



Report

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**Investigating Linguistic Landscapes: A study of the use
of signs in businesses in Burnage,
Chinatown and Rusholme**

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1. Introduction

In this report, we aim to investigate the linguistic landscapes of small businesses located on 'Dickenson Road/Anson Road' in Rusholme, 'Mauldeth Road/Broadhill road' in Burnage and 'Chinatown' in Manchester's city centre. The list of businesses can be seen in table 1 of the appendix.

The aim of our investigation is to realize and analyze how these different landscapes reflect the area they are located in and to allow for a comparison of the linguistic and social diversity found in Manchester.

We aim to find answers to the following questions:

1. What information do linguistic landscapes disclose about multilingualism?
2. What audiences do the businesses intend to address through the linguistic landscape?
3. What are the purposes of address of the signs?
4. What inspires the businesses to select these languages?
5. What are the differences in the linguistic landscape arrangements in these areas?
6. What are the roles of these selected languages concerning regional identity?

1.1. Recap of Literature Review

Landry & Bourhis (1997: 25) define linguistic landscapes as 'the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on Government buildings...of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration.'

Linguistic landscapes are 'the subjectivity of the viewer in the interpretation of, or response to, the sign's meaning and connotations' (Tufi & Blackwood, 2010). Personal evaluation and perspective of the linguistic situation can also shape the linguistic landscape through the individual's linguistic behaviour (Cenoz & Gorter 2006:67-68) and their individual, regional and social identities.

1.2 Recap of methodology

Our fieldwork plan was to collect 5 (depending on frequency) business signs from each research area. Upon finding a sign, a picture was taken and the business name written down. Afterwards, if they were willing, we asked the business owners to answer a questionnaire about the languages their business uses. One problem we encountered was that some businesses whose signs we have featured were closed or indicated no clear access. Our original methodology indicated that should this occur, signs would be removed from our final analysis unless it contained interesting or unique features that we could draw speculations from.

Consequently, we have attempted to provide reasons behind the businesses linguistic choices based on the business use, potential customer base and the area the sign was found in our discussion.

2. Findings

2.1. Chinatown

T·LA Arts & Crafts Gallery

T·LA Arts & Crafts Gallery is located on Faulkner Street and sells Chinese artwares. The name of the store is written in both English and Cantonese (images 1 & 2). The motivation of language selection was to let English and Chinese customers notice the shop. Meanwhile the board of the shop has not been changed since the shop opened, and most Chinese customers at that time were Cantonese speakers.

The store mainly targets Chinese speakers who are buying the products for festivals and celebrations, as well as local people in Manchester who are interested in Chinese culture. Therefore, the English translation enables the shop to appeal to non-Cantonese speakers. As for the use of Cantonese, one possible reason is that it highlights the distinction of the store. Another reason could be that the former shop owner might have come from a Cantonese-speaking area, so he retained his language, meanwhile many Mandarin speakers are still able to read and understand the script.

J&P Consultancy

J&P Consultancy is also located on Faulkner Street. The languages on the signs (images 3 and 4) are Mandarin Chinese and English. The motivation about the language selection was similar to the answers given by the owner of Arts & Crafts Gallery in that languages on the signs were chosen to attract customers. However, the owner of the consultancy wanted to attract 'diverse clients', rather than clients who spoke specific languages.

Since it is a different type of business, J&P Accountancy offers its customers (individual and firm) services such as investigation and business communication therefore emphasising the Chinese feature is almost unnecessary. Consequently, considering the function and aim of J&P Consultancy, the use of English may be the main method to attract more customers. Mandarin might be a supporting language for those Chinese customers who cannot use English fluently, and in this way the firm may have a unique selling point over their competitors.

Woo Sang supermarket

This superstore is located on George Street. It has Mandarin, Cantonese and English on the sign (image 5). The languages were not directly translated into the same meaning.

Cantonese was only used to express welcome, whereas the name of the supermarket was in Mandarin and also its English equivalent. The shop owner said the purpose and motivation in terms of language selection was that most customers are familiar with English or Mandarin and would therefore be able to read the sign, which would then attract them. The Mandarin Chinese sign was chosen to stand out more as the supermarket sells mostly Chinese products and so Chinese speakers are more likely to buy the products. The English sign was used mostly to attract any English speakers. The Cantonese sign was also used to attract more customers and acts as a welcoming message for those who speak Cantonese. The use of three languages means the shop can appeal to a wider range of customers, encouraging more people to shop there.

Discussion

The frequent use of Mandarin and Cantonese in Chinatown reflects the identity of the residents and their customers - they are immigrants from Chinese speaking areas or their children still living in Manchester, for the major customers of the shops are overseas Chinese except those who are interested in Chinese culture and products.

2.2 Rusholme

Phone Solutions

Phone Solutions is an internet cafe on Dickenson Road that also provides a number of other services such as money transfers, mobile phone repairs and SIM cards. This establishment had a sign on the outside of the shop, underneath the primary English sign (image 7). The sign was composed of Urdu and Afghani and, according to the owner, was a direct translation of the English sign. The owner said that he provided signs in both Urdu and Afghani as well as English because there are people in the community who cannot read English. He also thought it would be a way to attract customers. It creates a sense of community, showing that anyone and everyone is welcome, regardless of language.

In Rusholme, there is a large community of Afghani speakers. Therefore, having a sign in Afghani would attract these members of the community, as it gives them a feeling of security and familiarity within the community. It is also practical, as it means that more people are able to read the outside signs and use the facilities.

This also applies to the use of Urdu in the sign, especially as it is the second most spoken language in Rusholme after English (2011 Census). Therefore, it would make sense to reach out to the majority of the population of the area to create as much potential business as possible.

Venus Supermarket

This is a Turkish supermarket on the corner of Dickenson Road and Anson Road. Whilst there were only English signs on the outside of the shop, there were some multilingual signs inside (images 8 and 9) written in Persian and Arabic respectively. The sign in image 9 translates as a Persian term for a sheep's head and leg. There was no English translation on the sign and when we asked a worker at the store why, they said it was because it is a sign for a food that is specific to the Persian culture that non-Persian speakers would not order. Therefore, they didn't see a need for the sign to be in any other language. Image 8 depicts an Arabic sign for an Arabic drink that was produced by the drinks company and not the supermarket. The sign is in both Arabic and English in order to advertise to not just Arabic speakers but any other shoppers.

Toprak consultancy

This is an advice bureau offering immigration information and advice. We were unable to gain access at the time of data collection but we noted the sign on the outside of the building shown in image 10. After contacting the business, they informed us that the sign contains the languages English, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic and Farsi. The business also explained that they chose these specific languages as the parts of the world where these languages are spoken tend to be where the majority of their clients come from. It would also make sense for a business like this using a larger number of languages in order to reach a larger number of potential clients.

One observation from this sign is that there are two contact email addresses featured at the bottom of the sign. One directs the client to the website for Toprak Consultancy and another directs the client to what appears to be the business' sister firm 'Top Level English' an international educational consultancy for those who wish to come to the United Kingdom to study English. The fact that the business seems to be encouraging its clients to learn English is interesting as this would allow for a future reduction of languages in the sign due to an improvement in clients English skills.

Discussion

We observed a range of languages in Rusholme, including English, Arabic, Urdu, Afghani, Persian and Kurdish. As Rusholme is a culturally diverse area, we expected to see many of these languages present and in a variety of ways. Some are being used to create a sense of familiarity to attract customers (e.g. Phone Solutions), whereas others were simply for practicality (e.g. the Persian sign in Venus supermarket). The language diversity we witnessed is accurate of Rusholme as a whole.

2.3 Burnage

Dayaa Pastry

This business was closed when we conducted our fieldwork so we were unable to learn more about the use of the sign through a questionnaire. However we took a picture of the sign that uses a mixture of English and what appears to be Lebanese Arabic (Image 10). We speculated the language was Arabic and attempted to translate this into English however this proved difficult as we could not find a translation site that had this language available. Further research led us to conclude that the language could be a dialect of Arabic, perhaps Lebanese. The use of these languages reflects not only the products - a mixture of English and Arabic food but also their customer base which appears to be a mixture of English and Arabic speakers. In addition, a specialised business (focusing on pastry) conveys a message of authenticity to not only Arabic speakers who will be acquainted with their products but it also brings diversity to Burnage where 76.6% of people were born in England (Census, 2011) and acquainted with English food.

Beirut

Beirut is a convenience store selling a mixture of English and Arabic food items which is reflected in the brand in English and Arabic (Image 11). The owner was willing to answer questions about language motivation however their written English was limited, indicating why the predominant language outside the store is Arabic, so we wrote down their answers. They claimed the reasons behind using English and Arabic was to attract customers. They did not want to make the shop exclusively English or Arabic so as not to exclude anyone in the community as selling a mixture of products widens their customer base and thus increases profits. This illustrates that their motivation for using both languages is related to economy. Due to having a business within an area where 86.5% speak English as their first language, (Census, 2011) using English as well as Arabic allows Beirut to target those whose main language is English whilst still catering for Arabic speakers. We learnt that two of the signs reflected what was written in English ('Beirut' and the names of foodstuffs sold inside) but we were unable to identify the meaning of the Arabic message under the business name. However, we speculate the store's name, 'Beirut' reveals something about

regional and cultural identity. Beirut is the capital of Lebanon and has Arabic as its official language (CIA Factbook, 2015). Choosing to name the business 'Beirut' not only potentially illustrates the business owner's connection to the country but also displays a wider message. It creates a sense of community between the Arabic speakers in Burnage, who are a minority, and establishes a sense of unity between them.

Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia

Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia (Images 12 & 13) is a Manchester Islamic centre offering a range of services to the local community such as educational visits to the Centre for schools and inter-faith groups, congregational prayers and an Islam information service. (Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia, 2013) Whilst we did not receive a questionnaire for this business, it is evident that the reason for the use of Arabic is religion. Arabic is the liturgical language of Islam as this is the language the Quran was written in (Dajani, 2014). It is interesting to note that the name of the community centre is also written in the English script. This may be to help the local community they serve, as the majority have English as their first language (Census, 2011) and will therefore be able to identify the use of the building, regardless of being unable to read the Arabic script.

Beaverton House

Image 14 shows that the only language used for this sign is Arabic. Access to this establishment was unavailable but we have speculated two reasons for the use of Arabic. One is that the property is residential, as can be assumed a house name (Beaverton House) and a post box. This idea would further explain the reason for the monolingual sign as if it was a residential property, it could be assumed that as it is part of a Muslim community centre they only wish members of their congregation, such as faith leaders, to be housed there out of convenience. Alternatively, a comparison of the two signs from Beaverton House and Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia shows the same telephone number is located on both signs. One might suggest the reason for this is that Beaverton House was the name of the building before it became a community centre in 1994 which can be evidenced through the gates.

Discussion

Although we have seen examples of multilingual signs in Burnage, the lack of them is due to the monopoly of monolingual English signs. This is most likely because 86.5% of the population have English as their first language and 76.6% of residents here were born in England. (Census, 2011). Consequently, this highlights how the identity of an area, as being predominantly English affects the linguistic landscape of Burnage. Even though English is the majority language, there were multiple minority languages present such as Urdu (4.1%) and Panjabi (1.1%) that we expected to be represented however our research only identified Arabic, demonstrating how the linguistic identity of an area is reflected in the linguistic landscape.

3. Comparison

Our research aimed to discover novel findings. Not only did we research an area previously unreported (Burnage) but in Rusholme, we also decided to research a less commercialised area (Dickenson/Anson Road instead of the Curry mile). Additionally, by taking a comparative approach, we could investigate the similarities and differences in linguistic landscapes across Manchester rather than a focused study of one area.

Our research found the use of Mandarin and Cantonese in Chinatown interesting, as despite them both being subdivisions of Chinese used by people from different areas in China, we didn't find any instances of them being used in the same signs. The alternation of these languages indicates the owner's specific group identity and their targeting of a certain customer group. The findings in Chinatown imply that the language function as a means of asserting identity is strengthened.

Venus Supermarket was similar in its use of the Persian sign. Although the supermarket advertises itself as a Turkish supermarket on the outside, there were no Turkish signs inside. This suggests that Turkish on the brand is used to attract customers interested in Turkish products, compared with English as the language used for communication, once again indicating a strengthened multicultural identity as seen in Chinatown.

The two language phenomena above are related to two functions of language: language as means of asserting one's identity from others (Jaspal, 2009), and the conditions of both languages indicate the strengthening of original social identity of the shop owners. Many immigrant languages in the shops we witnessed have a more obvious function of identity; to target more customers rather than as a communication tool. In comparison, English as a lingua franca has an important tool function and also an identity function nationally. Therefore, the shop owners as immigrants have not only the identity of their

original society but also the identity as British residents, and the shifting from original identity to the present one (Aronin, 2008). It is very likely this shifting process is difficult as the immigrants usually live in a speech community where many people have the same original identity. This can lead to identity conflict and is reflected in our research where businesses use both English and their mother tongue.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, our research has shown that there are many different languages being used in the linguistic landscapes that we have investigated, however they all have the same motivations behind them; to attract/appeal to customers and to showcase individual and group identity. Further research may benefit from investigating a different aspect of the linguistic landscape such as public road signs and Government building signs to witness whether the motivations behind their language choices are different to the ones we have seen through investigating independent businesses. Another area of interest would be researching languages that are being used as a tool rather than as a way to showcase identity.

WORD COUNT: 2982

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space. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 7, 197-210.

Appendices

Business name	Type of business
<i>BURNAGE</i>	
-Dayaa Pastry	Pastry shop
-Beirut	Arabic food store
-Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia	Manchester Islamic Centre
-Beaverton House	Unknown
<i>CHINATOWN</i>	
-T·LA Arts&Crafts	Gift shop
-J&P Consultancy	Advice bureau
-Woo Sang	Supermarket
<i>RUSHOLME</i>	
-Toprak consultancy	Advice bureau
-Phone solutions	Internet café
-Venus supermarket	Supermarket

Table 1: List of businesses and their uses in our research areas.



Image 1: Art & Craft Gallery in Chinatown, Faulkner Street



Image 2: Art and Crafts Gift Shop in Chinatown, Faulkner Street



Image 3: J&P Consultancy in Chinatown, Faulkner



Image 4: J&P Consultancy in Chinatown, Faulkner Street



Image 5: Woo Sang Supermarket in Chinatown, George Street



Image 6: Woo Sang Supermarket in Chinatown, George Street



Image 7: Phone Solutions in Rusholme, Dickenson Road



Image 8: Venus Supermarket in Rusholme, Anson Road

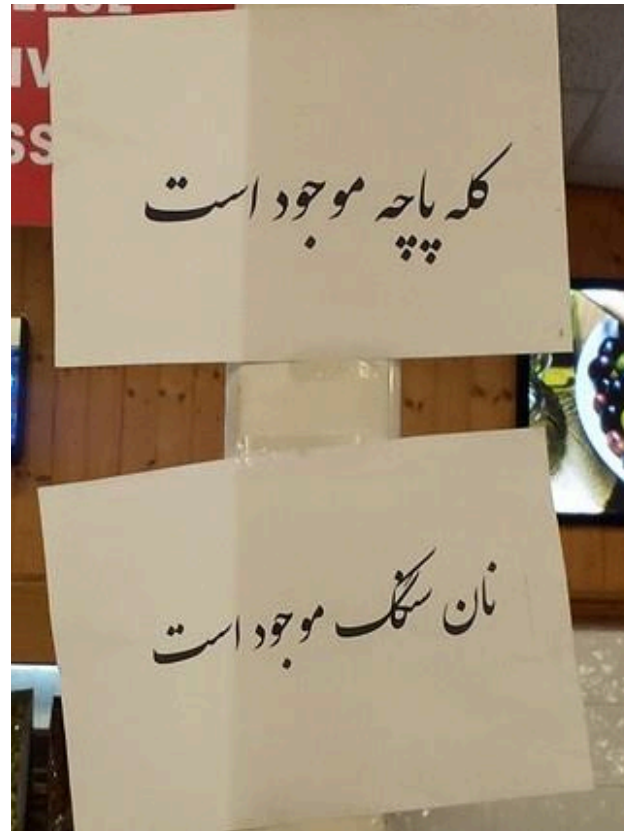


Image 9: Venus Supermarket in Rusholme, Anson Road



Image 10: Toprak Consultancy in Rusholme, Anson



Image 11: Dayaa Pastry in Burnage,



Image 12: Beirut food store in Burnage, Kingsway



Image 13: Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia centre in Burnage, Mauldeth Road



Image 14: Khanka Naoshbandia Mujaddadia centre in Burnage, Mauldeth Road



Image 15: Beaverton House in Burnage, Mauldeth Road