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Report

2010

The University
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Punjabi in Manchester

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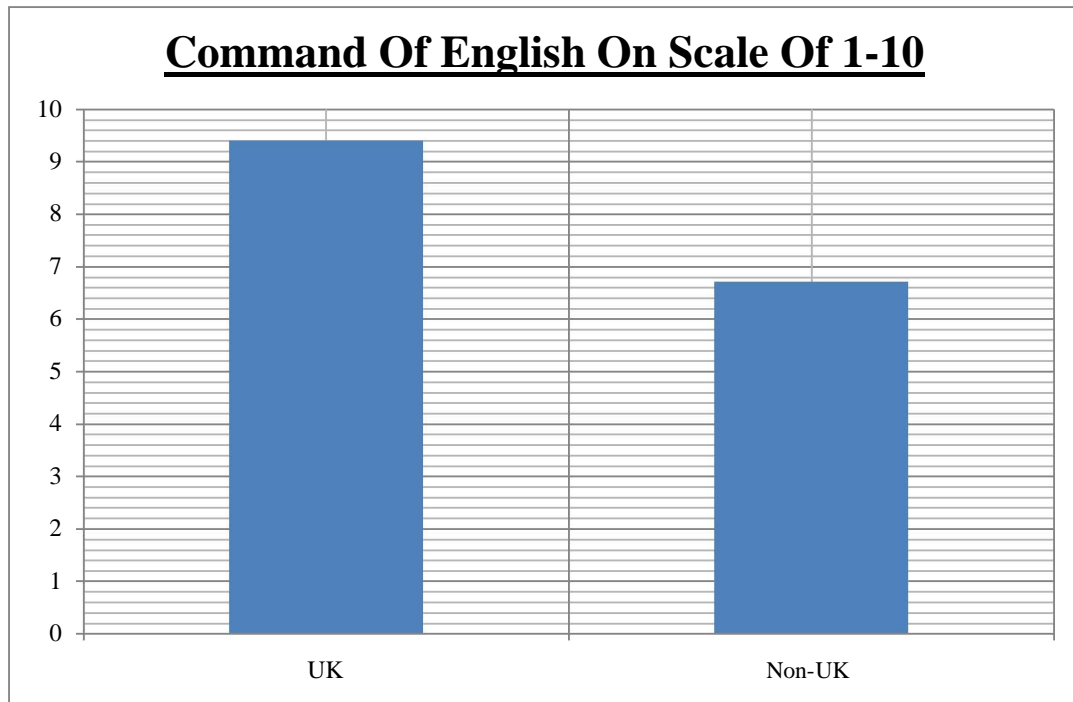
Punjabi in Manchester

Recapitulation

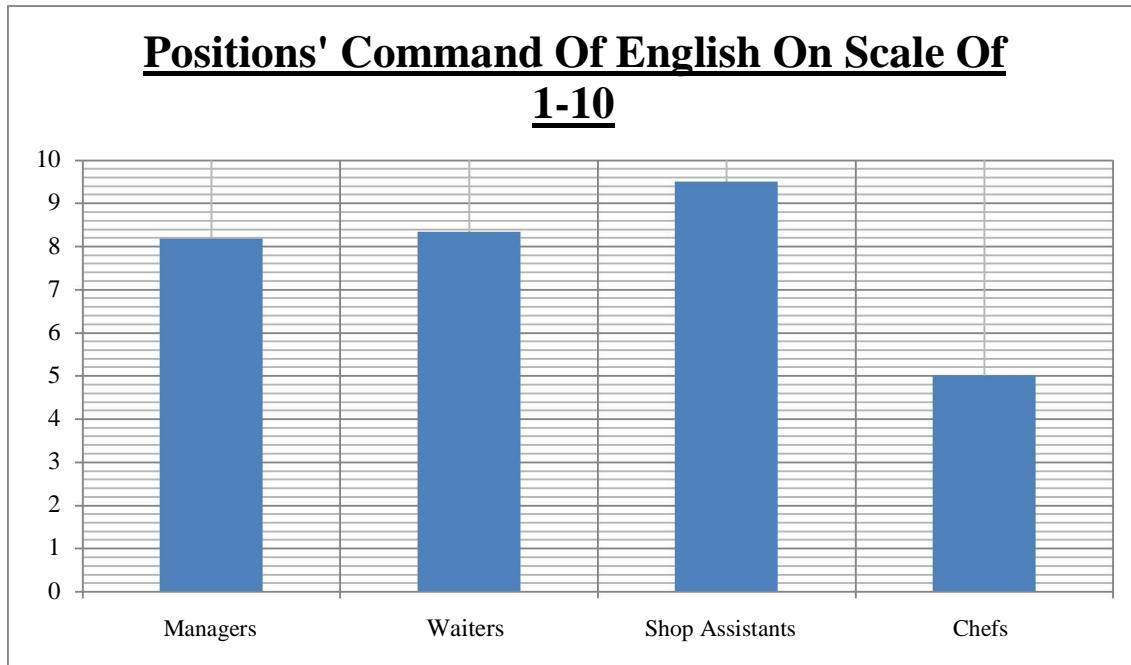
The aim of our investigation was to determine how strong Punjabi is as a language in the local community of Rusholme in Greater Manchester. To recapitulate our methodology, Rusholme was chosen as the point of our investigation for various reasons. Firstly, it is a well-established area and its notoriety attracts workers from all over the country. These people vary greatly in terms of age, ethnicity and social class and therefore are of particular interest for study. There is a lot of information on The Curry Mile regarding many areas, but not necessarily on language and multilingualism, so this uncovered area will be an original piece of information available for study. The main principles of our methodology were kept the same as stated in our proposal. However, we did come across some issues regarding unwillingness of participants, which will be discussed later. Having carried out our investigations and collated the results, we worked well together as a team and managed to maintain within our original schedule. Through remaining within our proposed schedule, it became much easier, as a group, to work effectively and it gave us enough time to analyse our findings in great detail.

Results

Firstly, it is important to determine whether the people who were born in the United Kingdom rate their English on a higher level than those born outside of the United Kingdom. The diagram below shows that this is indeed the case as those born in the UK have a rating of 9.4/10 whereas those born outside of the UK have a rating of 6.7/10.



Secondly, it can be seen that position of work has an effect on command of English. The managers, waiters and shop assistants all rate themselves relatively high according to how good their English is, 8.2/10, 8.3/10 and 9.5/10 respectively. The chefs, on the other hand show a noticeably lower rating of only 5/10. This can be explained in terms of contact with other English-speaking people. The shop assistants and the waiters have the most contact with English speaking people and as expected, have a better command of English and therefore rate themselves highly. The chefs, on the other hand, have very limited contact with the customers and therefore do not get much of an opportunity to speak English as much as any of the other positions. This is reflected in their self-rating of only 5/10.



After having determined how well each position rates themselves on account of their English-speaking abilities, the next few pie charts show how this is furthered by the language used when speaking to managers, waiters, chefs and shop assistants.

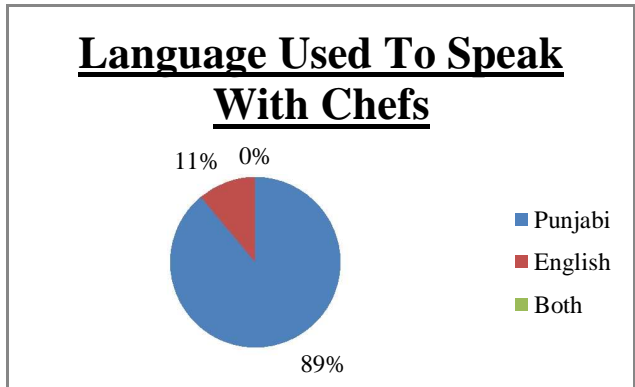
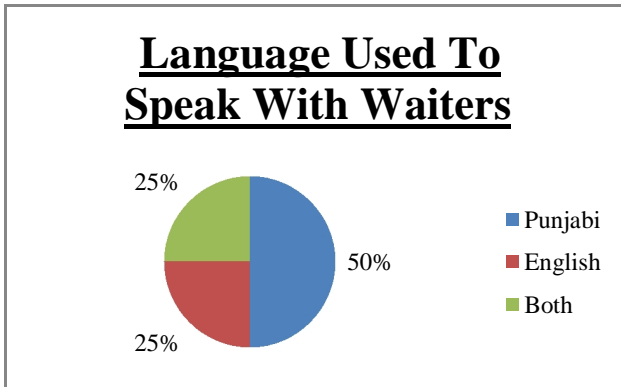
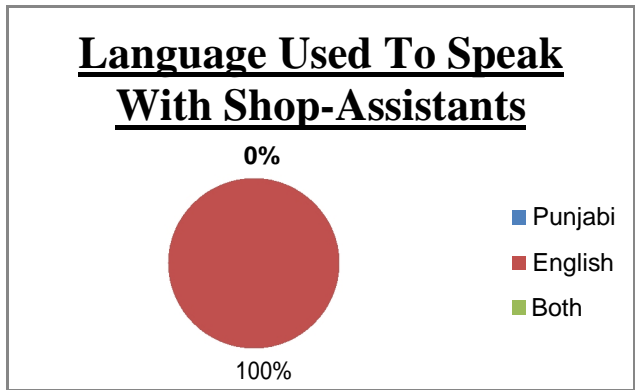
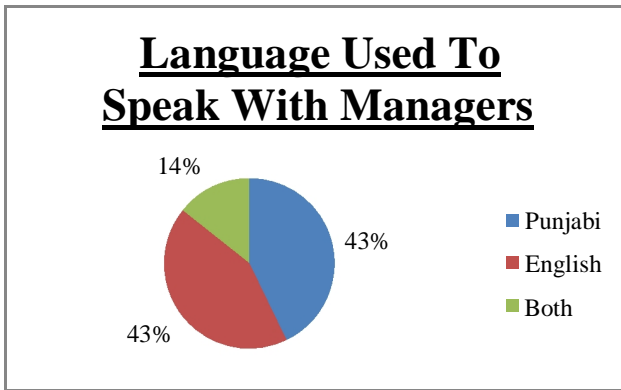
Firstly, it can be seen that from the pie chart concerning speaking with managers in Fig. 1, people generally switch between using Punjabi and English and some people even speak both to their manager. This can be explained by the fact that the managers were generally older than their subordinates were, so even if they had been born abroad, as many of the managers were, they had spent a number of years in the country, and therefore have a reasonable command of the English language and feel comfortable conversing in both languages.

The language used to speak with shop assistants was surprisingly English 100% of the time as is shown in Fig. 2. This is perhaps because the shop assistants that participated in the survey were all born in the United Kingdom so spoke English as well as Punjabi. Despite

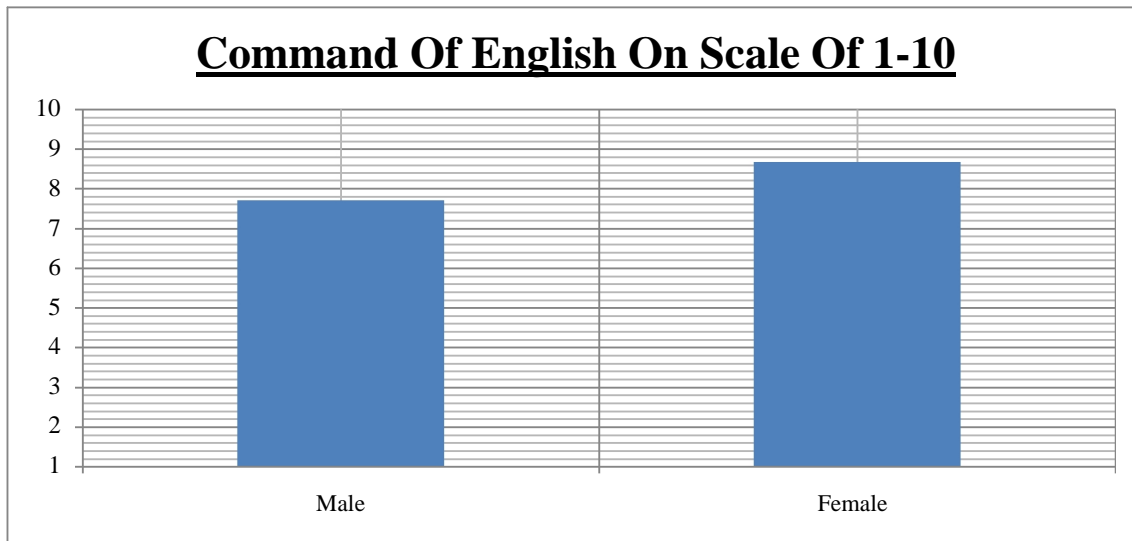
being bilingual, the managers, who have been established as comfortable English users, spoke to their shop assistants in English.

Where the waiters are concerned, it can be seen from Fig. 3 that they were spoken to in Punjabi around half of the time and English around a quarter of the time. As the waiters are exposed to English speakers a lot, other workers felt comfortable speaking to them in either English or Punjabi. However, because of the nature of the work, especially in restaurants, times can get very busy. In times like these, to avoid even the slightest bit of confusion, others would speak to the waiters in Punjabi, which would be more comfortable for them and would take less computational effort in the mind, saving energy and effort.

Fig. 4 shows that the chefs were spoken to in Punjabi around 89% of the time, as their command of the English language is not as strong as the others' command. In a context such as a restaurant, where communication mistakes can cost time and money, it is imperative that everything is understood quickly and effectively. Because of this need, it is easiest for people to speak with the chefs in Punjabi as they feel more comfortable conversing in Punjabi.



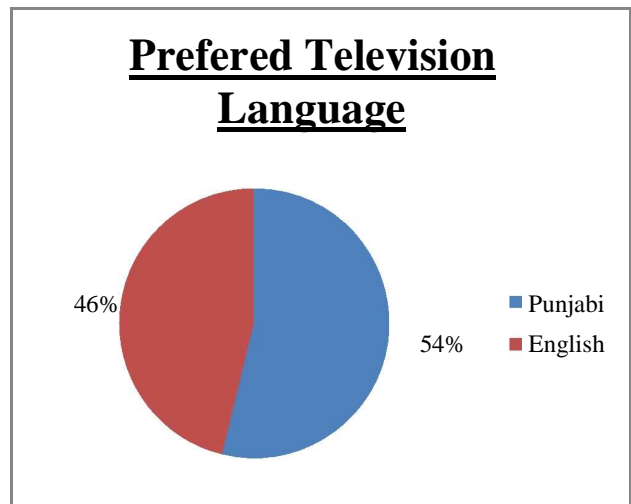
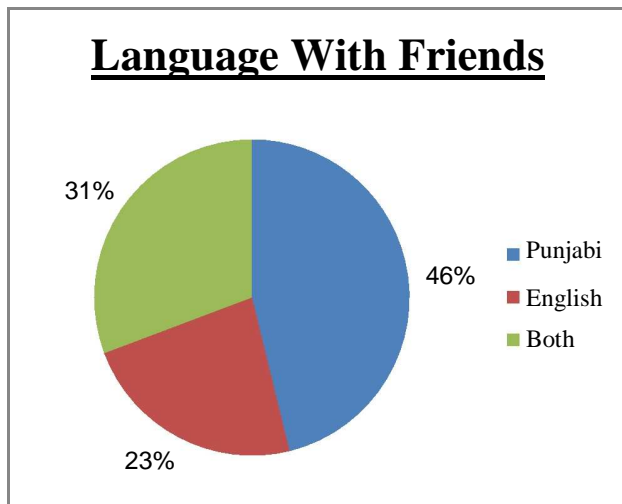
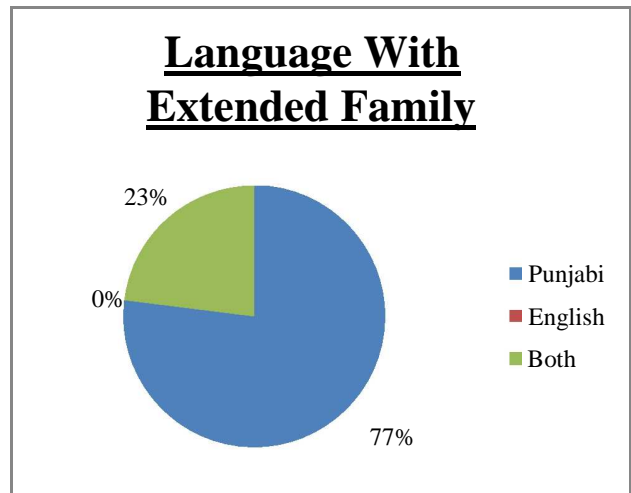
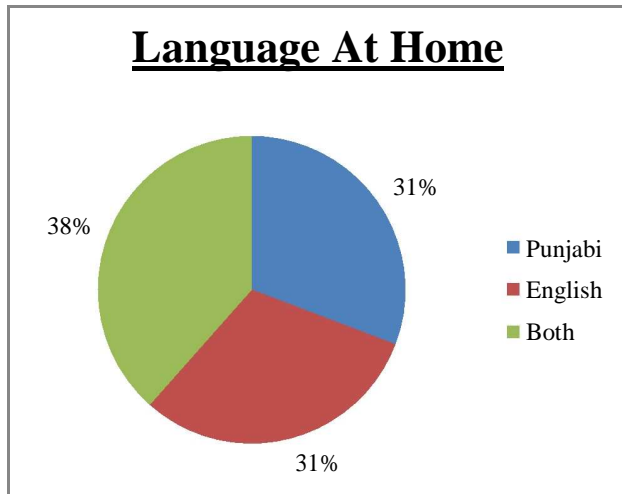
The graph below shows the differences between how males and females rate their command of English.



As it can be seen from the graph above, the females rate themselves higher in terms of their English ability than men. This could be because the women who were interviewed, were all involved with dealing with customers rather than being behind the scenes and therefore could speak English relatively well. One other reason could be because women would prefer to believe their command of language to be relatively good as it has been shown in previous studies that women tend to lean towards the standard whereas men do not.

The pie charts below show how the participants use different languages in different domains away from the workplace. When at home, most of the participants use both Punjabi and English when conversing. At other times, either just Punjabi is used or just English but it is fairly even throughout. Where speaking with their extended family, Punjabi is used mainly at 77% and sometimes both languages are used (23% of the time) and English is never used. This can be explained by the fact that the participants' families speak Punjabi as their first language and feel more comfortable using Punjabi rather than English. Many of the families of the participants may not live in England and those who do may rather speak Punjabi because they wish to retain their Punjabi roots.

However, from the pie chart concerning the preferred language in which to watch television, it can be seen that a great deal of people (46%) prefer watching television in English. This is because a great deal of those who answered English in their questionnaire were born and raised in the United Kingdom where the media is predominantly English. Those who answered Punjabi were mainly born outside of the United Kingdom where a lot of the media would be in Punjabi.



Evaluation

Language attitudes: the study of what people think about different linguistic varieties and how those perceptions about language related to perceptions of attitudes about different users of language (Meyerhoff 2009; 292). We encountered a number of contextual factors, which affected our fieldwork. Firstly, we would like to discuss the variant of age. Having completed our fieldwork study, we collected data from a wide variety of age groups ranging from 18-65. As this is a very diverse group, it is sometimes easy but sometimes difficult to collate the necessary results. For example, the youngest participants of the survey adhere to our prediction by speaking English to their friends and both English and Punjabi at home. Whereas the older participants in our survey tended to code-switch between Punjabi and English but predominantly Punjabi in the work place, especially those who were not born in England. The two eldest participants, aged 64 and 65, portrayed their reluctance in the

questionnaire to adopt English as their mother tongue as Punjabi is part of their national heritage and it allows them to feel associated with their roots.

Another factor, which affected our results, was the time the fieldwork was conducted. Our data collection took place at midday. Unfortunately, due to time restrictions on the project this is the only times the entire group could get together to carry out the research. Consequently, the number of staff who were working at this time of day was considerably smaller than if the experiment had been conducted in the evening. This therefore may go some way in explaining why so few results were collected. For example, the number of workers in a shop compared to the number of workers in a restaurant is considerably smaller.

Technically, a shop only needs one assistant for business they carry out, whereas, a restaurant needs at least three members of staff at all times (a chef, a waiter and the manager). However, this does not mean we can necessarily target those in a restaurant due to the lack of staff. Our aim was to complete approximately 40 surveys; however, due to unforeseen circumstances we also encountered an unwillingness to participate in the survey as some individuals felt that the workplace was not a place to discuss personal issues.

It is clear from our results that there is a dominant male presence throughout our survey. This is because the staff in the Curry Mile restaurants were more willing to participate in our survey and they are considerably more male dominated compared the shops in this area. We wanted to attain the maximum amount of data possible so gender was an extraneous variable in this research. According to Penny Eckert in her 1989 *Language Variation and Change*; Jocks and Burnouts study, women have a habit of converging towards the higher prestige. We noticed that the women who took part in our survey did tend to converge to the level of English we were using whilst talking to them. They also rated their command of English higher on the scale in the questionnaire compared to the males surveyed. This is an example of linguistic insecurity: *Speakers' feeling that the variety that they use is somehow inferior, ugly or bad. Negative attitudes to cones own variety expressed in aesthetic or moral terms* (Meyerhoff 2009; 292).

It has previously been suggested that women are innovators in language change because they tend to commence the change process from the bottom up. ... *the claim is made that women are grater innovators than men and that they learn the standard language more quickly; the argument is that because of their weaker economic position, generally inferior status vis-a-vis men, and, in particular, the increase in duties in the service sector requiring verbal communication, women must adopt behaviours including linguistic ones) which contribute to upward mobility in the social hierarchy* (Aikio 1992). Another issue regarding our fieldwork is that nobody is necessarily sure whether the people taking part are being 100% truthful. Labov has alluded to the fact that males tend to over report the use of non-standard language, whereas women tend to over report the use of standard language. The reason why men over report is possibly due to the connotations of masculinity associated with convert prestige.

If we were to conduct this research, again there would be a number of elements that we would do differently. For example, regarding the time, we would collect the data during

the evening period (7-10pm) as this is likely to be the peak time, therefore giving us a larger and more diverse amount of participants. Furthermore, we would also visit the area a number of times, rather than the just one occasion. Moreover, we could also add more questions to the questionnaire to elicit a larger quantity of data. The final area we would change from our original proposal is that we would ensure that the questions asked were specifically relevant to our aim.

Social Factors & Context

Rusholme is fascinatingly dense with ethnic diversity, and with this diversity comes a mixture of languages. In our experiment, we decided to concentrate fully on the language of Punjabi. We looked at the employees and owners of restaurants, with this decision we needed to be aware that there would be many social factors and contextual issues to consider.

Firstly, we looked at the different codes the participants of our survey used in relation to each other, but also in reference to their situation and environment. There are two differing types of codes that potentially our participants could have used. The definitions of which follows:

Code Mixing: generally refers to alternations between varieties, or codes, within a clause or phrase. Often elicits more strongly negative evaluations than alternations or code switching across clauses. (Meyerhoff 2009: 287)

Code Switching: In its most specific sense, the alternation between varieties, or codes, across sentences or clause boundaries. Often used as a cover term including code mixing as well. (Meyerhoff 2009: 287)

When conducting the fieldwork, code switching and code mixing did occur, especially when talking to the managers of the restaurants. The managers spoke to us in English, but gave directions (as some of the restaurants were busy with customers) to waiters or chefs in a mixture of Punjabi and English. Interestingly, code mixing generally took place when managers were speaking to waiters about English customers. Moreover, code switching predominantly happened when employees or managers were talking to us, and talking to others at the same time; ... *in some contexts one variety will serve their needs better than another* (Meyerhoff 2009: 115). Context is especially important when referring to code mixing/switching as we observed that the participants in our survey changed ...*the variety they use depending on where they are, and consequently, who they were talking to* (Meyerhoff 2009: 115).

When code switching is constrained by where speakers happen to be, it can be called domain based or situational code switching. When it is constrained by who a speaker happens to be talking to it can be labelled addressee-based (Meyerhoff 2009: 116). When analysing data from our fieldwork, it is clear that we encountered all of these different types of switching. However, I believe the main type we encountered was addressee based.

Conversely, the main type used by the participants of our survey could be domain-based. Domain is defined by Meyerhoff as *The social and physical setting in which speakers find themselves* (Meyerhoff 2009: 116). Our results show which language the participants spoke at home and at work etc. and it does tend to differ depending on where the participant is and who they are speaking to, which are some of the key contextual factors that occurred during our fieldwork.

Taking this into account, it is necessary that the definition of a diglossia be looked at:

Diglossia: *Classically defined as a situation where two closely related languages are used in a speech community. One for high (H) functions (e.g. church, newspapers) and one for Low (L) functions (e.g. in the home, or market). The situation is supposed to be relatively stable and the languages/varieties remain distinct...Now often extended to refer to any two languages (even typologically unrelated ones) that have this kind of social and functional distribution* (Meyerhoff 2009: 287).

When looking at the definition of diglossia, in its modern sense, it is relatively easy to apply it to Rusholme, especially in relation to Punjabi and English; although they are not typologically related. However, there are more languages in Rusholme than just Punjabi and English, so this also needs to be taken into account.

Language Maintenance was also any key area to focus on. *The study of language maintenance and language shift is concerned with the relationship between change or the ability in habitual language use.* (J Fishman 1964). The maintenance of a language is affected when one language comes into contact with another, in this case Punjabi coming into contact with English. Punjabi faces becoming replaced with English, especially amongst the younger generation of Punjabi speakers. Our results have shown that younger Punjabi speakers communicate more using English with their friends compared to the older generation who are more likely to use Punjabi with their friends. This may suggest that Punjabi is under threat in the Manchester area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen from this research that Rusholme was a viable field for a multilingual study. However, due to the major ethnic diversity of this area, Punjabi is a minority amongst a vast quantity of other languages and cultures. Although, English may threaten to eliminate the use of Punjabi, the older speakers still see it as a marker of identity, solidarity and patriotism of their roots. However, this may not be the case in years to come, as English is the preferred language of the younger generation, which is possibly due to the constant influx of the media.

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