

# लघुतौल्युवा MANCHESTER

**Report 2012**



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# **Multilingual Manchester: Longsight Report**

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## **1) Introduction**

Prior knowledge and existing research of the Longsight area, which will be detailed in the section 1.1, was the motivation for the selection of the location and topic of this investigation. A member of the group was aware of the Longsight Help with English Centre and its provisions to aid non-native, mainly adult, speakers in the acquisition of the English language. This was to be the focal point of our study. As our research showed, the area is extremely multicultural which we infer signifies an area rich in multilingualism.

The Longsight Help with English Centre is a free service that caters for all levels of capability and is not exclusively aimed at new arrivals into the Manchester area. While the main emphasis is placed on language learning, classes take place in an informal environment which promotes social interaction. This social interaction takes place in transitional English and the native languages where possible. Learners benefit from conversation with their peers as it acts as a confidence builder and furthermore encourages immersion in the language.

Adapting an individual, attitudinal case study approach, this paper aims to discuss the process of learning English as a second language, with specific focus on the motives for learning and the perceived quality and accessibility of the provisions available. Previous research has indicated that there are vast provisions for non-English speakers in the Longsight area. This investigation intends to build on the aforementioned research, by showing how these provisions are received in this community.

This paper comes at a time when multilingualism is not only prominent in our society but is a growing quality of English communities. As such, local councils and other organisations are striving to provide optimal resources for those who speak a language other English. Manchester City Council “considers providing information to the public in their own languages as its responsibility” (Fathi, 2006: 66). It is essential for both the multilingual speakers who rely on these services and the organisations that provide them to evaluate the efficiency and ensure the success of these provisions.

### **1.1) Previous research**

The following section is dedicated to scrutinizing prior research of multilingualism in Longsight. The data and conclusions presented in the previous research, highlighted certain aspects of multilingualism in Longsight, which required additional attention.

“A survey of language use in Manchester. Case study: Longsight”, revealed that the main languages spoken within the Longsight community are English, Punjabi and Urdu. The study stated that local businesses and organisations recognized this linguistic diversity and provided “translation and interpretation facilities” accordingly (Beswick *et al.*, 2010: 18). The present investigation intends to expand on these conclusions by acknowledging the profusion of other language communities within Longsight, besides Punjabi, English and Urdu. It is not clear from the above mentioned study if the provisions for the minority languages are as abundant or facilitative as they are for the main languages. On the whole, the implementation of different language resources in an area reflects the level of demand from language communities. Venner (2010) suggests that it is the level of status that a language has, within a community, which governs the level of provisions that are made available for speakers.

It is not always realistically possible to accommodate each and every language equally and this is evident from the “Linguistic Landscape” (Landry and Bourhis, 1997:25) of Longsight. The term “Linguistic landscapes” alludes to the languages that are used on public signs, notices and advertisements, within a particular area. After visiting Longsight in person, it is evident that the “Linguistic Landscape” reflects only the majority languages spoken in the area (mainly Urdu, Arabic and English). Perhaps, this is one of the main motivations, for speakers of minority languages which are not mutually intelligible with the languages in the “Linguistic Landscape”, to learn English.

On the other hand, there are much more far-reaching language provisions for non-English speakers at local doctor’s surgeries, libraries and Jobcentres. The Longsight Library and Learning Centre offers books in an array of different languages. Furthermore, Manchester City Council has produced a webpage that indicates the locations of libraries in Manchester, where books in 26 different languages are available. This is one indication that Local Authorities and businesses in Manchester have taken the initiative to support and encourage speakers of different languages.

Another indication is the help provided by doctor’s surgeries, such as the Ailsa Craig Medical Practice, for non-English speakers. As well as providing information about the NHS, appointments and treatment procedures in a multitude of languages (see figure A in the appendix), the practice also offers interpreters to translate during medical appointments, on request.

Despite all these provisions, there are still many people in Longsight that are actively learning English. Their learning is supported by language courses, which are provided by a number of different organisations. The English for Speakers of Other Languages Review (Davey and Summers, 2008) indicated that the majority of English- learning support came from City College, Manchester College, Manchester Adult Education Service and Work Solutions (a non-profit organisation founded by Local Authorities in Manchester). As well as this the review also found a large number of community run organisations such as the Longsight Help with English Centre. This signifies that while Local Authorities are keen to facilitate non-English speakers, they are also

encouraging them to learn English, thus ultimately promoting integration and multilingualism in Manchester.

However, there has been limited attention given to understanding individual non-English speaker's awareness of and attitude towards the current resources and classes, which are available to them. As such, this provided the basis for this investigation. The attitudinal approach towards the collection of data is outlined in the following section.

## **Methodology**

As a group, we resolved that our focus would centre on provisions in place for second language (L2) learners of English in the Longsight area, and whether those using the services thought that there could be any improvements made to them, or any extra facilities made available in the Longsight area which would aid their acquisition. In order for us to conduct our experiment, we designed a questionnaire, to be carried out as an interview, with questions concentrated mainly on provisions for L2 learners in Longsight. In addition to this, we asked background information such as age, occupation, where they are originally from, and whether they speak any additional languages aside from their native and English, in order to obtain a well-rounded view of our participants.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012, three of our group members visited the Calvinistic Methodist Church, situated at the corner of Daisy Bank Road and Longford Place in Longsight, South Manchester. Every Thursday morning there is a class held at this establishment for those wanting to learn English. As it is free to attend, they have often had up to 30 students in attendance at any one time. The course co-ordinator had informed the students prior to our arrival of our project and what we intended to do with the data we would collect. Obviously, due to the language barrier faced by the coordinator and ourselves, it was difficult to ensure all students were fully aware of the investigation's aims.

We interviewed students of varying ability and experience from the class with the aim of acquiring a broader picture of the perspectives on learning English in the area. The class was segmented in to three ability groups; Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced learners. We conducted one-to-one interviews with randomly selected members of each group, in total conducting eight interviews. Confidence in the disciplines of a foreign language (reading, writing, listening and speaking) can vary amongst learners and is often dependent on the means of acquisition. An L2 learner who acquires language from written resources may not have confidence in his/her speaking skills whereas a learner who has a more practical introduction to a language – based on contact with native speakers – may feel less confident in his/her written abilities. Because of this, the interviews were recorded in two ways: some students preferred to write down their own answers and others preferred for those conducting the interview to make a note of their responses.

Initially, we assumed our questions were straightforward and simple enough for the participants to understand, meaning we foresaw little need to deviate from the composed

questions. However, as we proceeded with the interviews, we discovered that much paraphrasing was necessary with some participants. In order to refrain from causing the participants unnecessary stress or discomfort, we felt it necessary, particularly with some novice learners, to exclude difficult questions from the interview entirely where paraphrasing was ineffective. Unfortunately, the questions we were required to omit focussed on local provisions for L2 learners of English, such as those regarding other services available to second language learners and users.

### **Limitations**

Prior to the investigation, we were aware that there would potentially be limitations. Whilst every effort was made to overcome these, some obstacles were unavoidable.

Initially, we assumed our questions were straightforward and simple enough for the participants to understand, meaning we foresaw little need to deviate from the composed questions. However, as we proceeded with the interviews, we discovered that much paraphrasing was necessary with some participants. In order to refrain from causing the participants unnecessary stress or discomfort, we felt it necessary, particularly with some novice learners, to exclude difficult questions from the interview entirely where paraphrasing was ineffective. Unfortunately, the questions we were required to omit focussed on local provisions for L2 learners of English, such as those regarding other services available to second language learners and users.

However, we did not foresee the level of reluctance we faced which arose for an apparent variety of reasons, such as disinterest in the topic and lack of confidence in language skills. Although we were keen to establish as much data as possible, we entirely respected the individuals who did not wish to participate.

Despite not collecting as much data as anticipated, we feel that, as the investigation focuses on the individual perspective of multilingualism, the quality of the data was more significant than the quantity.

### **Results and Discussion**

The survey revealed a great deal of variation in the amount of time for which the students have lived in Manchester, ranging from 2 months to 8 years. If this small sample is representative of immigration into Manchester as a whole, it shows that the Longsight area must have an ongoing appeal to those arriving into the country.

Each participant had a different first (and sometimes second) language. These ten languages spanned three continents, representing the co-existence of a wealth of different cultures in the area. With so many languages spoken in Longsight, one can foresee difficulties in providing a sufficient amount of accessible resources to learn English. Although the Longsight library stocks literature in at

least seven other languages, ten languages are revealed to be spoken by this survey of just eight inhabitants. This suggests that there are languages within the area which remain unrecognised. The lack of resources available for speakers of these languages could result in a feeling of isolation from a community which thrives on multiculturalism.

When asked which languages were spoken in each domain (family, friends and work colleagues), the results varied. This appears to be significant for a number of reasons.

For participant E, spoken English was interspersed with her native language Twi and French, which is also a prominent language in Ghana. Two factors which potentially contributed to this were the length of time that she had spent in England and that she had young children who were at an English-speaking school. It can be assumed that the prominence of English in her vernacular displays an eagerness to help her children become bilingual. Similar findings were uncovered in the case of participant H. By identifying the motives for learning English as a second language, we endeavour to highlight the most efficient uses of existing resources and identify areas of provisions which are lacking.

Most commonly, the participants felt learning English would improve their chances of finding employment. A study based on the 2000 US census (Cheeseman Day & Shin. 2000) revealed a correlation between the ability to speak English and the probability of finding employment. There was a particularly significant positive correlation between the probability of finding full time employment and the standard of English spoken. Moreover, the census revealed those who spoke English 'very well' earned almost 210% of the earnings of those who spoke no English. If this holds true for the UK, efforts should be made to encourage all non-native speakers to improve their English, not just for an individual's personal development but for the benefit of the community. Furthermore, many participants expressed a desire to continue their studies at undergraduate and postgraduate level. As many universities stipulate a good level of English as a course entry requirement, provisions such as the Longsight Help with English Centre are vital in facilitating the acquisition of language to a level which allows learners to achieve their academic potential.

The other principle motive given was to improve communication in a number of situations. One participant expressed a desire to help her daughter with her school studies. Some schools in the area, such as St John's C of E School, often have a majority populace of students who have English as a second language at home. Despite this, all lessons are taught in English which can prove challenging not only for the students but for their parents who often cannot offer help. Another participant also wishes to learn English to improve her relationship with her children. Because school children are in an English-speaking domain through the day, their English often develops at a faster rate than that of their parents. One can assume that this language barrier may lead to a feeling of isolation for the older generation and cause frustration within families.

There was agreement amongst all participants with regard to the benefits of multilingualism.

All interviewees believe that it is important to speak English if you live in the UK. One participant touched on the idea that it 'helps the community'. Language is an integral part of identity but a common language aids the growth of a multicultural society as it encourages communication, leading to increased trade, stronger relationships and a clearer sense of 'community'.

Although every participant believed the ability to speak English was vital, they also felt strongly that maintaining their mother tongue was important. One participant suggested it must be maintained for visiting 'home' but also as a means of expression. This alludes to a close relationship between personal identity and the mother tongue (Mac, 2007: 148) which complements another participant's answer who believes it to be important to maintain use of the native language with family.

Questions 10 and 11 revealed interesting information about the awareness of L2 English learning resources in Longsight. Three participants were unaware of help available to them outside of the Longsight Help with English Centre, one of which said he learns English from watching sport on television. One participant mentioned that she had attended the International Learning Centre in Levenshulme, run by Learndirect, which is approximately 1.5 miles from Longsight. Several participants were aware that the library ran courses but informed the interviewers that they were often at capacity and, if not, were too expensive. The library seemed to be the one facility that caused much frustration among the students as they knew of the provisions available and their value but did not have the means to pay for the service or could not get a place. It also appears that the high level of immigration in the area is creating a level of demand which the services in Longsight cannot meet.

In terms of other suggestions for improvements to resources in the area, participants had a range of suggestions. They wanted to see acknowledgement of other languages in supermarkets so to allow more effective communication with staff, and also in doctor's surgeries as all informative literature – such as posters and leaflets – is in English which makes it difficult for them to receive the same level of information as a fluent English speaker. It does not seem that the students believe that services should be provided in other languages so there is less need to learn English, but to aid them with the transitional stage between beginner and fluent speaker.

### **Concluding Comments**

This research on multilingualism aimed to reveal some insights into both the practical resources available to L2 English learners in the area, as well as their personal reasons for wanting to learn English whilst maintaining their native language as a form of identity. For the most part, we feel we have achieved these goals to a reasonable degree, given the reluctance and struggle of participants to answer some of the more complex questions we had, this was not an unpredicted problem and we adapted our approach in order to obtain enough information to work with.



It can be seen that there can be two primary reasons for wanting to learn a language; 'instrumental' and 'integrative' motivations (Edwards, 2010; 65). The former refers to utilitarian purposes, wherein they wish to learn the language for the sake of being able to function better in society in terms of work and practical reasons. The latter refers to wishing to learn a language so that they may better immerse themselves in a language. Our research, despite being perhaps a relatively small sample, showed that the majority were focused on instrumental reasons for learning English (to increase employability), but not exclusively, as seen in some of the participants answers. That is not to say that the two reasons are not compatible, and the participants were in agreement that a shared language helps to build a sense of community within the area.

The provisions available to L2 English speakers would appear to be satisfactory – the very place we gathered research from was a free class, which is very beneficial to those that are out of employment, and must learn English to improve their chances. The general consensus amongst participants was that there were areas that could be improved throughout the area. For example, the provisions run by the local library could lower their costs, and due to the high levels of immigration in the area, there is clearly a demand for more language teaching services. Other ideas included more recognition for their native languages in places such as supermarkets and doctors buildings; not as a way of getting rid of the need to learn English, but to help beginner speakers as they learn. One idea we could suggest would be a school that features classes where parents are able to join with their children. This would be beneficial to both parents and children, as it would enable them to both further their understanding of English, while potentially assisting each other in the process.

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## **Appendix**

Figure A: A list of the different languages that a factsheet about the NHS procedures has been translated into. (<http://www.ailsacraigmedicalpractice.co.uk/info.aspx?p=9>)

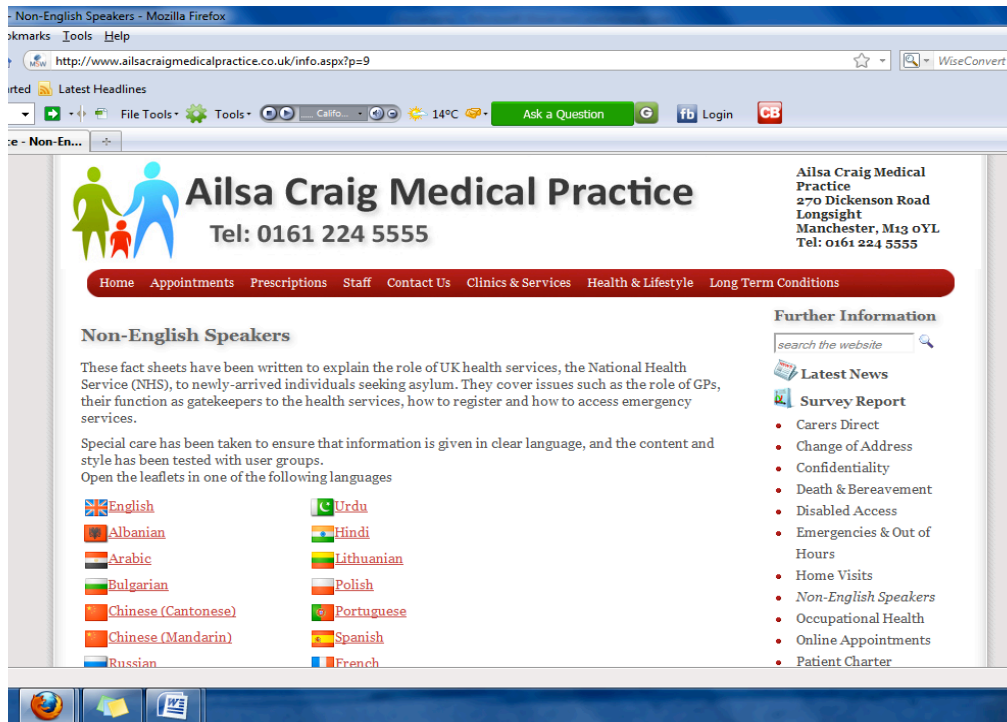


Figure B: The results from the survey of the Longsight Help with English Centre. Each participant has been labelled as a letter to maintain anonymity.

### Results

Participants:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Sex: M / F	F	F	F	M	F	F	M	F
Age:	27	28	20	27	37	45	59	28
Occupation:	n/a	Computer engineer	n/a	Factory worker	Mum	n/a	n/a	n/a
Children?	n/a	2	n/a	n/a	2	1	4	2

1) FOR HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING IN MANCHESTER?

- A: Nearly 5 years
- B: 3 years
- C: 1 year
- D: 2 months

- E: 8 years
- F: 4 months
- G: 9 years
- H: 9 months

2) WHAT IS YOUR FIRST LANGUAGE?

- A: Bengali
- B: Arabic
- C: Panjabi
- D: Czech
- E: Twi
- F: Slovakian and Hungarian (bilingual)
- G: Arabic
- H: Dari

3) CAN YOU SPEAK ANY OTHER LANGUAGES, IF SO WHAT ARE THEY?

- A: English
- B: English
- C: Urdu and English
- D: English
- E: French and English
- F: Slovakian, Hungarian and English
- G: Urdu and English
- H: Farsi and English

4) IN WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOU SPEAK TO YOUR:

a) FAMILY

- A: Bengali
- B: Arabic
- C: Panjabi
- D: Czech
- E: English
- F: Slovakian and Hungarian
- G: Bengali

H: Dari

b) FRIENDS

A: Bengali

B: Arabic

C: English and Urdu

D: Czech

E: English and Twi

F: Slovakian and Hungarian

G: Bengali

H: Dari

c) WORK COLLEAGUES

A: n/a

B: Arabic and English

C: n/a

D: Don't speak with work colleagues as they all speak English.

E: n/a

F: n/a

G: n/a

H: n/a

5) WHAT LANGUAGE DO YOU SPEAK TO YOUR CHILDREN IN? DOES IT VARY? IF SO HOW AND WHY?  
(FOR EXAMPLE, DO YOU SPEAK TO THEM IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES DEPENDING ON WHETHER YOU  
ARE IN PUBLIC OR PRIVATE)

A: n/a

B: I speak to them in Arabic.

C: n/a

D: n/a

E: French, Twi and English. I tell them off in English.

F: Child at high school in Slovakia so Slovakian when I see her.

G: Bengali and sometimes English.

H: Dari and sometimes a bit of English.

6) DO YOU EVER COMBINE MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING AND IF SO, WHEN AND WHY?

A: Not really, normally Bengali.

B: Yes, sometimes with my children when they don't understand in Arabic.

C: Yes, at college.

D: I speak English just in the city, Czech everywhere else.

E: I use Twi when I can't think of the words in English.

F: Sometimes, I speak a small amount of English in Manchester.

G: Combines Bengali and English occasionally with his children. I consider it important to promote English while still maintaining use of my native language.

H: I sometimes combine a bit of English with Dari when speaking to my children.

7) WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH?

A: For a job. English is international.

B: For many purposes. I am planning to do a Masters in Computer Engineering and another is I would like to be able to help my daughter with her studies.

C: I want to continue my studies and then would like a job. So English is very important for living in the UK, and English is international.

D: I want to speak English at the same level as I can speak Czech (fluently) mainly because I like the language.

E: I want to be able to write to friends and I want to be a designer. English is useful for communication.

F: I only understand English at the moment but need to speak it well for a job.

G: So I can find a job. I could not find a job until I learn to speak English.

H: So I can speak it properly to my children who are fluent English speakers. It would be helpful to understand English better when shopping and driving.

8) DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE IN LONGSIGHT TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH?

A: Of course.

B: Sure, learning English allows them [citizens with English as an additional language] to deal with others easily and confidently.

C: I think it is very important because everybody can't understand your language.

D: Very.

E: Yes, helps the community.

F: yes, to speak English well.

G: Yes, very important.

H: Yes, it is important if you live in England to speak English.

9) DO YOU THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE TO USE YOUR FIRST LANGUAGE AS WELL AS ENGLISH?

A: Bengali is not important in this country, but it is back home.

B: Of course, the mother language is the most important language for everyone.

C: Yes, I think it is important but it is more important to learn English because I would like to live in the UK for life time.

D: n/a

E: Yes, maybe if you go home and to express yourself.

F: Yes.

G: Yes and to maintain its use in my family.

H: She would like to continue speaking Dari after learning English, and only use English when necessary.

10) WHAT KIND OF RESOURCES ARE/WERE AVAILABLE TO YOU AS A NON-ENGLISH SPEAKER IN LONGSIGHT/ MANCHESTER?

A: Just this [the Longsight Help with English Centre], I don't know any others.

B: I think there are too little resources in Longsight. We attend just one day in the church [the Longsight Help with English Centre]. Unfortunately, the library staff always say there are no places there.

C: I went to Learn Direct College in Levenshulme.

D: Just this class as far as I am aware. I learn English from sport on television.

E: This centre and library.

F: Just attends this class.

G: I think the library offers good resources such as Bengali newspapers and books.

H: n/a

11) ARE THERE ANY PLACES THAT YOU FEEL COULD OFFER MORE HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS? (for example: the library, doctor's surgeries, supermarkets)

A: Library and the doctor's surgery (all in English)

B: Yes like schools, Surestarts and the library. The library could have more language courses, more

places available for learners and more meetings for conversation.

C: Yes, at the library the courses are too expensive and I don't like working there.

D: n/a

E: Doctors – everything is in English, ASDA

F: n/a

G: In supermarkets: I have problems communicating with the employees and could do with more help there.

H: In supermarkets – I don't understand the signs – and at the doctors.

#### Additional information

A: "I think it is difficult but I enjoy learning English. I did 2-3 months at the centre before going to YMCA training centre in 2010."

C: "I want to attend full time college, but expensive."

D's first class at the centre that day and had difficulty answering the questions (9 and 11 were unanswerable) but speaks English well considering the time spent in the country.

F is a beginner in English and has been attending the class for a month. She can read English but speaks very little.

G only speaks English in class and when shopping.