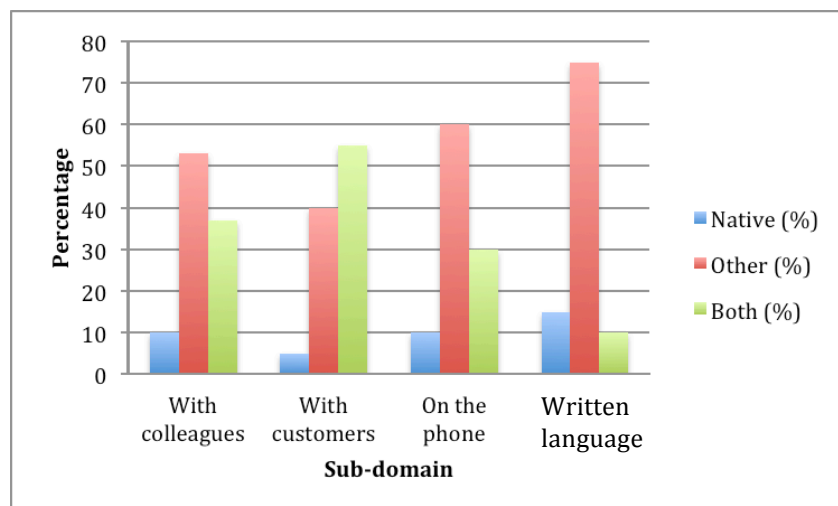

Figure 8. 'Work' domain.

Overall, it was shown that English was the apparent choice of language and participants' responses to the attitude questions showed that they did find knowledge of English to be paramount, particularly due to its prestige and status. One informant neatly summarised the main point: 'all cultures are equally important – some might be more dominant'.

To conclude, our fieldwork and data analyses have successfully helped us to answer our initial research question on how multilingual speakers adapt their language usage in different domains. Our initial hypotheses were confirmed, with children increasingly using English whilst maintaining their native language at home. English is dominant within the media and the preferred language choice within every

subdomain of work. There were, however, domains where speakers' native languages were widely used; such as communication with parents and extended family.

The attitude questions helped us to further understand the results, with many stating that English held more prestige than their native language. This feeds into the notion of diglossia, whereby languages or varieties may be in simultaneous use in a community but one is viewed as a 'high' variety and the other 'low'. It was also noted that code-switching was found within the Curry Mile and that some informants would use both English and their own native (or a mutually intelligible language) in conversation with others.

Overall, our results highlight the fact that English usage in predominantly English-speaking countries seems to be increasing; yet with a retention of native languages. Language, however, is not a stable phenomenon and change between domains is expected. Ultimately, our results illustrate this retention of native language and shows that it is a useful marker of identity, but use of English is on the rise as it is very much considered a 'language of prestige' (Baquedano-Lopez et al, 2007: 80).

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Appendix 1

Below is a map of the area in which we distributed our questionnaires; the red line indicates the area covered.
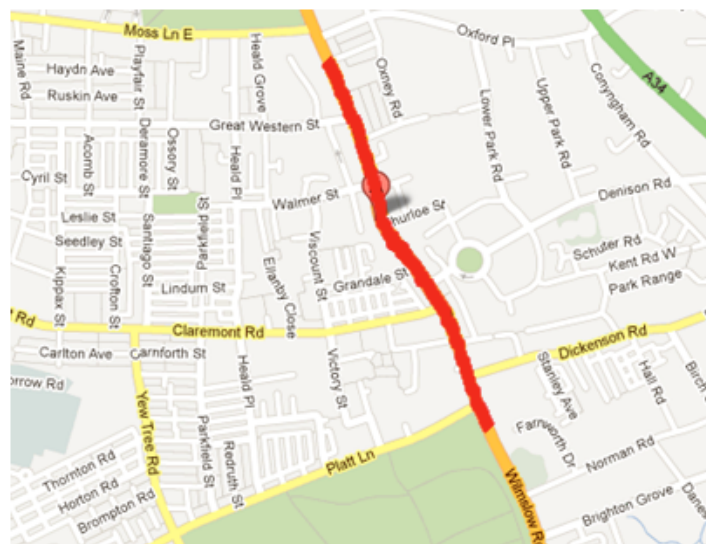
We are English Language students investigating language usage on the Curry Mile, Manchester. We would appreciate if you would answer the following questions to help with our research. Thank you.

Part 1: Participant

Sex: Male   ☐   Female ☐

How old are you? ____

What is your nationality? _____

Where were you born? _____

How long have you lived in the UK? _____

What is your occupation? _____

Part 2: Language usage

1. What is your first/native language?
   _____

2. How many languages can you **speak** competently?
   _____

3. What are they?
   _____

4. How many languages do you **understand** competently?

Please list them below:

Language _____
   Understand but can't speak   ☐   Written and spoken understanding   ☐

   Either/or ☐   Fluency ☐

Language _____
   Understand but can't speak   ☐   Written and spoken understanding   ☐

Either/or ☐   Fluency ☐

Language _____

      Understand but can't speak ☐   Written and spoken understanding ☐

Either/or ☐   Fluency ☐

*If you need more space, please use the back of this questionnaire.

5. What languages would you use in the following situations?

- With family:
  - With your partner: _____
  - With your children: _____
  - With your parents: _____
  - With extended family:

    _____

- With friends: _____

- Talking in the street: _____

- At work:
  - With colleagues: _____
  - With customers: _____
  - On the phone: _____

6. What language do you write in at work?

   _____

7. What language do you mostly watch TV in?

   _____

8. What language do you mostly listen to the radio in?

   _____

9. What language do you mostly read newspapers in?

   _____

Part 3: Language attitudes

1. How competent do you feel you are in English?

   Very competent ☐   Quite competent ☐   Not very competent ☐

2. Do you think knowledge of English is needed?

Strongly agree ☐ Agre☐ Not sur☐ Disagr☐
Strongly disagree ☐

Why do you think this? _____

3. What ethnicity do you believe the majority of your customers belong to?

English ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani ☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Other ☐
If other, please state which: _____

4. Which of your languages do you feel you use the most?

Native language ☐ English ☐ Other ☐

5. Why do you think this is?

_____

6. Do you believe English to be more prestigious than your native language?

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Not sure ☐ Disagree ☐
Strongly disagree ☐

Please provide a reason for your answer

_____
_____

7. If you have children, which language do you want them to use most?

_____

8. Why is this? _____

9. Of the languages you speak, do you have a preferred one? Yes ☐ No ☐

10. If yes, what is it? _____

11. Why is this?

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

Information Sheet

Research aims

The aim of our research is to investigate how multilingual speakers in the Curry Mile area of Manchester use the languages at their disposal. To do this we intend to explore different domains where we feel differing usage will be most prominent and, therefore, of the most interest for our purposes. This includes clothes shops, restaurants, supermarkets, jewellery shops and so on.

Participation

If you are willing to take part you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire we have devised based on your own language usage and language attitudes. Participation in this study is completely optional and you are able to withdraw at any point. All questionnaires are anonymous and after completion, results will be analysed as such.

It should also be noted that upon completion of this project, our final report may be uploaded onto the Multilingual Manchester website (http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/). All data will still remain anonymous if this is the case.

Any questions, concerns or enquiries are welcome and should be directed to the investigators, via email. The contact details are listed below. The email address of our supervisor, Dr. Nick Wilson, is also provided should you wish to verify any information.

Consent

Having read the information provided, I hereby agree to participate in the study mentioned and agree to the usage of my recorded questionnaire answers. I understand that any personal and sensitive information will be treated as such and my data will remain completely anonymous upon publication.

Print: _____

Sign: _____

Date: _____