



Report

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The University of Manchester

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Online language use of Polish and Chinese communities in Manchester

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Introduction and Literature Recap

Our research aim is to compare and contrast how Polish and Chinese Speech communities in Manchester use online Social media. Due to the work of Danet and Herring (2007) who stated that China was the second most active country on the internet, we expected there to be a strong Chinese presence on social Media – in relation to our research, we know that there is a high Chinese demographic with many international students in Manchester. However, in the case of forums we found there to be a significant lack for Manchester and on a national scale, British Chinese communities. We expected to find code switching – especially where the speakers are British educated, on social media platforms, the work of Holmes and Wright (2004) found this to be commonplace online. Androutsopoulos (2006) found that the languages multilingual speakers choose to use online are “tailored to the requirements of different modes within a website” and also can be used in certain ways to show ones identity online. We have discovered similar results on social media within both Polish and Chinese communities where users code-switch when appropriate for certain contexts and their target audience.

Over 150 languages are reported to be spoken in Manchester, with nearly 20% of respondents from Manchester in the 2011 census declaring a language other than English as their main language. 6,447 people declared Polish as their main language and a combined 8,468 speakers of varieties of Chinese. 2011 figures show that Polish is the most dominant non-English spoken main Language in England Wales – with over 540,000 speakers. The Chinese language varieties are reportedly spoken as a main language by over 140,000 speakers in England and Wales (Multilingual Manchester:2013).

Research Questions

Our main research question is as follows:

- *How do Multi-lingual groups residing in Greater Manchester establish and enforce their native language via social media platforms?*

We also used the following research aims to guide us upon our discoveries;

- To study the Chinese and Polish communities in Greater Manchester
- To compare different types of media and see how they are used.
- To study the effect media has on the mentioned languages; is there a style shift taking place? How do users choose their language when communicating online?
- To analyse how the languages are being conveyed online, is there a standard version, or as there is with English, is there a non-standard slang version?

Case Study

The main focus of our data collection from our social media sites came from the top 15 posts on the Facebook group and the top 3 most detailed threads of discussion from our forums. For our websites we explicitly analysed the homepage in addition to other tabs on the webpage, which are mentioned in the following analysis. For all platforms, screenshots were taken and are shown below.

Although mentioned in part 1, we didn't acquire the help of a native speaker of either language as we were able to understand and interpret the data with the use of multiple online translations such as Google translator and the translation services provided by the websites.

One issue we expected to find with Chinese is the presence of different varieties within the language making it difficult to determine which form is being used. However this issue resolved itself due to the lack of Chinese present within the forum as most speakers opted to use English as the main language instead.

Another issue we expected to find with the forums is that the thread of speech from an individual may be difficult to follow. However this wasn't the case as each user had their own unique online login, therefore by distinguishing these logins, we could analyse each post as separated speech.

Polish Website: (*klub-bury.co.uk*)

The screenshot shows the homepage of 'Dom Polski w Bury'. The browser address bar displays 'http://www.klub-bury.co.uk/'. The website header includes the title 'Dom Polski w Bury' and the subtitle 'oficjalna strona internetowa klubu polskiego w Bury'. The navigation menu consists of 'Strona Główna', 'Historia', 'O nas', 'Wydarzenia', and 'Aktualności'. The main content area is titled 'Witamy' and dated '15 marca 2011'. It contains a welcome message in Polish and English, followed by information about membership and local community support. A sidebar on the right contains sections for 'Godziny Otwarcia' (Opening Hours) and 'Spis Treści' (Table of Contents).

Godziny Otwarcia

Wtorek	19:00 - 23:00
Czwartek	19:00 - 23:00*
Piątek	19:00 - 23:00*
Sobota	19:00 - 23:00*
Niedziela	11:00 - 14:00 19:00 - 22:30

Spis Treści

Lista wszystkich działów wraz z opublikowanymi artykułami (w obu językach).

Galerie Zdjęć

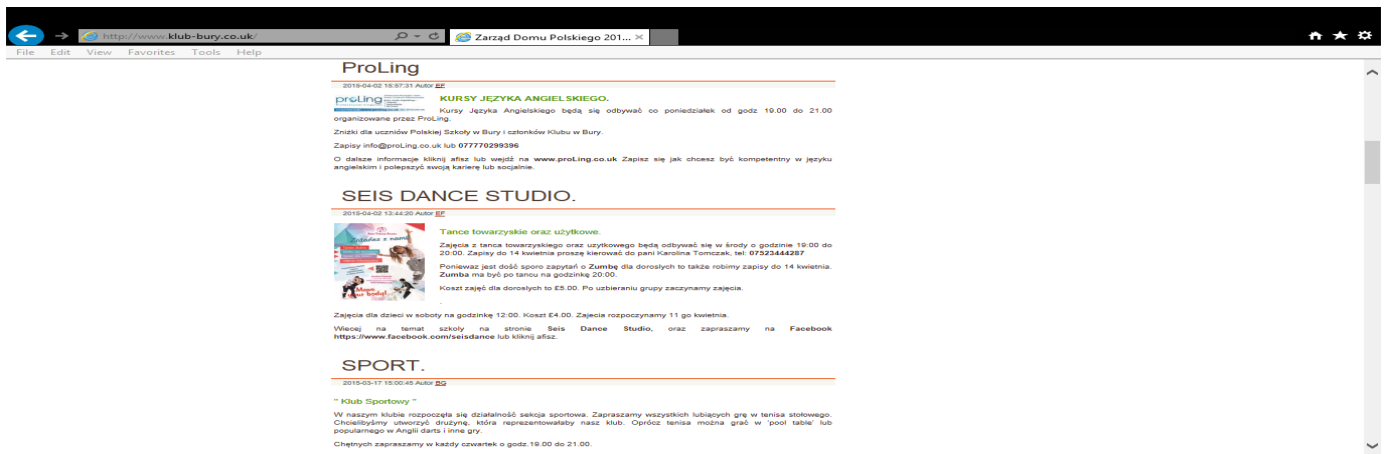


Fig.1+2: Screen shots of the homepage (<http://www.klub-bury.co.uk/dzial/2/>)

The Polish website we have chosen to use is the official Bury Polish website; ‘*Dom Polski w Bury*’. Bury is a town in Greater Manchester that has a population of 60,718 (*Great Britain Historical GIS Project, 2004*). In result of a recent study at Salford University, over 200 Polish, Slovakian and Czech Republic native speakers were interviewed in Bury and Salford. The majority of respondents were Polish (82%) and they stated that they moved to Bury and Salford due to family and friends being there and having a large Polish community based there. This study looked at the language barriers of these migrant communities and found that 39% said they did not complete an English Language Course. In Bury, 1,250 adult overseas nationals registered for a National Insurance number during 2008-2009 (*Lisa Scullion and Gareth Morris, 2010*).

The layout of the website is designed formally, like you would expect for an official community website. On one of the sections, it explains the history of the Polish Community in Bury and advocates the importance of the Polish migrants keeping their native routes and national identity. They say that “social centres were founded to cater for the need of social contact” which establishes the use of this website for Polish speakers is to keep their native community alive in Greater Manchester. This website endorses involvement within the community throughout, by advertising to becoming a member to use facilities such as the dance studio, hall and function rooms.

Linguistically, the website does have an option to translate into English, however, even when you are on the English translation, there is still Polish segments written which restates that the use of this website is for the Polish community in Bury to keep active and have the social contact. As shown below on Fig.3, on the English translated version, the Polish sentence about Easter is still used, encouraging the ‘English speaking friends’ to know and learn more about the language.

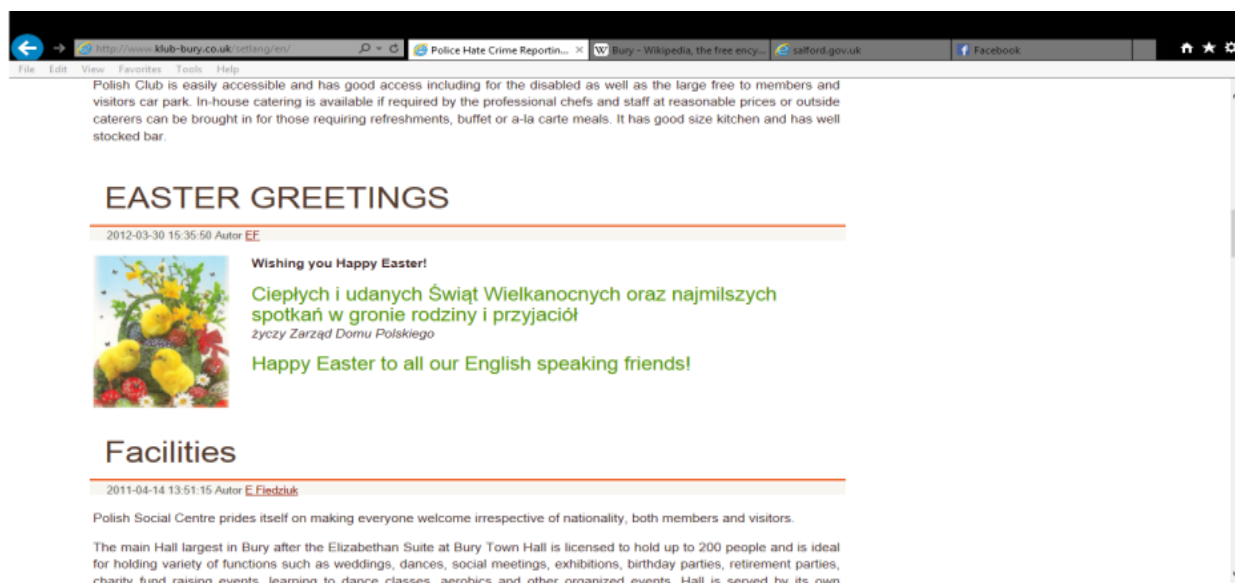


Fig.3: Screen shot of a section in the English translated format of Polish being used.

Chinese Website: (www.waiyin.org.uk)

Upon commencing our research project, we predicted that there would be a huge online social community for Chinese residents in the UK, specifically Manchester, as not only do such a vast number of Chinese individuals and families live here but also as China is renowned for its huge investment in and dedication to technology. It therefore came as quite a surprise when we were unable to find many forums and websites for Chinese speech communities residing in our focal area of Manchester. We can assume on the basis of our findings from Facebook that these popular, less archaic social media outlets are where most interactions between Chinese speakers in the UK tend to occur on the internet for our access, whether in Chinese or English. Nonetheless, one very interesting website we did find was for the Wai Yin Society, the UK's largest Chinese community centre, which has been around since 1988 and boasts aims to empower, support and provide opportunities.



Fig. 4: Homepage of Wai Yin Society site

The website appears to be extremely influential and a hub for Chinese speakers across the country, alongside other ethnic minority groups such as Bangladeshi's and Pakistani's, who can join the service via the website. There are more than 1000 service users across the UK, mainly Chinese although not exclusively, which gives us some evidence that the website is in frequent use and plays a crucial role in the lives of the Chinese speech communities.

Specifically to Manchester, the society the website is for is in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University and has 3 bases in Manchester, where largely Chinese people, can take English classes as just one example, supporting that the website is an informative source for Chinese residents in Manchester to seek opportunities and find out what is going on in the local area. On the contrary, there is very little Chinese used on the website, which is probably due to the fact the society the page is for is not entirely exclusive to Chinese speakers and aims to appeal to various ethnic minority groups and also people who wish to participate in fundraisers and other related events. It is on the 'Latest News' section of the website that some Chinese is used to coincide with English: **Fig.5: Latest News section of the Wai Yin website**

the Wai Yin website

We urgently require new and well qualified tutors to teach our learners ICT and ESOL skills. If you think, you can fill the role, please contact our ETE Team in the first instance: Tel: 0161 833 0377 Email: yang_zhang@waiyin.org.uk Email: wal_ling_tang@waiyin.org.uk

Stepping Stone: Education in the UK

Posted by: Woon Lay-Cheng in [Family Unit](#) Apr 21st, 2015 | [No Comments](#)

Life in the UK – New Class 電腦入籍考試班

Posted by: Yang Zhang in [Education, Training & Employment](#) Mar 30th, 2015 | [No Comments](#)

Women’s Football – England v China 足球比賽

Posted by: Sylvia Sham in [CEO's Blog, In The News](#) Mar 30th, 2015 | [No Comments](#)

Knowsley Coach Safari

Fig. 5: Latest News section of Wai Yin Society site

Here, next to brief event titles are similar Chinese translations, for example next to ‘New Class’ says ‘Computer test course’ and below is ‘Football match’, which is clearly there for those non-native speakers of English. However, it is clear from the screen shot that there are no comments from website users which shows there is not a great deal of communication between Chinese speakers on the website, which seems to be more informative than communicative.

Polish Forum (www.mojawyspa.co.uk):

The Polish forum we have chosen to analyse is Mojawyspa (www.mojawyspa.co.uk) focussing on the Greater Manchester area. The ‘Forum dyskusyjne’ translates to ‘forum discussion’. As you can see on the screen shots, there are many adverts used advocating sending packages from England to Poland for £15.95.

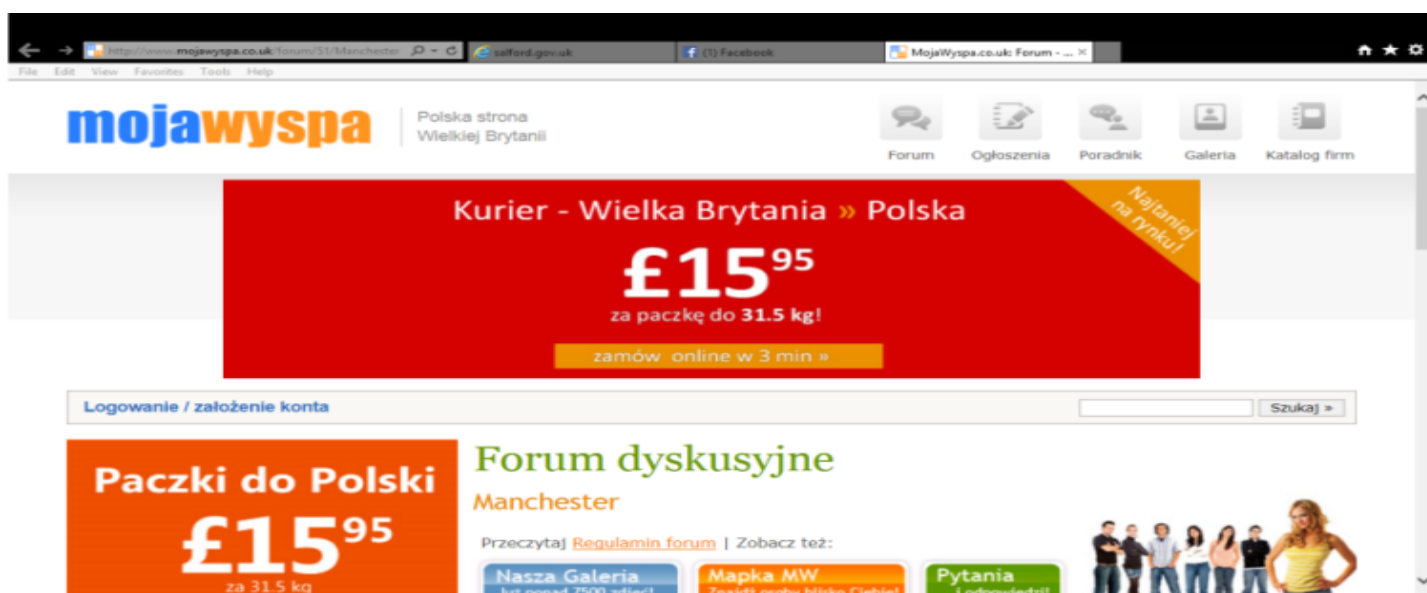


Fig. 6: Home page of Polish forum

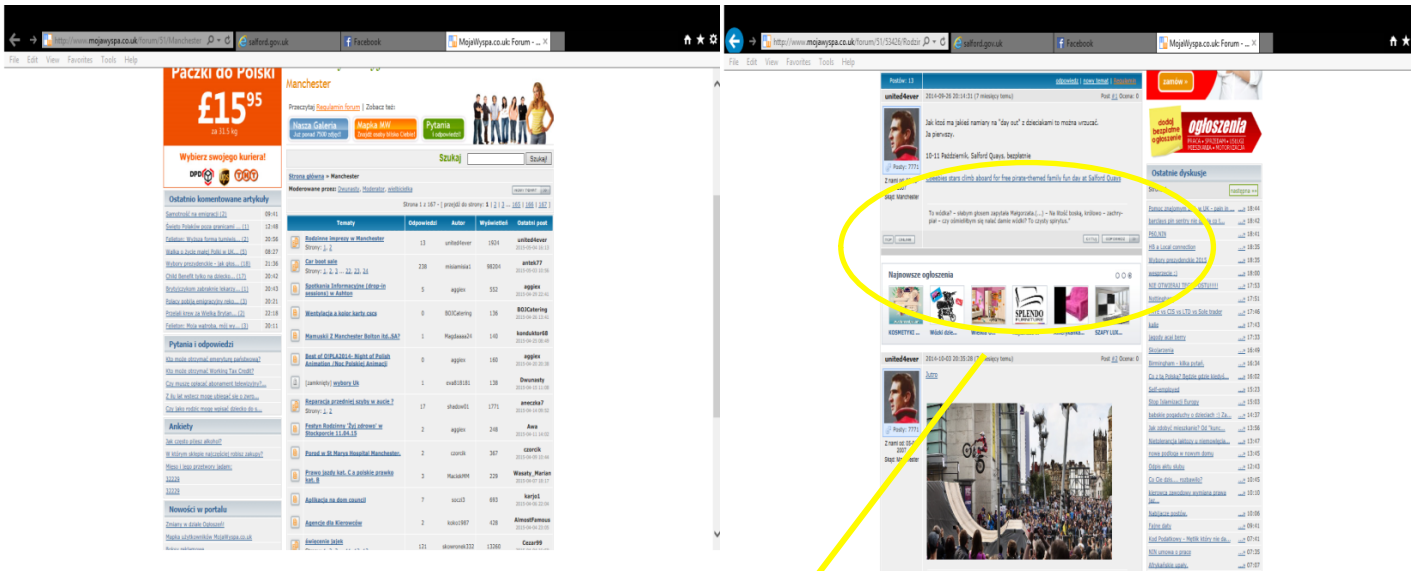


Fig. 7 and 8: Home page of Polish forum

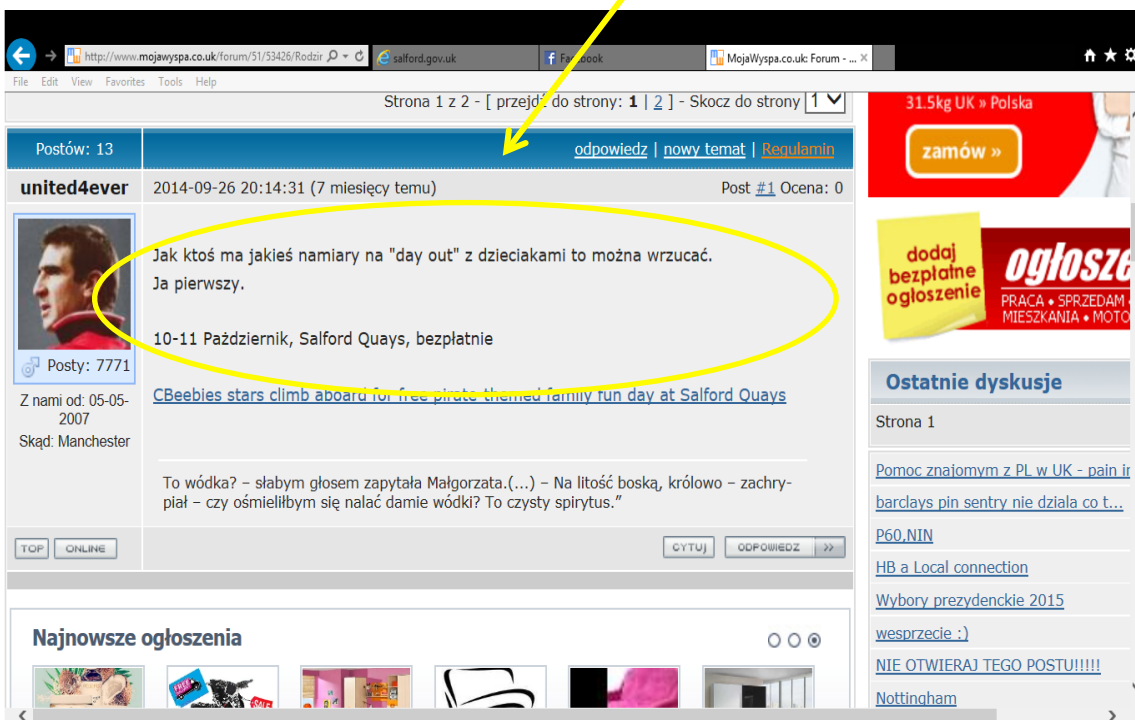


Fig. 9: Post on forum by user 'united4eva'.

This forum has been running since 2003 and is a platform for discussions considering work & money, health, education, important places in Manchester, communication & travel and government & local authority information. There is no option to translate these forums into any other language; therefore it is exclusive to Polish speakers. Also, the adverts are all promoted in Polish and are associated with the Polish community. However, when looking at

some of the forums, there was one section that showed code switching as shown in the zoomed in screenshot shown above.

The discussion is about a family fun day at Salford Quays and the writer uses the English phrase “day out” which shows that this writer chooses to use the English phrase to advertise this event in Manchester. Interestingly, the writer’s profile name is “united4eva” which shows deviant spelling with “4” and “eva” demonstrating multilingual skills as this speaker is more than likely a polish native but uses English slang, which other polish readers will be aware of and know. Apart from that discussion, the other conversations we analysed were purely written in polish.

Chinese Forum (www.britishchineseonline.com/forum):

As we failed to find an online forum for the Manchester Chinese Community, we decided to use a forum specifically for Chinese people who were British born because we felt that this would represent the wider Chinese community who we expected to use both Chinese and English online. The purpose of the forum is for British Born Chinese people (who refer to themselves as BBCs) to discuss anything they like in a series of themed discussion boards as well as a section to arrange meet ups. The forum currently has 51171 threads, over 1.9 million posts and 9442 members.

Due to the lack of forums available for Chinese speakers who are multilingual could also suggest that perhaps these speakers prefer to use other various social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. The posts that were analysed also displayed no usage of Chinese or multilingualism and all users were also using slang, acronyms and blending. An explanation for this is as they were British born, they are native speakers of English and therefore English is their first language, despite their Chinese heritage. Another reason for this is that because they are British born, they may not even know a Chinese dialect and therefore this would also explain the lack of Chinese used within the forum for online communication.

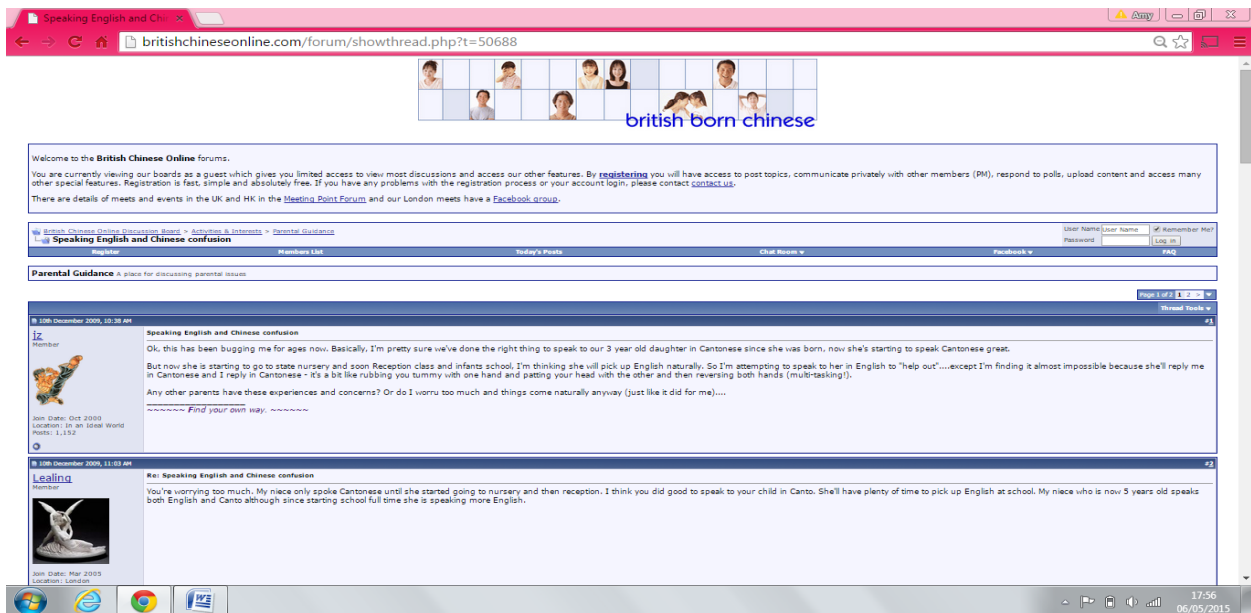


Fig.10: screen shot of the homepage

Furthermore, because no Chinese is used on the forum posts, it could also suggest a linguistic change, as users prefer to use English over Chinese when posting online.

However, one of the posts explained how a Father is teaching his daughter Chinese along with English and is being brought up in a multilingual environment. This implies the BBC community are still using both languages within the real world despite the lack of Chinese used within the forums.

Polish Facebook Group (*Polish Events Manchester*):

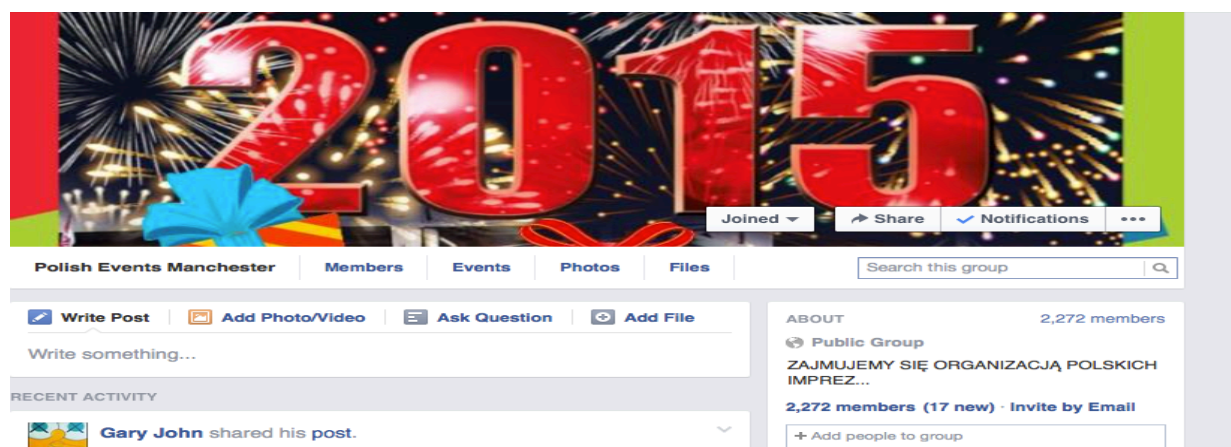


Fig. 11: Polish events Manchester Facebook page

The Polish Events Manchester Facebook group is a public group (with an option to request to join membership) that is visible to any Facebook account with a total number 2,269 members to date.



Fig. 12, 13: Polish events Manchester Facebook page

Due to privacy issues we were unable to check the identity of the participants to see whether they're native Polish speakers or are just of Polish heritage so therefore could only go off the names provided by the members section of the group. We analysed the first 15 most recent posts to the Facebook group to see whether multiple languages were used. Out of the 15 posts analysed 11 of these posts show no evidence of code switching as they were just posted in Polish (fig. 12,13).



Fig. 14: Polish events Manchester Facebook page

However in contrast to this the post in Figure 15 (6th post) was posted completely in English. This could be that post in question entitled “some signs of cancer you should know” provides serious health advice and instruction. However this post was seen more than once on the page, therefore this could actually suggest potential virus or spamming by the user who posted it.



Fig. 15: post on Polish Facebook.

The 5th post below, showed code switching between English and Polish. The link of advertised website featured English writing on the page but with some of the products being listed in Polish and the advertisements within the website itself being in Polish. This was the only post that translated the whole text from Polish into English.



Fig. 16: 5th post on Polish Facebook group

The second post that showed evidence for code switching was the 10th post below which was an advertisement for fitness classes. Half the advertised poster was shown in Polish and half was shown in English, however the actual post to the page showed the available classes all in English with just the day of the activity taking place being in Polish.



Fig. 17: 10th post on Polish Facebook

Chinese Facebook Group (Mucss – University of Manchester Chinese Student Society):

The Facebook page that we chose to analyse in relation to the Chinese community in Manchester was the ‘University of Manchester Chinese Student Society’ page (Fig.18). The purpose of the page is to connect with members of the Chinese community studying at the University. The society’s website states that there are currently over 1000 members – of which 739 have “liked” (connected with) the Facebook page. The page owners mainly post photographs of events that have been held by the society, there are few text posts – all of which are written in English as evidenced by Figure.19.



Fig. 18: Chinese Facebook Page.



Fig. 19: Closing down message on Chinese Facebook Page.

We analysed the first 16 posts sent to the page by members and found that 13 were written entirely in English. One post was entirely Chinese, and the remaining two used a mixture of both languages – this is represented on chart 1:

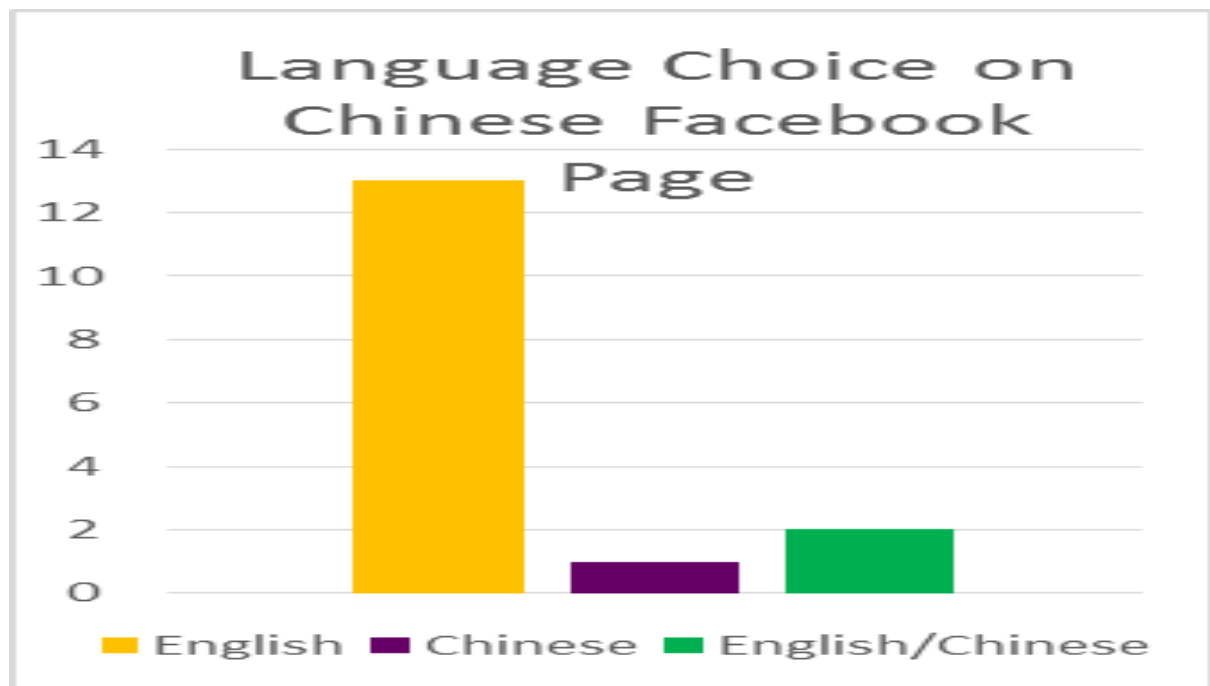


Chart 1.

Most of the posts we analysed had an advertisement purpose, commercial (such as nightclubs and businesses) or job and volunteering vacancies.

One significant post was an advertisement (fig.20) for www.ivoryresearch.com – when visiting this website we found that it was written entirely in English and is a UK based business. The advertisement posted on the page was specifically tailored for the Chinese community – it featured a male of Chinese ethnicity and the text was written completely in



Chinese.

Fig. 20: Post in Chinese

One further post (fig.21), shows the use of code switching which is prevalent in multilingual speakers. The majority of the post is written in Chinese but words such as “SU”, “room” and “voucher” are also found. Another interesting post we found was written by a non-Chinese student (who appears to be English), who was requesting participants for his own research. He has chosen to write in Chinese first and then written the same message again in English. As this person is requesting a favour from members of The Chinese society it is likely he has chosen to write in both languages (despite them understanding his own native language of English) and in Chinese first, to respect the culture of the addressed as a politeness strategy. (Fig.22)

 Mia Grace Champion ▶ Mucss - University of Manchester Chinese Student Society
12 March near Manchester · 🌐

同学们！

我们将在下周一曼大SU 3楼 Room 2 举行一个为青少年癌症慈善组织集款的时尚快闪服装店。

我们从一些非常知名的欧美品牌店收集到了很多全新挂牌的服装，如：French Connection, Penguin, 及复古服饰。所有的服装售价均低于市场价！现场还有精美的中国点心零食免费奉送，单人买超过两件衣服的朋友有抽奖机会，奖品有Tops Buffet 或Nandos 用餐voucher。

请有兴趣的朋友不要错过这次机会，我们下周一在SU等你！感谢所有努力爱与回馈社会的所有人！

Fig. 21: Chinese post on Facebook page.



Fig 22: Post in both Chinese and English.

One possible reason for the high proportion of English posts on this page may be because the users are students at a British University where they are taught in English and are actively encouraged to use this language – they may be choosing to continue their use of English on this platform as the page itself is associated with the University.

Conclusion

Having analysed a Facebook group, an online forum and a website for both the Polish and the Chinese speech communities in Greater Manchester and the UK, our exploration was far-reaching and as a result, fantastic for comparison. Our initial predictions prior to thorough research and analysis were that we would have a huge number of findings due to the UK, specifically Manchester having so many Polish and Chinese residents – as well as China being so consumed by the internet and technology. On the contrary, we found it rather difficult to find a vast breadth of sources where speakers used their native tongue a huge amount, especially in Chinese which was surprising. Additionally, there appeared to be more use of code-switching and linguistic variety on Facebook groups than forums and websites, perhaps because the latter two are viewed as being slightly archaic and potentially less specific to one speech community.

We came to the conclusion that where English was used predominantly, which we found a considerable amount, the speakers were most-likely British-born anyway, or studying at the University of Manchester/MMU so are taught in English, alternatively that the content is also

applicable to other languages like the Chinese website which also appeals to Indians, Pakistanis and other ethnic minority groups. Overall, by comparing and contrasting our findings from different media sources, we feel we were successfully able to identify our research question and focal point, how multi-lingual groups residing in Greater Manchester establish and enforce their native language via social media platforms.

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