multilingual MANCHESTER

Report

2013

Language Provisions within Manchester City Council

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1 **Introduction**
Our research was inspired by Manchester's outstanding culturally diverse population .We aim to promote awareness of the linguistic diversity that is present, and identify the language needs of individuals in the community. We are focusing our study specifically on provisions within Manchester City Council, investigating the practices that are in place and how well they accommodate for non-English speakers.

Our data has been obtained from First Street Building, to which Manchester City Council has recently relocated some departments. The website states: 'the new cultural facility will form the centrepiece of this new destination, creating a distinct feel and atmosphere in this part of the city'. We have met with members of the City Council on numerous occasions to enable us to gather the relevant information for this study.

1.1 Modifications to our Investigation
Upon beginning to gather data for our investigation, it became evident that we needed to make various adaptations to our original proposal. Although Manchester Town Hall still holds the headquarters for the City Council, we discovered that the departments relevant to our study had been relocated to the First Street Building when we were redirected there by a member of staff. When visiting this location we discovered that there were no leaflets printed in foreign languages, which led us to question the depth of our study. From speaking to a representative we decided that focusing our research on language provisions provided by the City Council, in particular the M-four translations department, would be of greater interest to us. We felt like our original idea to look at printed documentations would have limited our data, and looking at the broader department in general would enable us to draw better conclusions.

1.2 Research Questions
We proposed new questions to answer throughout our study, based on our updated investigation plan.
i. Do Manchester City Council have language provisions in practice that cater for the needs of the community? Do the languages used in translation and interpretation reflect the languages spoken in Manchester?
ii. What determines the array of languages available for translation or interpretation?
iii. Is there a demand for the services provided by the City Council? Are members of the community made aware of the language provisions in practice?

2 **Previous Literature**
Research conducted by Terry Lamb in 2001 investigates two cities in the UK, Nottingham and Sheffield, exploring the need for national language policies. He conducted a small-scale project on community language teachers in Nottingham, to identify what they considered the linguistic needs of their pupils, and whether they are fulfilled in both mainstream and supplementary schools. He then analysed a description of 'The Sheffield Multilingual City Project' to determine any useful principles for the production of an intelligible policy that considers the voices of community language speakers.

Through his study in Nottingham, he discovered that support for bilingual children provided by the home office has recently been delegated to schools, focusing on English language support. Limited support for native language learning is available through

funded supplementary language schools taking place outside of mainstream education, bilingual instructors offering support in the transition stage and the existence of advisors and support groups. However, Lamb discovered that in recent years many national and local policy changes had taken place that effected the survival of children's mother-tongue languages. He found that financial support had been cut by 40% effecting the survival of community schools, the number of GCSE examinations available in community languages had been reduced, and that costs for entering these examinations were no longer covered for pupils taught outside of mainstream schools. These policy changes had a negative effect on non-native English speaking pupils, as they were put at an unfair disadvantage in their exams, and showed no support for individual's first languages.

He then went on to provide an analysis of 'The Sheffield Multilingual Project', stating that it recognises the need to maintain an individual's first language for linguistic, educational and social purposes. The project rejects the ideas that maintenance of the mother-tongue language will affect the acquisition of English, and that multilingualism can be problematic. He notes the biased assumptions that being bilingual in more prestige languages such as French or German put children at an advantage, as opposed to ex-colonial languages such as Urdu which are considered to cause problems for children. They express the idea that a city cannot necessarily be classed as a speech community, as not all individuals will communicate within it 'they do not speak alike; and furthermore they do not all mean alike' (2001:10). Through this project, the importance of listening to minorities and allowing them to speak for themselves has been made explicit. Lamb believes this is essential for the development of the project, ensuring that it is responding to the needs of the communities themselves.

By comparing the two policies under study, Lamb has indicated that variations of policies exist, even between linguistically comparable cities. He has highlighted the need for a national policy in the UK to ensure that the needs of all individuals are considered and that appropriate language provisions are not dependent on geographic location. We will be comparing our findings to those of Lamb, in order to evaluate the language policies adopted by Manchester City Council, discovering whether the voice of the minorities is valued and responded to. We will compare our findings from Manchester to those Lamb found in Nottingham and Sheffield, and discuss whether we feel a national language policy is necessary, or even required, in the UK.

The case study carried out by Vivian Edwards (2001) looks at the community languages within the UK, and discusses data collection methods for language provisions. Edwards defines 'community languages' as 'immigrant languages', and are therefore, the languages that reflect immigration within the UK, and not just the languages which are seen as *superior* and are on the curriculum nationwide. The main areas Edwards looks at are the distribution of minority languages and the accuracy of total number of speakers, as well as the language maintenance and shift, specifically focusing on the role of formal teaching in mainstream and community education in passing community languages on to the next generation.

Edwards frequently emphasizes the difficulty in gathering accurate data with regards to speakers of community languages, since the UK 1991 census only categorises ethnicity, and not specifically languages used by the individual. She criticises the way in which the questions were asked, stating that participants should have specifically been asked what language they spoke, since ethnicity does not always accurately reflect this. Also, she

goes on to say how we cannot automatically presume that somebody is bilingual, based on their ethnicity, particularly if they were born in the UK.

Edwards was thrilled by the new survey published by Baker & Eversley (2000) to discover the languages of London school children, and hoped this would provide a more accurate representation of the community languages spoken amongst children in London. Compiling information from over 850,000 school children from all of the 32 London Boroughs, as well as the City of London, it is fair to say that the Languages of London Project was a milestone in the research of multilingualism as it gathered information of over 3000 minority languages.

However, Edwards discusses how problems still arose with this data collection, and this was probably due to the fact that the participants were children, and may not have acquired knowledge to specifically state exactly what languages it is they speak, and may just use the generalised terminology. In 3.26% of the responses (2001:244), it was not possible to determine the language spoken for numerous reasons, one being that children gave the name of a place, rather than a country. Despite the proportion of mistakes of this kind only being small, Edwards blames this on the uncertainty of the questioner's motives (2001:245).

Through closer analysis, Edwards goes on to say that one of the issues which arose in her study was that the numbers of same languages spoken which were above the average, tended to be in adjoining boroughs of London, suggesting that people's choice of area was dependent on linguistic communication. She also discusses the role of the European Union with respect to community languages, suggesting that they may be imposing language policies on us, and are still awaiting modification on individual's attitudes towards language provisions. We will be comparing these findings to our study, to see how reliable the City Councils methods for data collection are, and how advanced the service is (discussed further in section 5).

3 **Methodology**

We began our study by visiting First Street building, collecting any relevant documents and photographing appropriate information. We spoke to representatives of the City Council, who directed us to the M-four translations department. There we spoke briefly with an advisor who forwarded us contact information for the manager of this department.

We later contacted the services manager (SM) and arranged to conduct an interview the following week. We chose to adopt the interview technique as this allowed us to present open questions to the interviewee, providing us with rich, detailed responses. This meant our information was not as limited as it may have been if we had opted for another technique, such as questionnaires. This also allowed us to ask further questions if any new information arose throughout the interview. Before going to the interview, we devised a list of questions covering the topics we wanted to address (see appendix 1) . We agreed that these questions would be taken as a guideline, and were open to alterations and additions throughout the interview.

We understood the importance of professionalism at the interview as we were representing the University of Manchester. We were also aware of the pressure and scrutiny the city council are constantly under from the public and other professionals, which affected the way we approached the interview. Due to the recent cuts Manchester

City Council has faced, we ensured the interviewee understood our field of work and our appreciation for what they do. We began by explaining our study to the interviewee and reassured them that they were not being judged negatively in any way. We had originally planned to use a recording device to record the interview, but when we asked for the SM's permission, he refused due to an obligation to inform the press office. Consequently, we assigned a note taker within our group whilst the interview took place. Throughout the interview we were fortunate enough to meet two interpreters and an assistant of the SM which gave us an insight to working within the M-four translations unit.

After the interview had been conducted, the SM insisted that he guide us around the building, introducing us to members of staff and explaining how work by the translations team was incorporated into different departments of the council. This included the homelessness department where we spoke to a representative about their connection to the translations team.

We will present our findings in a qualitative form, expressing information that we discovered throughout the interview. We will also include appendices of any documents we obtained throughout our study. This includes quantitative tables and graphs, provided by the interviewee.

4 Findings

Our time spent talking to members of staff from the translation team unearthed a wealth of interesting information. We began by asking about the origins of the service, and discovered that it was set up 21 years ago by the SM himself. We were informed that before the service could begin to function properly, there had been a huge period of consultation. This included discussion with the local population in order to determine their needs and how best to respond to them. There was also much organisation involved, such as recruiting translators and interpreters proficient in the relevant languages. The SM told us that in its 21 years, the service has not changed greatly in terms of logistics and strategy: the same key objectives which were held at the start still remain. When we asked about the nature of these key objectives, we were told that harmony in the local community was priority. The service aims to facilitate communication, in order to help residents fit into society and live peacefully. The SM told us that his motto was 'Contact. Consult. Create.' by which he meant that it was important to make links with the local community and decipher their needs before taking action, an idea which he spread to the rest of the department. We were informed that other than a few individual, practical issues (i.e. interpreters being late), there have been no major complaints regarding the capability of the department to serve the community.

Perhaps the most important discovery, in terms of how it affected our project, was the fact that the council deal with around eight times more cases of spoken interpretation than written translation. Appendix 2 shows that between April 2012 and March 2013, the department completed 12,687 interpretation sessions compared to 1589 written translations. As mentioned above, this changed the course of our work considerably.

As a result of government cuts, the City Council had to make adaptations to their procedures in order to reduce costs. Although such cuts did not have a major effect on the M-four translations unit, it meant that the SM and his team had to be more vigilant with their expenditure; though they maintain that 'if a need arises, it is fulfilled'. They decided to make adaptations to their printing procedures as it was a lengthy process,

which they deemed unnecessary. Prior to the cuts documentations were printed in languages of the highest demand and made publicly available. Translators were paid by the number of words produced, and as one word in a specific language may translate to multiple words in another in order to avoid ambiguity, this became expensive. Thus a process was introduced whereby a resident must call a number if they wish to have the document printed in another language. Often when residents call the number, an interpreter is able to explain only the section of the document that is relevant to them, to save the time and cost involved in creating an entire new document.

We discovered that translations of documents from English into other languages were not very common as a free service. The SM told us that translations of written documents are not printed unless there is a need for them. As previously mentioned, the resident must make a request using the instructions included in the original document to acquire a copy in another language (see appendix 5). We asked how the department decided which languages the instructions were printed in, and discovered that it is based on the number of translations requested in various languages in the previous year, (and reassessed annually). This process is implemented so that it reflects the languages spoken and required by speakers using these services. The department does, however, provide a service of paid-for translations when there is not a need, but a request for documents to be translated. For example, many international students at the local universities ask for their certificates to be translated into their mother tongue. We enquired about forms which residents need to complete, and the level of help they receive with these. We were informed that the resident is advised to ask a friend or relative to help, but if there is no other way for them to understand the document, an interpreter will explain the questions. However the interpreter must obviously be careful not to influence the resident's responses.

We were informed that the business of this service is not to maintain the mother tongue, but to facilitate communication so that people can access the help they need. It is for this reason that the census data, demonstrating which languages are spoken in the area, is of little use to the department; they are not concerned with how many people speak different languages, but how many people don't speak English, because those are the people who actually need the service. The languages most often requested for interpretation are Urdu/Punjabi, Bengali, Polish, Arabic, Farsi, Somali, Portuguese, Pushto, Kurdish and Romanian (see appendix 4). This differs greatly from the languages most often requested for translation, the top ten of which are: Chinese, Arabic, Portuguese, French, Urdu, Farsi, Spanish, Polish, Italian and German (see appendix 3). This is due to the fact that the translations are more affected by the student population of the city, whereas the need for interpretation is affected more by immigrants moving to the city who have no knowledge of English yet.

With regards to spoken interpretation, the SM told us that each individual case is assessed separately in order to determine whether the customer needs the service immediately, or can arrange a later appointment. Cases considered severe include homelessness, where an interpreter will be called instantly. If a member of the public misses an organised appointment without notice, then the service will no longer be provided to them. Interpretation services are also available for a charge. When we asked about the range of languages that the service caters for, we were told that being the UK's largest translation department in a local government, with 11 full-time and 400 freelance interpreters, meant that they cater for almost every language. However we were informed

that if the need arose for interpretation in a language that they couldn't accommodate, they would call elsewhere to find someone who could provide the service.

We spoke to the SM about the recruitment and training process involving interpreters. He explained that no matter how many qualifications someone may have, they still need sufficient training and preparation. The training involved roles plays, assessments and shadowing qualified interpreters. He explained that it was essential that they understood the severity of some cases they may deal with, and the need to remain detached from both the situation and the individuals. They are not their friends; they are there to provide a service. Customers are able to make a preference for interpreters of a specific gender or ethnicity, and although interpreters must not show any cultural or ethnic biases, where possible the team did try to match each individual with their request. They explained a case where an interpreter had to be dismissed as they refused to go to a specific household, due to conflicting cultures.

In terms of supply and demand, we discovered that the service is very dependent on current affairs. For example in 1993 and 1994 the most requested language was Albanian, with Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian also in the top 10, due to the immigration linked to the Kosovan war. However in recent years the demand for these languages has been very low, if there was any demand at all. We were told that this signifies a success for the service; they have managed to settle people into the community and allow them to live normally, without the need for additional help. Due to the fact that most of the cases they deal with are linked to immigration, we discovered that the departments working most closely with the translation and interpretation service are Housing and Homelessness and Adult, Child and Family Services.

5   **Discussion - Including References to Previous Literature**
As noted in the first part of our research, we read and analysed the 1998 work by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas which commented on the provision for minority languages amongst the governing processes of Western countries such as Britain and USA.

Skutnabb-Kangas argued that little was done to maintain minority languages in Western society, and our study proves her right. We found no evidence that m-four translations team tries to aid the maintenance of minority languages within the city, or even supports any outside programmes which aim to do as such. However, from the information we gained during our research, we now understand why. As our interviewee stated, it is not the business of Manchester City Council to encourage maintenance of the mother tongue; it is the council's job to facilitate communication so that the council services are accessible to all residents. This can be applied to Skutnabb-Kangas' argument in the fact that she claims it is the duty of the governing body to encourage the provision of minority languages, but it is arguable that the duty of the governing body is purely to run the country and make it safe. However, we must be aware of programmes set up by the City Council, outside the sector of our study. This includes adult learning centres, where there are courses available in community languages.

Skutnabb-Kangas likens providing language equality to providing racial equality, and claims that to ignore one is just as bad as ignoring the other. However, it is arguable that governing bodies need to provide measures to enforce racial equality because this is something that the public cannot enforce themselves. Language learning is, however, something which the general public can organise alone if they wish to maintain a minority language. As our interviewee stated, there is not enough money or time for the

council to translate every publication or interpret every speech into the language of the residents' choice; it must be done purely on a necessity basis.

Although our research proved Skutnabb-Kangas correct in her claim that governing bodies do not attempt to aid the maintenance of minority languages, it also cast doubt over the validity of her argument. We found that Manchester City Council go out of their way to fulfil the language needs of the local population, but not the language requirements, as the logistics of time and cost dictate that this is the business of the individual, not the governing body.

When comparing our findings to Lamb 2001, we found that Manchester City Council did place emphasis on some similar aspects to 'The Sheffield Multilingual Project'. They listened and responded to the voice of the minority communities, by basing their language choices on previous requests. Our research was on a smaller scale, focusing specifically on the council, and therefore we feel the policies in place are equally as successful as those in Sheffield, yet they are not as progressed or advanced. The linguistic policies we studied did differ in some way, as they did not place emphasis on preserving the mother-tongue language of individuals, as previously mentioned. We feel our findings have indicated the need for national language policies, as suggested by Lamb, as they provide evidence for the variation amongst provisions in different cities, relating back to those in Nottingham. We feel that such basic policies should be provided, to ensure that all minority communities are recognized regardless of where they live, and that they should be adapted slightly depending on individual needs for each city.

When comparing Edwards (2001) findings to our own, it is evident that Manchester City Council was extremely forward-thinking in its introduction of such a cohesive translation department. Edwards comments on the Baker & Eversley study published in 2000, saying that it was a step forward in the recognition of minority languages in Britain. Considering that the M-four translation team at Manchester city council was founded eight years before, with the aim of allowing minority language speakers equal access to council services, this shows just how advanced they were for the time. Thus, this proves that there was a call for language provision in the city, which the council continues to answer efficiently today.

6 **Conclusion**
To conclude, our findings have indicated that there is a strong need for language provisions in Manchester, to cater for the non-English speaking minorities. Manchester City Council have recognised this need, and set up a service to cater for these individuals and ensure that they can integrate well into new community life. Our research has shown that the M-four translations team, within Manchester City Council, excels in providing language services to the community. Despite recent funding cuts, and an ever-growing multilingual community, the council have maintained and developed excellent procedures and policies, reflecting the demands from non-English speakers. They have ensured policies are updated regularly. All members of the team showed willingness to do all they could to provide sufficient services and ensure each individual settled into society.

References:

Baker, P. and Eversley J. 2000. *Multilingual Capital: The Languages of London Schoolchildren and their relevance to economic, social, and educational policies.* London: Battlebridge Publications

Edwards, V. 2001. Community Languages in the United Kingdom" from Extra, G. and Gorter, D. *The Other Languages of Europe: Demographic, Sociolinguistic, and Educational Perspectives.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. 243-260

Lamb, T.E. 2001. Language policy in multilingual UK. *Language Learning Journal,* no. 23. 4-12.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. 1998. Human rights and language wrongs – A future for diversity? *Language Sciences* 20, 5-27.

http://www.firststreetmanchester.com/news/2012-06-28-first-street-plans-for-new-cultural-destination-granted-by-manchester-city-council (date accessed: 12th May 2013)

Appendices

1

### Proposed Questions for Interview 24/04/13

1. For how many years have documents been produced by Manchester City Council in languages other than English?

2. Through which processes are certain languages chosen over others?

3. How is the decision made as to whether a document is printed in another language, or whether the resident must call a number for information?

4. How often is the city population re-assessed in order to determine which languages need to be catered for?

5. How has the service adapted to accommodate the growing diversity of languages in the city?

6. Have there ever been any complaints regarding the lack of material in certain languages?

7. To what extent have budget cuts affected language provision within the city council?

8. To what extent does the city council make residents aware of the service?

9. How much help is available for residents when filling out forms, is it printed in another language or are they assisted by a translator?

10. With regards to forms which are sent directly to residents' homes; are they originally sent in English? Is there any way of requesting a form in another language?

11. Do all departments within the city council link back to this one with regards to publishing documents in foreign languages?

12. Are they any departments which work more closely with the language team than others?

Face to face Interpretation:

Past year saw a little increase in the demand for face to face interpretation against all odds. We carried out **12, 657** sessions in **2012**, against **12,015** sessions in **2011**, and for written translations projects including braille and audios, we undertook **1589** assignments in a variety of languages for **2012**.
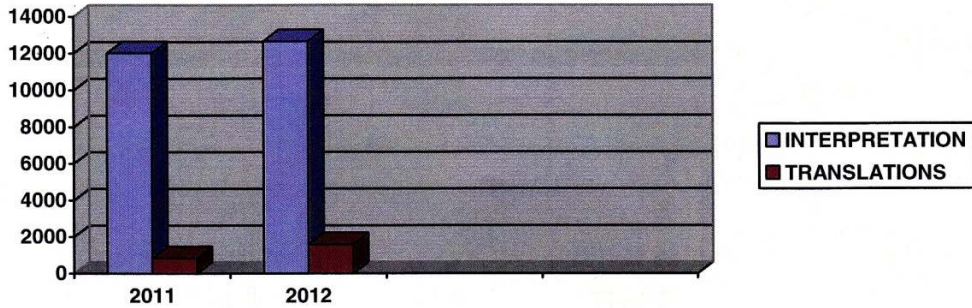
For face to face interpretation, Urdu/Punjabi (2282) language has been on the top of the demand list, as always, followed by Bengali (908), Polish (902), Arabic (852), Farsi (749), Somali (645), Chinese/Cantonese/Mandarin (644), Portuguese (437), Pushto (408), Romanian (405), Kurdish (401), Czech (386), Lithuanian (354), Russian (345), French (220) and British Sign Language (227). The rest covers other languages. Following chart shows the top Ten Languages requested.
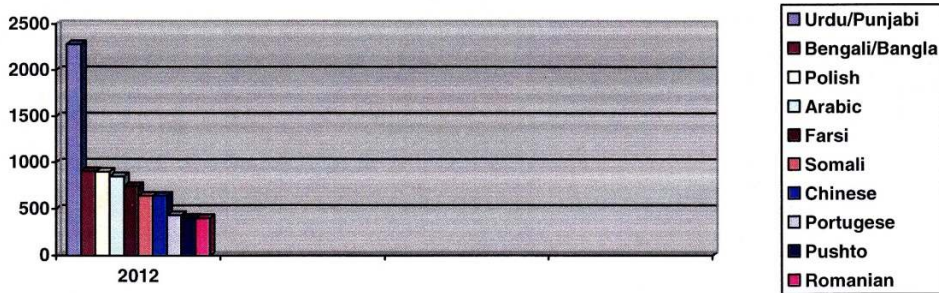
Written Translations:

On the written translations side, our service saw a busy period for counter services for translations of documents such as Marriage, Death, Birth, Academic and educational certificate. Chinese language was on the top of the league table. Manchester has seen high migration of student population. Chinese (223), Arabic (213), Portuguese (144), French (138), Urdu (104), Farsi (102), Spanish (79), Polish (79), Italian (52) and German (40). The rest of the project were in other various languages. Following charts outlines top 10 languages requested for written translations.
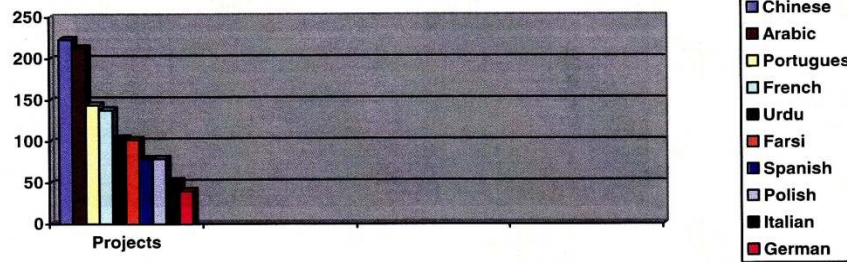
3

M-four Translations

Translation Summary Languages
Between 01/04/2012 and 30/03/2013

MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

CHINESE	223
ARABIC	213
PORTUGUESE	144
FRENCH	138
URDU	104
FARSI	102
SPANISH	79
POLISH	79
ITALIAN	52
GERMAN	40
BENGALI	36
CZECH	32
ROMANIAN	28
MANDARIN	25
KURDISH	22
RUSSIAN	21
DUTCH	20
CANTONESE	17
TURKISH	16
LATVIAN	14
GREEK	13
SOMALI	13
LITHUANIAN	13
GUJARATI	13
BRAILLE	12
HUNGARIAN	10
PUNJABI	8
DARI	8
PUSHTO	7
RECORDING	6
SWEDISH	6
SLOVAK	6
VIETNAMESE	6

BULGARIAN	5
TIGRINA	4
TRANSCRIPTION	4
UKRANIAN	4
ALBANIAN	3
JAPANESE	3
CROATIAN	3
LINGALA	3
MALAY	3
NORWEGIAN	3
AUDIO/RECORDING	2
DANISH	2
AMHARIC	2
ESTONIAN	2
THAI	2
HINDI	2
KINYA RWANDA	2
MIRPURI	1
TRAINING	1
TETUM	1
AZERBAIJAN	1
BELARUSIAN	1
TAMIL	1
LARGE PRINT	1
NEPALESE	1
ENGLISH	1
CATALAN	1
WELSH	1
GEORGIAN	1
ERITREAN	1
SHONA	1
Totals	1589

17 April 2013

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4

M-four Translations

Interpretation Language Summary
Between 01/04/2012 and 31/03/2013

MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

URDU/PUNJABI	2135
BENGALI	910
POLISH	904
ARABIC	870
FARSI	753
SOMALI	648
PORTUGUESE	429
PUSHTO	414
KURDISH	405
ROMANIAN	404
CZECH	387
MANDARIN	359
LITHUANIAN	357
RUSSIAN	348
CANTONESE	262
SIGN	235
FRENCH	218
TIGRINA	197
AMHARIC	191
GUJARATI	158
SPANISH	155
LINGALA	144
HUNGARIAN	142
SWAHILI	110
URDU	110
TAMIL	108
LATVIAN	91
SLOVAK	84
ITALIAN	80
GREEK	78
NEPALESE	74
YORUBA	71
TURKISH	70

14

MONGOLIAN	65
THAI	64
BRAVA	60
VIETNAMESE	51
NDEBELE	47
ALBANIAN	39
KOREAN	34
DARI	33
BULGARIAN	32
OROMO	28
TWI	28
PUNJABI	26
CHINESE	26
HINDI	26
MIRPURI	22
GERMAN	21
UKRANIAN	18
ERITREAN	15
JAPANESE	14
MALAY	14
EDO	12
MALYALAM	10
WALOF	7
BOSNIAN	7
DUTCH	7
SHONA	6
HEBREW	6
SORANI	6
IBO	6
UZBEK	5
BURMESE	5
SINGHALESE	5
SERB-CROAT	5
HAKA	4
MALAYALAM	4
ASHANTI	4
PUNJABI/GURUMUK	3
FULAH	3
AZERI	2

15

BAJUNI	2
SYLHETY	2
SINHALESE	2
MANDINKA	2
SENEGAL	1
AKAN	1
CROATIAN	1
AZERBAIJAN	1
TRAINING	1
KINYA RWANDA	1
HINDKO	1
TELUGU	1
Totals	12687

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