

लपतौलिंग्वा MANCHESTER

Report

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MANCHESTER
1824

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of Manchester

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Language usage and cultural identity in Manchester's Chinatown

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Our preliminary research shows that we are investigating the use of Chinese languages in Chinatown- with special attention to the relationship between the language choice and speaker's cultural identity/affinity with Chinatown. Chinatown, located in Manchester city centre, gives an exclusive glimpse at Chinese people living and working in Manchester and illustrates how they stay in touch with their heritage and ethnic ties. We initially predicted that 'those who relate more to their Chinese background will use Chinese more in *all* domains than those who are less so, especially when in Chinatown or at events which are linked to Chinese culture'. This is interesting because we can establish to what extent people living/working in Chinatown benefited from the opportunities of maintaining their Chinese culture and attitudes towards their backgrounds and if it has an effect upon their actual practise of Chinese languages (Cantonese and Mandarin).

The results we obtained from our questionnaires contributed vastly to the answer of our research question. We focused upon the usage of Cantonese and Mandarin languages use in Manchester in comparison with English. We chose to

locate our study in Chinatown as there is a large proportion of the Chinese population in Manchester that reside there. We anticipated that the presence of such a diverse and large Chinese population would provide us with conclusive results. We learned in our initial research that there is not much known linguistically about the Chinese community. This is why we chose their community to study, as it is an innovative and contemporary issue. It has been remarkable to study a topic in which we could diverge from our own research into whichever subject area we were interested in, with no strict rules to follow. A previous study that we were conscious of, done by students (Dubuis-Welch, Howard, Iftikhar & Rogerson, 2010) at the University of Manchester, focused upon the use of Cantonese language use in Manchester's Chinese community.

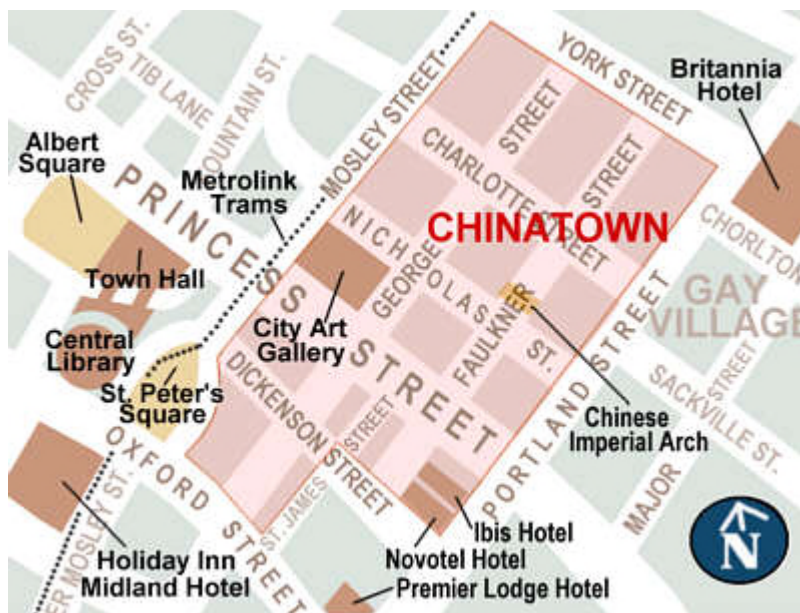


Figure 1 Map of Manchester's Chinatown

As we discovered from our preliminary research, the area is of abundant significance to the Asian population inhabiting Manchester, because it is one of the largest Chinatowns outside China itself, and homes the world famous Yang Sing restaurant. There are four intersecting streets that define Manchester's Chinatown and we have covered the entire area when carrying out our data collection. It is fascinating how the immensely huge population of Chinese residents in Manchester are faithful to their culture, and not as mixed up in the 'outside' society as we would have presumed, perhaps. This is paradoxical to the popular idea that immigrants

might submerge themselves in English culture and language in order to endure an easier way of life in England.

Chinatown was founded over thirty years ago, and the earliest settlers have created a second generation of British-born Chinese inhabitants and workers. This was idyllic for our group project because we could gain a strong understanding into the relationship between language choice and the speaker's cultural identity with Chinatown. The number of Chinese people living in the UK has elevated by over one hundred per cent over the last ten years.



Figure 2 Chinatown's Arch

We took this photo, Figure 2, of the Ming Dynasty Imperial Arch which was built in 1987 and stands in the centre of Chinatown as a beacon of Chinese culture in Manchester.

Research Methods

When reviewing our project proposal it was clear that the interview section needed to be revised. (A copy of this revised survey can be found attached at the end of this project write-up.) The first step we took was to remove the in-depth questions related to the businesses and institutions of Chinatown for participants we approached in these places. Although answers to these questions could have been useful for our conclusions they were not directly related to our research question. Other reasons for their removal were that those sections made the survey too long (which would have deterred people from taking part) and it would have been difficult to assure we were asking the right person to obtain reliable information about the business/institution. Another important change to the whole of our survey was simplifying the language so that participants with a low proficiency in English could still take part in our study.

We decided to split our survey into three sections. The first section was designed to obtain some general background information about our participants so we could get a general idea of the sample of the community we interviewed. We included the question “How would you describe your ethnicity?” in this section so participants would see this as a routine question and answer as they would naturally without realising that we were looking to link this with their attitude towards their Chinese heritage.

The second section aimed to look into the participants’ attitudes towards and participation in Chinese culture in Chinatown. We changed the majority of these questions to scalar answers. The participants were given statements and had to answer according to what extent they agreed (1 being Disagree, 5 being Strongly Agree). This saved time and was easier for participants’ with low English proficiency to respond to. This type of data also gave us the opportunity to in some way measure the participants’ attitudes towards and integration in Chinese culture and Chinatown on a scale of 0-30 from a weak to strong affiliation. We took the numbers the participants replied with to attribute to a ‘score’ for the following statements:

- *I am interested in Chinese history*
- *I am interested in Chinese art*

- *I like to watch or read Chinese media*
- *When I eat out, it is mostly at Chinese restaurants*
- *I like to take part in Chinese festivals*
- *The ability to speak Chinese language makes me feel solidarity between my Chinese friends and family*
- *I think it is important for Chinese people living in Britain to maintain their Chinese heritage*

And the number in the response to following statement counted as a negative contribution to the 'score':

- *I feel integrated in Manchester and the rest of British society in general.*

We also allowed for participants to add any further comments related to the questions in this section as well as adding a few more optional open ended questions so we could obtain some qualitative data to support our analyses.

In the third section we concentrated on language use. We obtained information about the participants' first language, the languages they spoke and the level at which they spoke them to get an overview of how multilingual the community is. We then followed our original plan of a quick domain analysis of when the participants use the Chinese language of their heritage, English (the national language of their community), or code-switch between the two.

We made the decision that in order to be considered part of the Chinatown community and eligible for our study participants must either work or live in Chinatown and have some Chinese heritage- we made this point explicit before allowing people to participate in our study. We ran a pilot interview with a friend who lived in Chinatown and were reassured that the survey was now of appropriate length and style. We also decided, after carrying out this pilot interview, that it was best for one of our research team to be present when the participants filled out the survey so there was no misunderstanding for them regarding the questions and their format.

We found our participants by approaching people out and about in Chinatown and in supermarkets. We also took note of writing systems in place around the community and took photos.

Findings

While interviewing people, members of our group photographed various areas of Chinatown, with the aim of obtaining insight on the area (language use in particular) which perhaps would not have been available merely from the interviews. As the pictures below, highlight, there are many examples of signs and advertising containing English and a Chinese language.



Figure 3 Betfred betting shop



Figure 4 Re-Nû Skin Care Centre

The questionnaires offered us the same insight with regards with advertising, and the average informant was similarly proficient in English and a Chinese language. There were also a few informants who spoke (to a self-accredited level of at least 3 out of 5) English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Another interesting fact is that not one interviewee claimed to speak no Cantonese, although one interviewee stated that 'the traditional places are Chinese but there's lots of English, too'. It was also noted that nobody had used an interpreting service and it was acknowledged that the schools around Chinatown were both Chinese and English speaking, with one speaker reporting that some people attended Chinese Sunday school in Chinatown.

One major problem we had which was unforeseen was that a number of people we attempted to interview spoke no English, or, at least, insufficient English to complete the interview. One female participant, who was not fluent in English, said 'Yes it is difficult to communicate. But we don't generally mix with English speakers anyway'.

One younger speaker also suggested this, by saying 'It is quite hard for the older people.'

The vast majority of the informants, if not born in the country, arrived in the country when they were young; in fact, only 3 arrived after their 20th birthday. This long duration of time in England could go some way to explain that 10 out of 13 interviewees said that they felt more 'westernised' since coming to England. One participant actually stated that 'Kids are becoming less interested in Chinese culture... and becoming more westernised'. It was, however, widely accepted that the ability to speak a Chinese language did offer solidarity in the community (one participant stating that 'some families only speak Chinese' and another saying Chinatown is a 'bit of a bubble' in which 'plenty of people speak only Chinese'), which was adjudged to be fairly close knit (14 out of 20 scoring 3 or more out of 5) whilst still managing to be well-integrated with the rest of Manchester. The idea of the area's inhabitants being well-integrated was strengthened by many of the responses to the question 'I encounter prejudice in Manchester concerning my cultural background and native origin' responding negatively, 14 out of 20 participants answering 1 or 2 (1 being 'Strongly Disagree'), although one participant, a male take-away owner, said he occasionally encountered racism from drunk people.

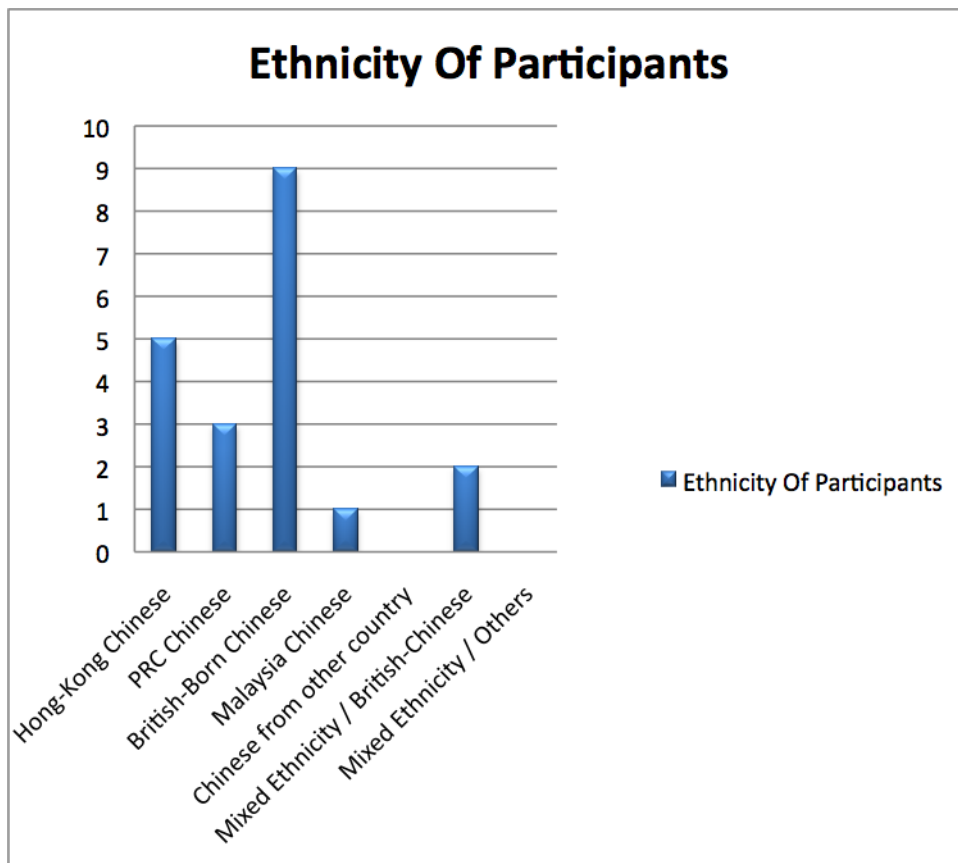


Figure 5 Ethnicity of Participants Graph

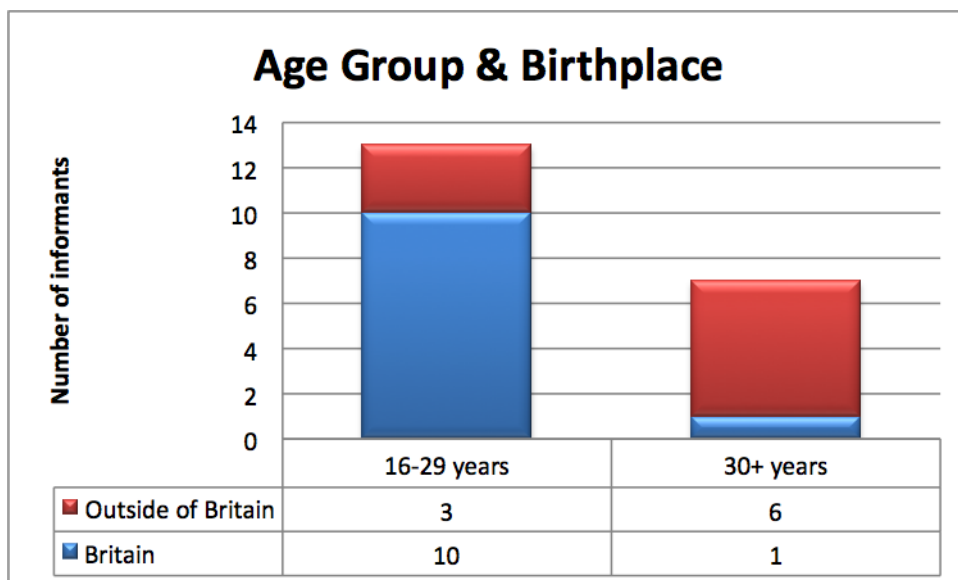


Figure 6 Age Group & Birthplace Graph

The above graph, Figure 6, shows both frequency and proportion (in terms of age groups) of informants' birthplaces. As can be seen from the graph, 77% of informants under 30 years of age were born in Britain, compared to only 14% of informants 30 years old or above. The graph also shows that 65% of our informants were younger than 30, which could perhaps be explained in a way irrelevant to any social issue, such as the time of day which the interviews took place.

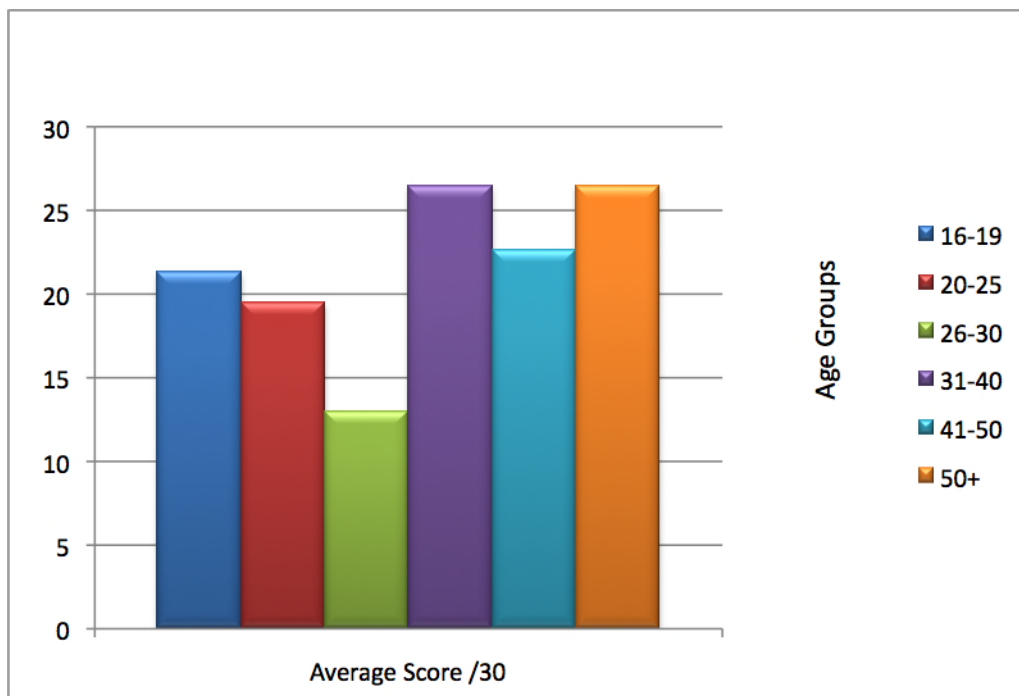


Figure 7 Average Score per age group

The 'score' referred to on the graph is the sum of 6 questions is the sum of the scores of six questions which the participants answered out of 5 regarding various aspects of the influence that their Chinese heritage has had, and continues to have, on their lives. A high score suggests a larger influence. The data suggests that this influence is apparent to a greater degree in the older age groups, although that is not to say that there is a direct, strong correlation on a steady, continuous gradient, as the average score for the age group 16-19 is only marginally lower than that of age group 41-50 and fourth highest overall. The fact that 16-19 has such a high score could, conceivably be an effect of the fact that the majority of people from said group will not be legal adults and would most likely be living with their parents, possibly

augmenting their parents' influence over their opinions, in comparison to the other groups.

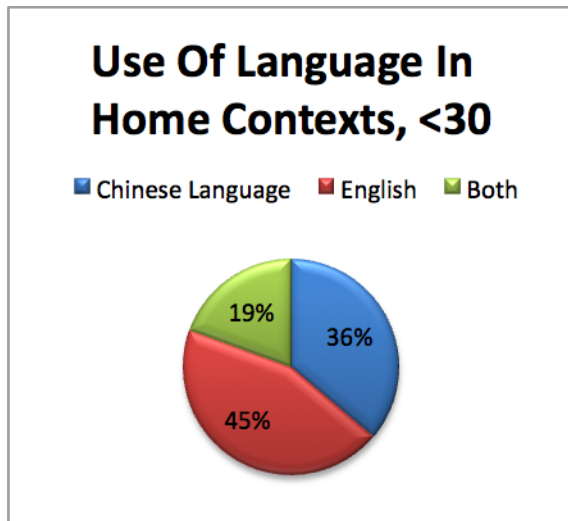


Figure 8 Use of Language in Home contexts for Informants under 30

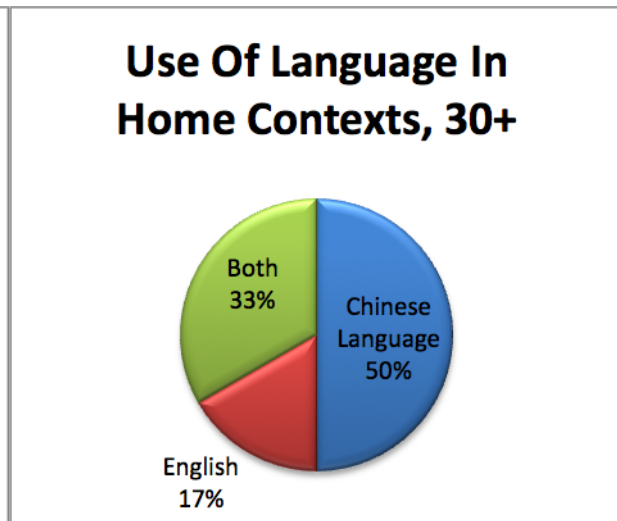


Figure 9 Use of Language in Home Contexts for informants over 30

Home - Informants under 30 were nearly three times as likely to speak English exclusively at home than those over 30. While nearly half of <30 use no Chinese at home, 83% of over 30s use a Chinese language in some capacity at home. The proportion of code-switching increases by more than half in older speakers, also.

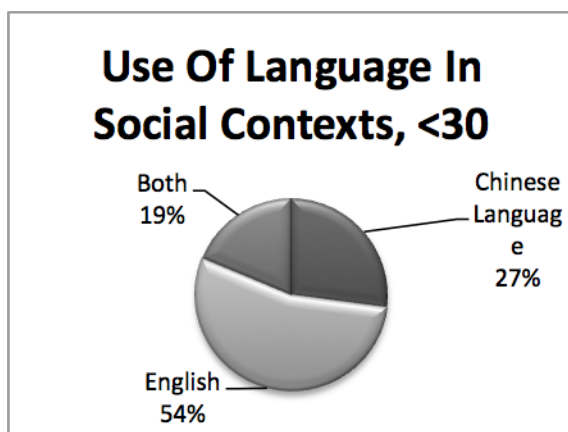


Figure 10 Use of Language in Social Contexts Informants under 30

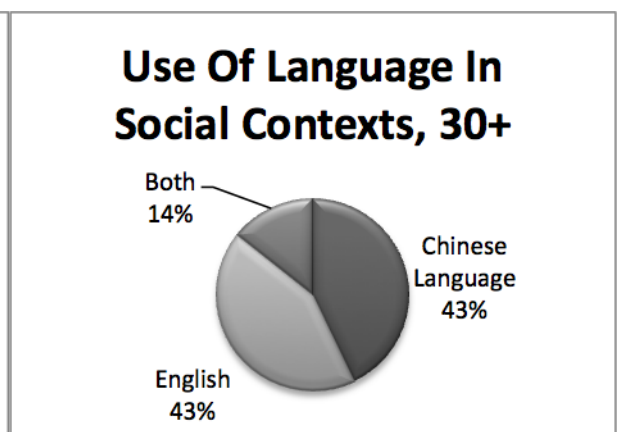


Figure 11 Use of Language in Social Contexts for Informants over 30

Social - In younger speakers there was more use of only English and less use of only Chinese than in home contexts, one possible explanation being that informants may interact with a lower proportion of speakers of Chinese languages outside of the home than in.

Older speakers show some similar traits; exclusive use of Chinese is decreased, whilst overall English use is increased, although in this case, the majority of this increase is caused by exclusive use of English and the proportion of code-switching is less than half that in home contexts. Younger speakers speak only English more than older speakers, as in home contexts, but the gap is much narrower (11% from 28%). Code-switching in social contexts is as close to parity as the two age groups come.

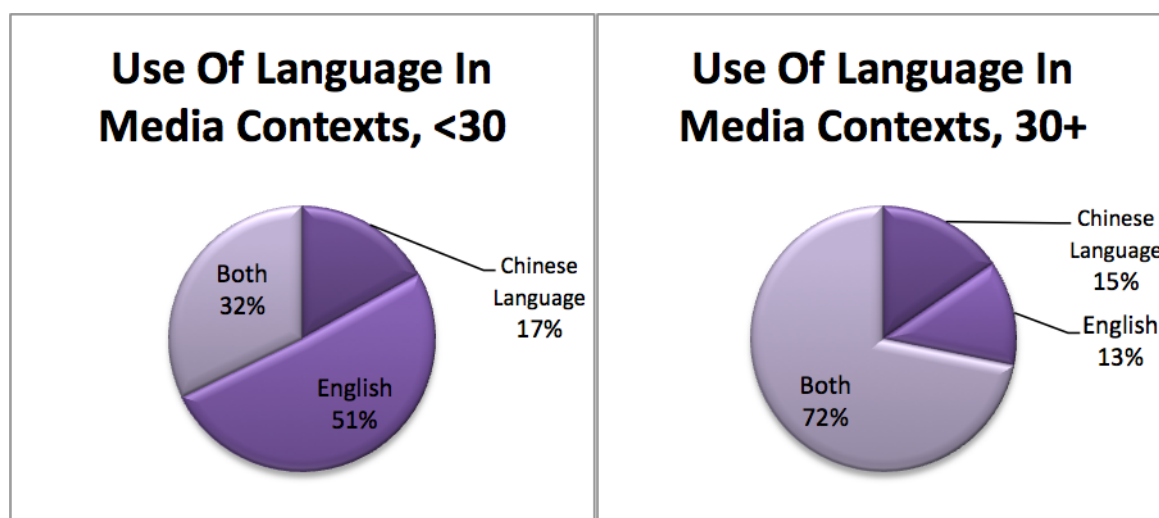


Figure 12 Use of Language in Media contexts for Informants under 30

Figure 13 Use of Language in Media Contexts for Informants over 30

Media - Perhaps not providing the same insight to language use as this is more a question of which languages are read and listened to rather than spoke. 87% of informants over 30 years old utilise Chinese media, with 72% of that group using both Chinese and English. The under-30 group primarily use English only, but in

these contexts use both to a greater extent than both social and home contexts, and this is also the only group of contexts in which the younger group uses only Chinese more than the older informants. However, although this is the case, overall use of Chinese (either exclusively or as well as English) is 38% lower than in over-30s, the largest gulf between the two demographics in any context.

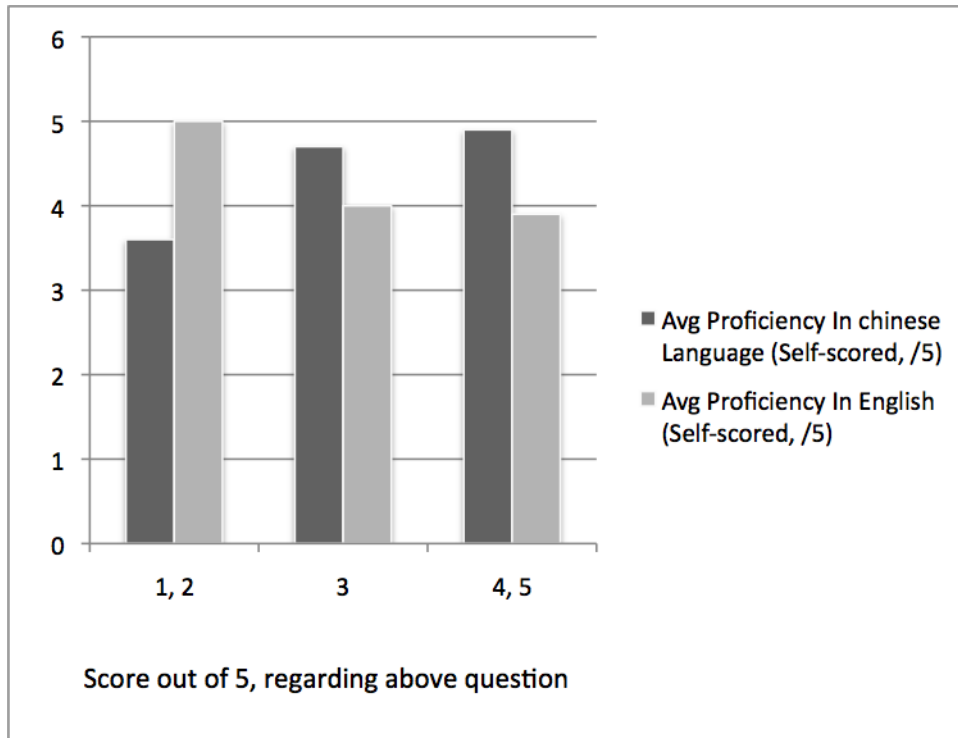


Figure 13 Average Proficiency in Chinese Language & English

The graph shows a clear pattern relating the importance (perceived by the informant, at least) of Chinese heritage to the informants' proficiency in English. Lower scoring informants enjoyed a markedly increase proficiency in English, and those who considered their Chinese heritage more important were, on average, more fluent in a Chinese language. Informants who scored themselves with a 3 were, on average, more proficient in Chinese than English, possibly suggesting that these people undersold the importance of their Chinese heritage, although this point could be related instead to the fact that in the whole study the average proficiency in a Chinese language was 4.47, whereas in English the average was 4.24.

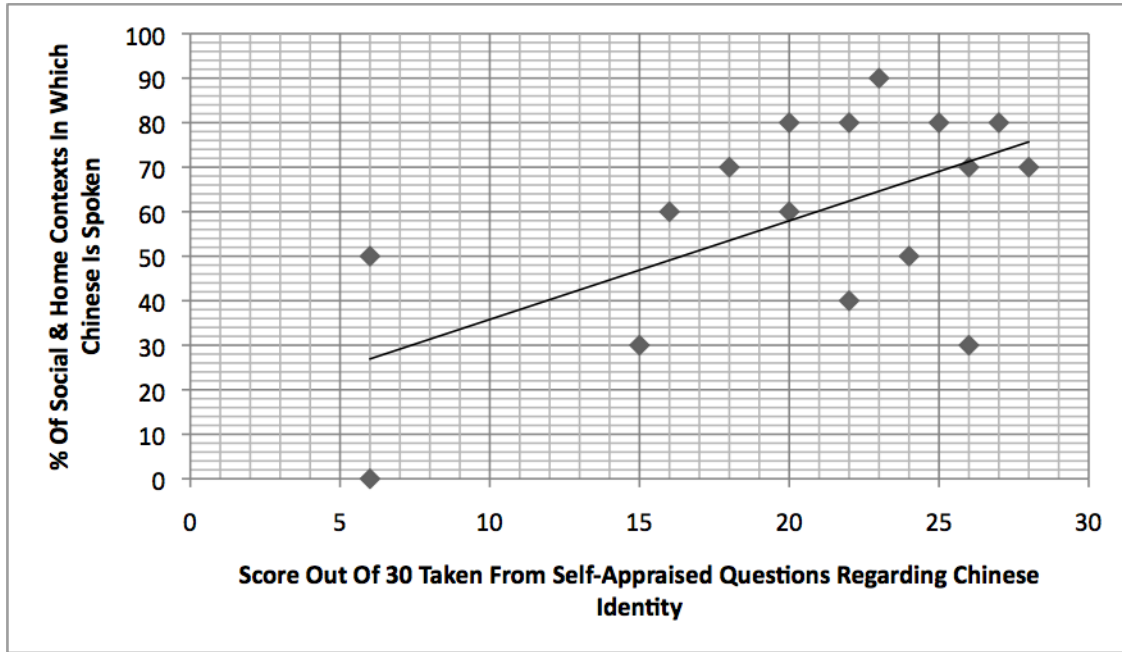


Figure 14 Chinese Identity & Social/Home contexts

This graph, Figure 15, plots each participants score in terms of Chinese identity (the same score from sheet 3) against the proportion of different contexts (social and home only) in which either Chinese or code switching between Chinese and English is employed. It can be seen from the graph that there is a moderate, positive correlation between the two - the stronger the Chinese identity, the more Chinese is utilised in home and social contexts.

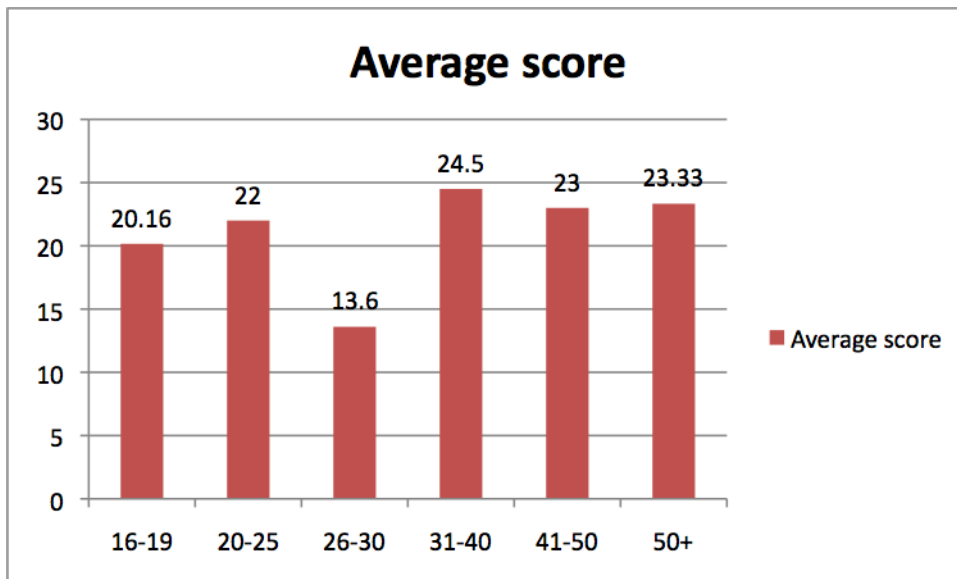


Figure15 Average Score by Age Group

As it can be seen in Figure 16, the three groups with the highest average scores are the three oldest groups. 26-30's unusually low score was affected by the fact that the two lowest scores appeared in that group, but with these scores removed this group would still, if not by the same distance, have the lowest average score.

Evaluation of findings

The graph that shows the ethnicity of the participants revealed that the large majority of the participants who completed the questionnaires were British-born Chinese; nine out of seventeen people. The graph showing the age group and birth place of the participants indicates that a greater proportion of the participants from 16-29 years old were born in Britain, yet a greater proportion of the 30 years and over age group were born outside of Britain. It is important, however, to bear in mind that six more participants were included in the younger age group; this may be due to the variables which were present at the time we were carrying out the questionnaires. The graph illustrating a 'score' demonstrates that the higher the score, the greater the influence of Chinese heritage upon the participant. It is evident that the older age groups of 31-40 and above 50 had the most influence of heritage on them. The scoring was calculated out of 30, and all of the age groups received above a mark of ten for their result. The graphs showing the language use of Chinese and English within the domains of 'media', 'home' and 'social' are divided into the age groups of below and above thirty. The dominant language for below thirty at home appears to be English at home, socially and in the media, whereas above thirty, the prevalent language is Chinese at home, socially, and a mixture of both Chinese and English within the media. The graph showing proficiency in Chinese and the proficiency in English, is calculated on a scale of one to five; one being strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree. The graph expresses that more of the participants regard themselves as having a higher proficiency in Chinese as opposed to English. The final graph illustrates Chinese identity; for each participant, Chinese identity is plotted against different social contexts of 'social' and 'home', where either code-switching between Chinese or English is significant. It is clear from the graph that there is a positive correlation between Chinese identity and the percentage of social and home domains in which Chinese is spoken. A variety of different types of graphs have

been used in this project as a way of demonstrating our groups proficiency in calculating important results, and to provide the reader with a diverse range of ideas.

Conclusions and further comments

- The most significant differences regarding affiliation to Chinese culture in Chinatown are to be understood according to each generation. As expected, the oldest informants feel more conservative of their Chinese identity, which can be seen through a higher use of Chinese languages in all domains. Old people do not seem very integrated in the Mancunian society and some of them do not seem to be bothered if they cannot speak English; this was quite obvious when seeing that almost nobody ever used interpreting services, even if proficiency in English was poor. Due to this, the youngest generations do use Chinese languages at home with their families, to communicate with older speakers.
- However we cannot neglect the fact that the younger generations use less Chinese languages than their older counterpart and try to favour English. This highlights the diachronic change Chinese languages and identity have undergone in the past decades. When interviewing teenagers and young students in Chinatown, we noticed that their cultural self-definition rather lies somewhere in between the two civilizations: the pride of their Chinese heritage and the integration in the British society and country where they live. People can then establish themselves with a brand new cultural identity. A Chinese immigrant states that “So you don’t really belong to any slot. You belong to a slot of your own in the middle... I think we have to establish our own identity” (Pan, 1999), which could summarize our findings.
- Our research project and findings integrates well into the idea of a multilingual and multicultural Manchester where ethnic and linguistic diversities are key points. Even though the Chinese population might be the one struggling the

most to integrate in Britain, it “also depends on the attitude of the host society” (Hong, 1998: p18) and Manchester seem to show a difference. Indeed, among our informants, a young student felt that “Manchester was more multicultural than London”

- Yet, we might also wonder about the future of Chinatown. If Manchester is becoming more and more multicultural, can a strong unspoiled Chinese identity survive? Or could Chinatown turn into another multilingual area of Manchester?

Bibliography

Hong, Suen Suen, *Citizenship and Social Exclusion in Britain: The experiences of Chinese minorities*, (University of Manchester, Institute for Development Policy and Management, 1998)

Map of Manchester's Chinatown

<www.manchester2002-uk.com/maps/chinatown-map.html>

Pan, Lynn, *The Encyclopaedia of the Chinese Overseas*. (Richmond: Curzon, 1999)

Appendix 1 - Reviewed Questionnaire

NB: YOU ARE ONLY ELIGIBLE FOR THIS SURVEY IF YOU LIVE OR WORK IN CHINATOWN

Part 1- Background information

For the following questions, please circle the appropriate answer or answer in the space provided.

How old are you?

<16

16-19

20-25

26-30

31-40

41-50

50>

What is your gender?

Male

Female

How would you describe your ethnicity?

Hong Kong Chinese,

PRC Chinese,

British-born Chinese,

Malaysia Chinese, and

Chinese from other countries

Mixed Ethnicity- British-Chinese

Mixed Ethnicity- other (*Please state*)

.....

Other (*Please state*)

.....

Were you born in the UK?

Yes

No

If you answered 'No' to the previous question, where were you born?

(If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, please leave this question blank)

.....

.....

How old were you when you arrived in the UK?

I was born here

<16

16-19

20-25

26-30

31-40

41-50

50>

Were your parents born in Britain or abroad?

Britain

Elsewhere (*Please state*)

.....

What is your occupation?

.....

Part 2- Integration in Chinese community and attitudes towards Chinese culture in Manchester

Please circle the appropriate answer for the following questions.

Do you live in Chinatown?

Yes

No

If not, would you like to?

Yes

No

Do you work in Chinatown?

Yes

No

If not, would you like to?

Yes

No

For the following statements, please circle the extent to which you agree with them:

1= Strongly Disagree

5= Strongly Agree

If the statement is not relevant to you please write "N/A" in the space for *Further Comments*.

If you would like to add any further comments, please do so in the space provided.

Your opinions are valuable to us.

I am interested in Chinese history.

Strongly Disagree

1

2

3

4

Strongly Agree

5

Further comments (optional):

.....

.....

I encounter prejudice in Manchester concerning my cultural background and native origin.

Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Further comments (optional):

.....

.....

For the following questions, please give your answer in the space provided.

If the question is not relevant to you please write "N/A".

If you would like to add any further comments, please do so as all your opinions are valuable to our study.

For people who don't speak English, do they find it difficult to communicate with non-Chinese speakers, and do they feel judged in any way?

.....

.....

.....

.....

What changes have you noticed in Chinatown and the Chinese community since you've lived in Manchester?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Further comments on your Chinese identity and your opinions of Chinese culture in Chinatown:

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Part 3- Language Use

Please answer the following questions as indicated.

What is your first/native language? (Please circle)

Cantonese

Mandarin

English

Other (*Please state*)

.....

What languages do you speak? (Please circle as many as appropriate)

Cantonese

Mandarin

English

Others (*Please state*)

.....

How would you rate your proficiency in English on a scale of 1-5?

(Please circle a number)

I speak none

I'm fluent

1

2

3

4

5

How would you rate your proficiency in Mandarin on a scale of 1-5?

(Please circle a number)

I speak none
1 2 3 4 I'm fluent
5

How would you rate your proficiency in Cantonese on a scale of 1-5?

(Please circle a number)

I speak none
1 2 3 4 I'm fluent
5

What language dominates the media around Chinatown? (Please circle)

English

Cantonese

Mandarin

A mixture *(Please elaborate)*

.....
.....

Is Chinese language taught in your schools? (Please tick contexts for which the answer is yes)

Your local school

The school you went/go to (if in Manchester)

The school your children go to (if applicable)

Do you ever use interpreting services? (Please circle)

No

Yes

If you answered Yes to the previous question, please tell us more about the service you use and where and why you use it:

.....
.....
.....
.....

What language do you use instinctively- in your dreams, thoughts, when you swear etc.?

Mandarin

Cantonese

English

Other (*Please state*)

Do many non-Chinese people you know speak Chinese?

Yes

No

For the following contexts please tick which language you PREDOMINANTLY use.

e.g. If you mostly speak Cantonese/Mandarin with your friends but use English very occasionally you should tick “Chinese language”.

If you very frequently change between using a Chinese language/English in conversation with your colleagues you should tick “Switch between the two”.

Domain	Chinese language	English	Switch between the two
Home- with partner			
Home- with elder family members			

Home- with non chinese speaking friends			
Home- with children			
Home- with children's peers			
Home- with peers			
At school/university			
Film/theatre			
Media- radio			
Media- film			
Media- newspapers			
Media- magazines			
Work- with manager/supervisor			
Work- with colleagues			
Shopping- in Chinatown			
Shopping- outside of Chinatown			
Whilst out for a meal at Chinese restaurants			
Whilst out for a meal at non-chinese restaurants			