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Report

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# **An investigation on language use in Rusholme: Businesses on 'The Curry Mile'**

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## **An investigation on language use in Rusholme – concentrating specifically on businesses on ‘The Curry Mile’**

We have chosen to focus our study on ‘The Curry Mile’ in Rusholme predominantly as it is a linguistically diverse area. It provides us with direct access to collect our data as there are a plethora of different businesses, located next to each other in this exciting and vast area. The Curry Mile is a multicultural part of the city, where many different languages are used in each particular business, therefore, allowing for a study to be an interesting investigation.

To obtain our results we will hand out a number of questionnaires to as many of the five types of businesses as possible, as we understand that some shop workers/customers may not be willing to complete our question forms. The businesses we will go into will be takeaways, restaurants, grocery stores, beauticians/hairdressers and retail shops. In addition, we will approach two members of the community on The Curry Mile and ask them to fill out the questionnaire, in order to ensure that we get a response from residents in the district as well.

Before we undertake our study we need to remember concepts of low prestige and popularity, as we need to establish if this could affect our results. For example, it could make one language seem more popular than it actually is. To try and overcome this, we have decided for the surveys to be anonymous and we will leave the questionnaire with each candidate, so they will not be influenced or feel under pressure if we are around when they are completing their survey. We also need to take into account the observer’s paradox (Wikipedia: 2010) i.e. customers may want to project themselves in a certain way, so they may use a particular language, or even one which they may think is of higher prestige, which again will provide us with false results. Leaving the questionnaires with the informants to complete on their own time will hopefully minimize the chance of affected results.

After receiving feedback on our fieldwork plan and re-evaluating our schedule, we have decided to focus only on the five different types of business below and to eliminate the Doctors' surgeries, as this may not be seen as a 'business' as such. Investigating only five types of businesses, will also allowing us to collect a more explicit and concise set of data and give us more time to analyse and evaluate our results.

**Expected schedule of visits and processing the information collected:**

Date	Business	Action
23 <sup>rd</sup> April 2010	Takeaway, restaurant	Distribute questionnaire to employees and record information
1 <sup>st</sup> May 2010	Grocery store	Same as above
8 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Retail shop, beauticians	Same as above
12 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	-	Tabulate all collected data and analyse our results
17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	-	Complete evaluation of our overall findings

Analysis of Results

After completing our research on the Curry Mile, we collected our results and ended our study with 11 completed questionnaires. A large number of other questionnaires were handed out at various businesses but these were either uncompleted or were not handed back to us. This means that our results sample was not as vast as we had hoped, due to people being too busy or wary of sharing their information with us. In order to try and overcome the Observer's Paradox, we left our questionnaires with shop

owners for the afternoon in our absence, in the hope of a more truthful result.

Also, the majority of the people who answered the questionnaire were male, who acted as the shop manager. This means that our results will nearly always be orientated around the male gender and opinions, with very little input from the female perspective of language on the Curry Mile. Also, as the shop manager seemed to fill out the questionnaire in most cases, our results are from people aged thirty or over. We came into no contact with the younger generation while handing out the questionnaires, and if we were to repeat this study again, we would aim to make sure that a more varied target audience was captured.

### **Age groups**

30-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-60
3	4	1	1	3

Some of the questionnaires were returned with particular questions unanswered, particularly question 5 regarding languages used in particular situations. Therefore, for some questions we had 11 results whilst for others we had just 9. In addition, some people provided more than one answer for each question, for example, the numerous languages they spoke, whilst others did not.

The businesses we targeted in our study were takeaways and restaurants, grocery stores, retail shops and beauticians along the Curry Mile. As mentioned before, we decided against including a Doctor's surgeries as it did not fit in with our proposal of investigating language use in businesses.

We approached employees in the businesses by introducing ourselves as students at The University of Manchester, conducting a survey on language use in businesses along the Curry Mile, we then asked them if they would mind filling out a short

questionnaire, and offered to come back and collect it in the next hour if they were too busy to fill it out straight away. In every case the manager of the business was the person who actually wrote out the answers to the questionnaire, which in retrospect was most likely the best method as they know the most about the business and therefore understand the dynamics of the way in which employees and customers interact, and also the way in which employees and employees interact as well.

In total there were 12 different languages spoken by the different people we questioned (See appendix 1. for pie chart). English was the most popular language with 11 out of 11 people being able to speak the language, closely followed by the popular Urdu, of which we found 10 speakers. Punjabi also held a large segment of the languages spoken. We found three speakers each for Arabic, Punjabi and Hindi. Two European languages, French and Greek had two and one speakers respectively. Other languages with just one speaker were Kutchi, Chaumau, Telugu and the Afrikan language Swahili. We were quite surprised to find only 1 Telugu speaker, as it is the 15<sup>th</sup> most spoken language in the world, primarily in India (Wikipedia: 2010), but gained the expected ratio result for Arabic, Punjabi and Hindi. Also, we are not aware of a language called Chaumau, and neither is any of the relevant literature, so this could be an anomalous result, as the gentlemen insisted he spoke it.

The vast amount of languages recorded reflects the diversity of the area we decided to investigate. We do need to bear in mind which languages may have prestigious connotations, and that people may alter the answers in regards to what they believe is popular. As the Curry Mile is abundant in ethnic minorities, the shop owners may feel that the minority languages are negatively perceived in England, and so could use answers as a way of showing their belief of English as being prestigious.

45% of speakers used three to four of their languages in an average day, closely followed by 36% of the people who used one to two languages per day. Two people used 5-6 languages a day, displaying their bilingual abilities as an everyday occurrence. This also shows what a large number of socially and ethnically different situations and

people the Curry Mile shop owners can come into contact with daily, and that their conversations are dependent on their vast language knowledge and use.

There was just one language which took preference in usage, namely English. However, six speakers said they did not have a language that they favoured over others, but were happy to use any of the languages they were able to speak. This result could support the view that English is viewed as the most respectable language for some people, however, it could just be that they genuinely like to speak the language. The fact that 6 speakers were happy to speak any language shows that most people are now comfortable with all of the languages they speak, and feel no negative connotations towards a particular one.

Furthermore, 67% of people said that, who they are speaking to affected their language choice, with just 33% saying their language choice was not affected (See appendix 2.). These results can be seen in the answers we gathered for question five, where each participant in our study had to reveal the languages they used when with family, friends, with members of staff and with customers. English, Urdu and Hindi were the three most popular language choices for interacting with family members. Other results were Punjabi, Cutchi and Telugu. When communicating with friends, English collected the majority of speakers closely followed by Urdu, Hindu and Punjabi. One speaker chose Telugu to interact with friends.

Percentage of each prominent language use with different social groups

	English	Urdu	Punjabi	Hindu
Family	50%	50%	25%	37.5%
Friends	75%	50%	37.5%	37.5%
Staff	75%	50%	37.5%	50%
Customers	100%	50%	25%	50%

English also had the majority of speakers when communicating with members of staff with six results. Urdu, Hindu and Punjabi were also popular with just a single result for Telugu.

As Manchester is an English speaking city with a large influx of other languages, it was not surprising that nearly all of the results showed that customers were addressed in English. Some of the people we interviewed said it depended on the kind of customer that comes into the business. Therefore Hindu, Urdu, French, Punjabi and Bangla are all used to speak to different customers, depending on the customer's nationality and background. Quite often, a number of languages can be used based on how well the interlocutors know each other in these multilingual settings (shown in above table). The table supports the fact that English is the most used language in the Curry Mile.

In general, our results showed that those questioned found it easy to speak to other nationality speakers in Manchester with just one finding it very difficult. However, this may be due to the fact they are not confident with the English language resulting in great difficulty when interacting with people from France etc. 70% of people believed that their business is affected by the language they used with 30% disagreeing, again supporting the fact that language choice is essential and crucial when interacting with other people.

When advertising their business, English was the most popular choice which is expected as the areas surrounding Rusholme are predominantly English speaking areas, so the products and details of the shop can be widely published, by the most widely spoken language. By advertising the business in English it would mean it would be more accessible to a larger amount of people. One person said it depended on what was being advertising, whilst other business choice to advertise in Urdu, Hindu and Bangla in addition to English advertising.

Nearly all of the people that completed the questionnaire said they spoke more languages in relation to previous generations, with one person saying they spoke the



equivalent to previous generations. This could be due to the fact that more people have since moved to England from their native countries and, as a result, have had to learn more languages in addition to their mother tongue. This also is indicative as to why so many languages are spoken in the average day, as if the shop owners see their parents or grand-parents, they might not have grasped the English language so well, and still prefer to speak their mother tongue.

A number of our participants did not understand the nature of a few of the questions, resulting in blank or anomalous answers. In particular the questions;

a) 'Do any other factors affect your language choice? I.e. Location'

b) 'How easy do you find speaking to other nationality language speakers in Manchester? (I.e. Polish, French)'

c) 'Do you think your business is affected by the language you use?'

In a) it may not have been clear what kind of answer we were looking for as it may have been confusing as to exactly how location would affect language choice as the question is not particularly specific. If we were to use this questionnaire again we could omit this question or change it so that it is clearer.

Question in b) again does not provide much scope for answers as it is slightly unclear exactly what it is we're asking them, and it does not specify if the 'other nationality speakers' are speaking in their language or English. Again, we could have been more specific to make this question clearer to the reader.

Question in c) does not state how exactly businesses could be affected by language, or what aspects of business would be affected. The question only really requires a yes/no answer and so the information gathered is limited, and we do not learn how their business is affected by language if it is in fact affected.

Also in the questionnaire, question 5 which follows on from the answer given in question 4 was left unanswered on a few occasions, as perhaps the participants did not understand that it was based on their answer in 4, or maybe they simply felt it was too long-winded. In retrospect, we could shorten question 5 or incorporate both into one question so it isn't as overwhelming for the reader.

We were planning to use a Dictaphone in our study, however the people we asked to fill out our questionnaire were not comfortable with us recording their speech and so we were unable to acquire any voice recordings of the languages used on the Curry Mile.

The majority of the managers of the businesses we visited were male and were middle-aged and above. This means the results we gathered from them were constricted and we were not able to observe how very many women viewed language use within business. If we were to repeat this study we could perhaps make sure we visited businesses run by equal amounts of males and females, by carrying out some further planning as to which businesses we include in our study.

Overall, the prominent method we used in our study, the questionnaire, produced some significant results which allowed us to understand more about the multilingual society that operates within businesses along the Curry Mile in Manchester. Although looking back we could have changed the wording of certain questions to allow for more relevant answers, and also could have made sure we had as many female managers as we did male. The evidence shows that as such a large number of different languages are spoken daily the language choice is situation dependent. The continuous use of the minority languages shows that people do not want to forget their ancestry and mother tongue, as even though most people speak English, they still choose to speak their native language in their more personal surroundings with their family and friends. This implies a covert prestige as it symbolizes their social unity as a close knit social group.

## **References**

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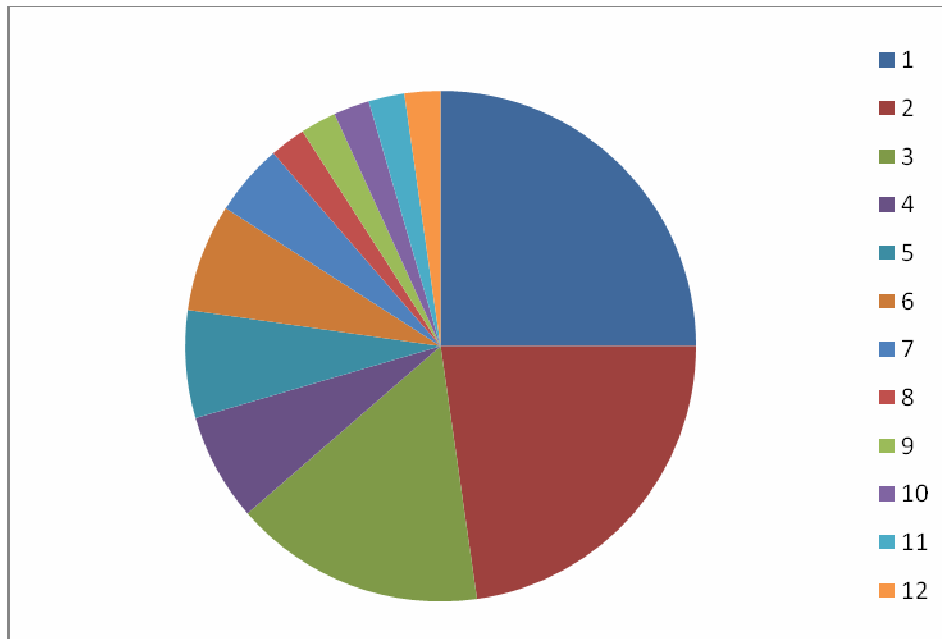
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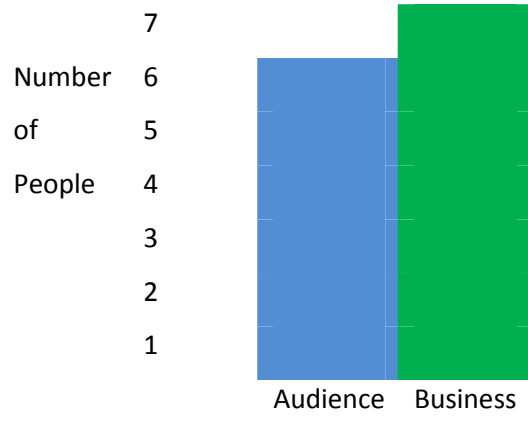
## Appendix

1.



- 1=English
- 2=Urdu
- 3=Punjabi
- 4=Arabic
- 5=Hindi
- 6=Bengali
- 7=French
- 8=Chaumau
- 9=Telugu
- 10=Greek
- 11=Swahili
- 12=Cutchi

2.



Affected area