



Report

2015



The University of Manchester

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School Language Survey in Heald Place Primary School

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background Information

The aim of our investigation was to look at multilingualism within a school environment. The data was collected from Heald Place Primary School, which is a local school located in Rusholme, Manchester. The school consists of approximately 630 pupils, who range from ages three to eleven. As the Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) report (2007) states, the school serves a multiracial, multilingual and multicultural community, which motivates our reasoning for using pupils from this school in our study.

Studying multilingualism within Manchester is particularly interesting due to the diversity of cultures and languages found in the city. According to findings by Robertson et al. (2013), there are at least 153 different languages spoken within the city. We wanted to continue the ongoing Multilingual Manchester project because we are aware that under-reporting occurs, especially in schools, as parents often answer for their children and may incorrectly state the home language. This project counteracts this problem by carrying out a more detailed approach when analysing multilingual children's home languages. With regards to a child's home language, we refer to the language a child learnt from a young age in the home environment and is used by family members when engaging in everyday interactions. Additionally, we are interested in whether the data collected in surveys such as the UK Census is truly reflective of Manchester's cultural landscape. We will also be evaluating our data in accordance with previous data that has been collected by the Multilingual Manchester project and with official findings stated in the schools Ofsted reports.

1.2 Methodology

The project was conducted through an interview style process using a questionnaire developed by Multilingual Manchester. The interview sessions involved the evaluation of the children's proficiency displayed in English as well as their home language(s). We also looked at the languages children use to speak to family members and in different domains. We surveyed two classes from the year three age group who were approximately seven years old. We interviewed 56 students; however two spoke only English and consequently we omitted this data from our analysis leaving us with a sample size of 54.

We had three main research questions, each of which were addressed by parts of our questionnaire.

- To whom is the native language spoken?
- What is the child's level of proficiency in each language?
- Which language is used in each domain?

To summarise our results, we found that the children were more proficient in English than in their home languages, and in terms of who the native language was spoken to, our results illustrated a pattern of generational change. We also found that in terms of domain, English was the most used language.

1.3 Classification of Data

In various analyses when investigating HL1 use, the data is grouped into the following categories:

- Home language 1 – HL1 is used predominantly.
- Mostly home language 1 – HL1 is used to a greater extent than another language
- Even – even use of HL1 and another language (English in most cases)
- Mostly English – English is used to a greater extent than the HL1
- English – English is used predominantly.

1.4 General Statistics

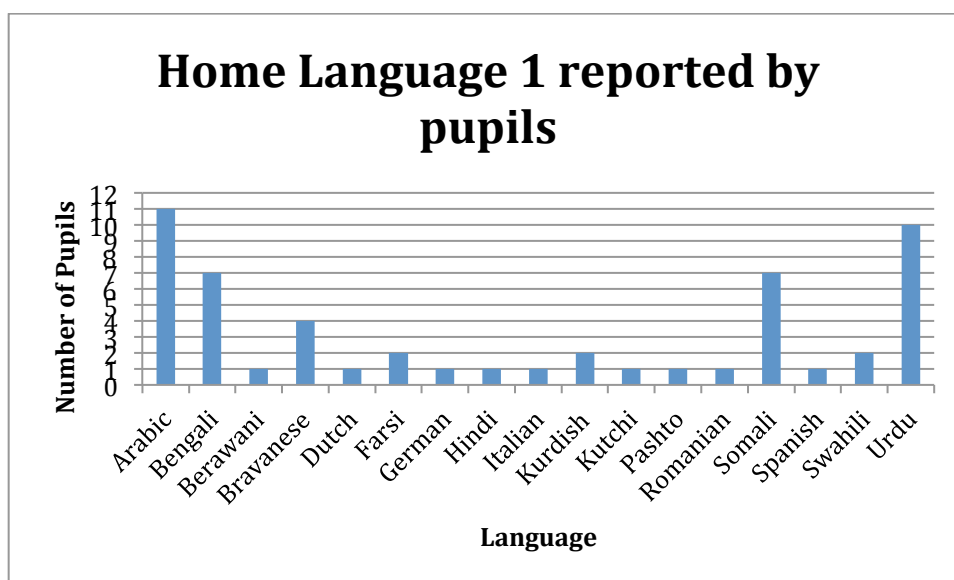


Figure 1: A graph showing pupil’s home language 1 responses besides English

In Figure 1, we have documented 17 different languages that pupils recorded as their first home language; a limited number of students reported a secondary or tertiary home language as shown in figure 2 and 3. Interestingly, this is a significantly lower amount than in the Ofsted (2002) statistics, which recorded 22 different languages altogether being spoken by pupils. Figure 1 shows that Arabic is the most common home language 1 (HL1), with 11 out of the 56 pupils reporting it as their HL1. In the 2007 Ofsted report, the main languages found in Heald Place Primary School were Somali, Urdu and Bengali. Our study indicated that the most prevalent languages in Heald Place were Arabic, Urdu, Somali and

Bengali. In comparison with the Ofsted report (2007), it is surprising to note the prominence of Arabic. However, this could be accounted for by the high mobility rate of the area surrounding Heald Place, as there are a large number of people moving in and out throughout the year. For example, Ofsted statistics (2002) state that almost half the pupils left the school or joined it for the first time in 2001 which accentuates the extent of mobility.

Additionally, our results correspond with Robertson et al. (2013); who conducted a school language survey in numerous local Manchester schools, and found that Somali, Urdu and Bengali were the most common HL1 among pupils. We found the same languages to be prominent; however Somali and Bengali are evenly reported by our respondents as being their HL1. Furthermore, we found Arabic to be the most commonly used HL1 which is not consistent with Robertson et al. (2013) findings. These differences are explainable by the dissimilar sample sizes, as Robertson et al. (2013) reviewed numerous schools, whilst we focused on only one school.

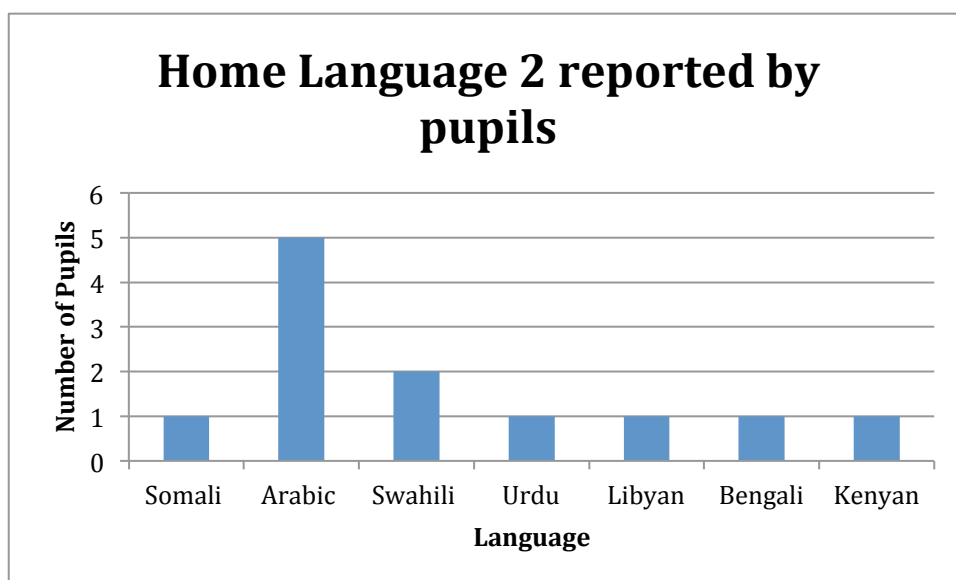


Figure 2: A graph showing pupil's home language 2 responses

This highlights how only 11 pupils reported a second home language (HL2), which alike to the HL1, Arabic was most commonly reported by respondents. The findings in Figure 1 and 2 are perhaps explainable in terms of the schools catchment areas. The catchment area of Heald Place School includes Rusholme and Moss Side. According to QPZM Local Stats (2012), aside from English, the most spoken languages throughout Manchester are Urdu, Arabic and Polish. Interestingly, there were no reports of Polish being spoken in our sample study however Urdu and Arabic are reported as the two most common home languages (as shown in Figure 1). When looking specifically at Rusholme, QPZM Local Stats (2012) found the most spoken languages apart from English were Urdu, Bengali and Arabic, whilst for the Moss Side ward the order was Somali, Arabic and Urdu.

We also looked at previous Multilingual Manchester studies, such as Parr et al. (2014) which found that in Heald Place, the top three spoken languages other than English were Somali, Urdu and Arabic. Figures 1 and 2 suggest that perhaps Heald Place receives a larger influx of pupils from Moss Side due to how Somali, Arabic and Urdu position as the three most commonly reported home languages.

There were three reported cases of children speaking a third home language (HL3). One pupil noted Swahili as their home language 3, another Urdu, and the third Arabic. However, all students scored the minimum proficiency rating of 4. This leads us to believe that the reported HL3 was not used enough to be considered relevant or significant.

2. Analysis and discussion of results

2.1 Language and others

In this section we will address the research aim of- *'To whom is the native language spoken?'*

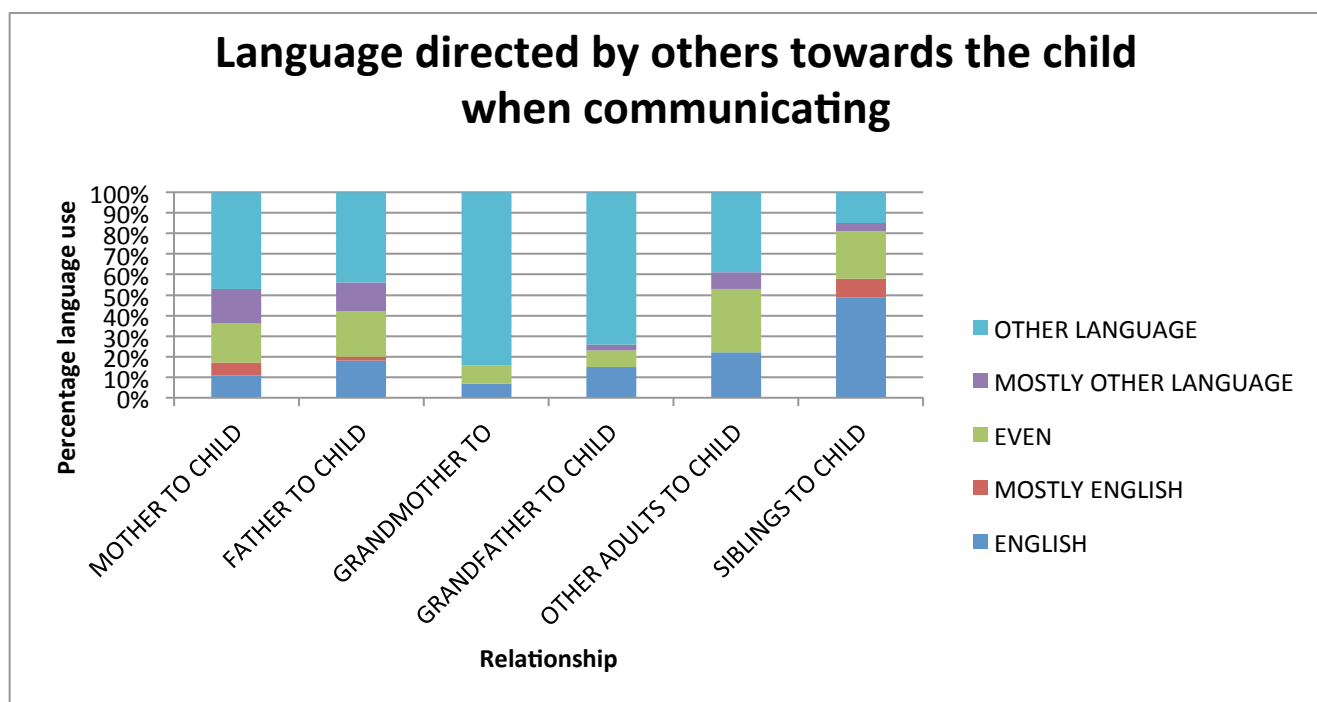


Figure 3: The language directed to the child by various interlocutors.

In Figure 3, the child's home languages are referred to as "other language". It is important to note that not all students had grandparents or fathers which accounts for the differences in the totalling numbers. In this analysis we will use percentages as opposed to raw numbers to be consistent with previous findings, allowing ease of comparison. However, an issue that arises in using percentages is the uncertainty of other researchers' sample

size being on a larger scale to the small sample used in this study, skewing the accuracy of our correlations. Unfortunately, this cannot be remedied due to our lack of access to resources. From analysing the data shown in figure 3, in relation to the research question, the home language is used predominantly by grandparents to the child. This pattern continues to a lesser extent with the next generation, which refers to the child’s parents, highlighting a generational shift. Other adults, such as aunts and uncles, showed a similar pattern to parents, as they are of the same generation. The most prominent generational shift is highlighted in the language directed to the child from their siblings. This is shown by the rate of use of English ascending to 49% highlighting English to be the dominant category, with the home languages only having a rate of use of 15%.

Column and Row Totals						
	parents	grandparents	other adults	siblings		Row Totals
English	15	9	11	28		61
Mostly English	4	0	0	5		9
Even	21	7	16	12		56
Mostly Other Language	18	1	4	2		23
Other language	45	67	20	8		140
Column Totals	101	84	51	53		289 (Grand Total)

Figure 4: Raw data used in Chi square test of generational change of the child’s input

In using the Chi square test, our results are significant at $p < 0.05$, with the Chi square statistic being 90.7711. This implies that generational change is in motion.

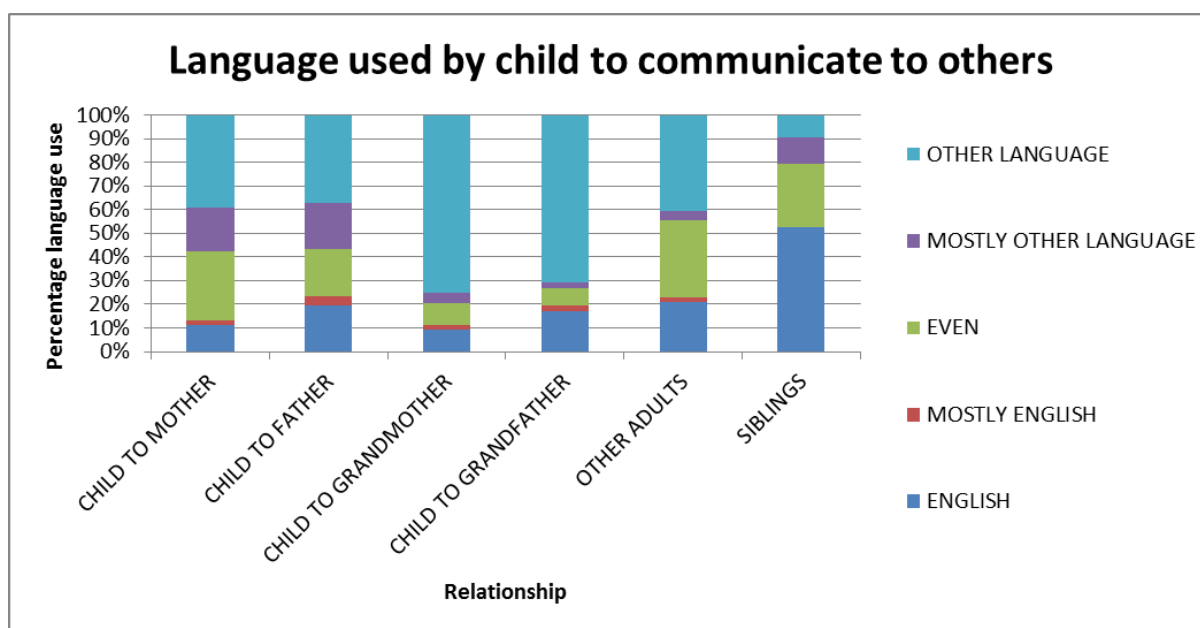


Figure 5: The language use of each child with varying interlocutors

The idea of a generational shift is mirrored in which language the child uses to communicate with their family and other adults; home languages were used more prominently when the child spoke to their grandparents, and this was also the case with their parents. Similarly, the use of English increased when the child spoke to their siblings, being used more than the home languages. This reflection is highlighted in figure 5.

Column and Row Totals						
	Parent	Grandparents	other adults	siblings		Row Totals
English	16	14	11	28		69
Mostly English	3	3	1	0		7
Even	26	14	17	14		71
Mostly Home Language	20	12	2	6		40
Home Language	40	52	21	5		118
Column Totals	105	95	52	53		305 (Grand Total)

Figure 6: Raw numbers used to conduct a Chi square test on child’s output

We conducted a Chi square test to see if this generational change was significant when the child is speaking to others. The Chi square statistic is 58.018 and the P-value is <0.00001. Therefore, the result is significant at $P < 0.05$, and concludes similarly a significant indication of generational change.

Dyers (2008) concludes in his study how global languages will still be used as a form of “in-group identity”. This provides an explanation for why the home language is used in the older generations; however presents discussion for the reasoning behind the generational shift, with the emergence of English dominating the younger generations. One argument which can be made stems from how the younger generation’s social environment is perhaps dominated by English as the superior language, being used predominantly in interacting with peers at school and therefore this then reinforces the use of English as the language used to communicate between siblings.

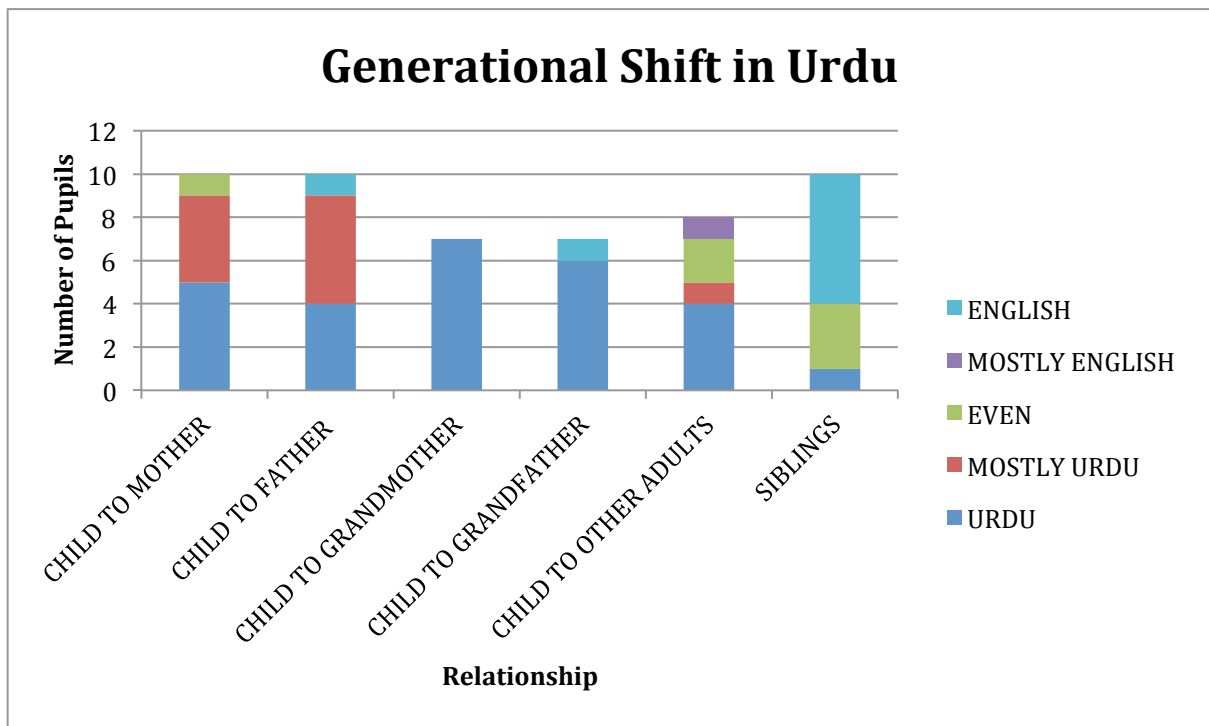


Figure 7: Generational Shift in Arabic

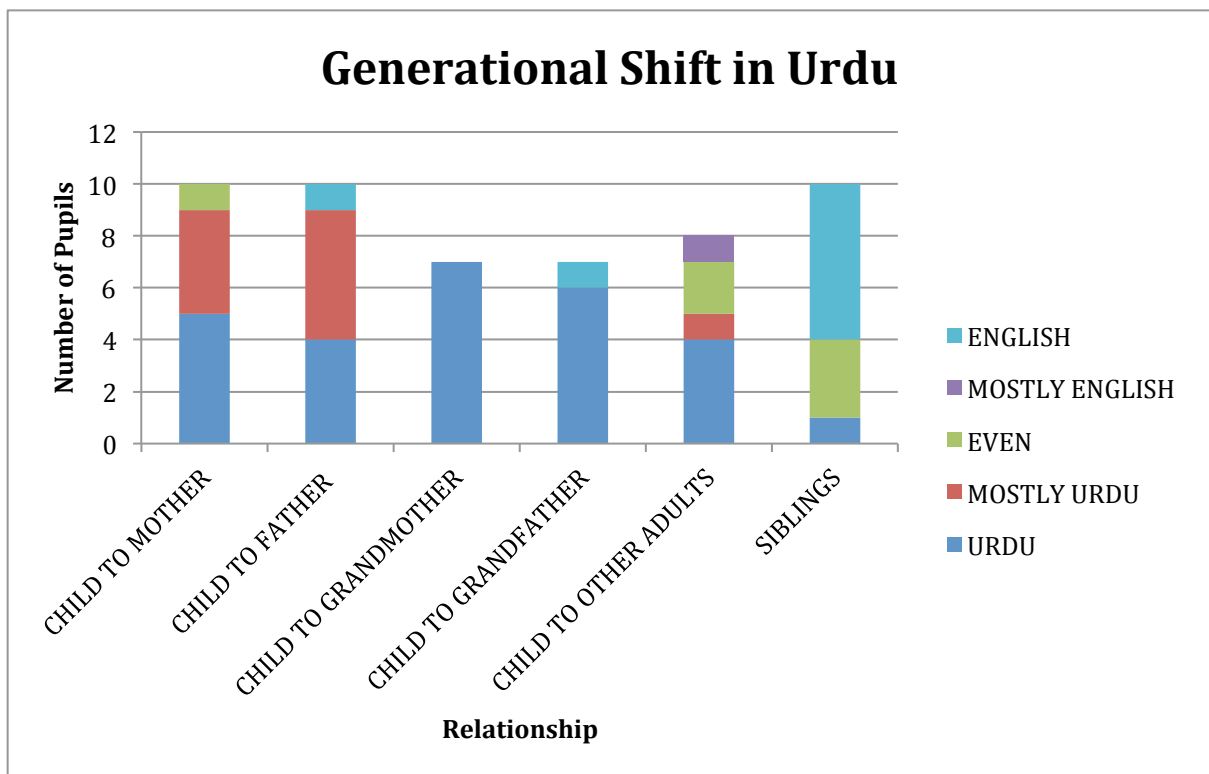


Figure 8: Generational Shift in Urdu

As well as finding a generational shift in English, we found that the same occurs in Arabic and Urdu. Our reasoning behind choosing Urdu to investigate generational shift is motivated from Robertson et al. (2013) who found that Urdu underwent a noticeable generational shift, and also due to how Arabic and Urdu were the two most frequently used HL1 in addition, giving us a larger sample to work with compared to the other languages recorded. We decided to use raw numbers for these graphs due to the small sample sizes, creating more accurate representations. The use of these home languages appears to decrease with age: grandparents use it the most, then parents and other adults, and then children. Interestingly, figure 7 shows that mothers do not use English to a greater extent than Arabic, whereas the fathers tend to use English more so. This could suggest that there is a correlation between gender and language use within the generational shift. Furthermore, our insight into the generational shift in Urdu is in accordance with Robertson et al. (2013) findings.

2.2 Domain

In this section we will address the research aim of- *'Which language is used in each media domain?'*

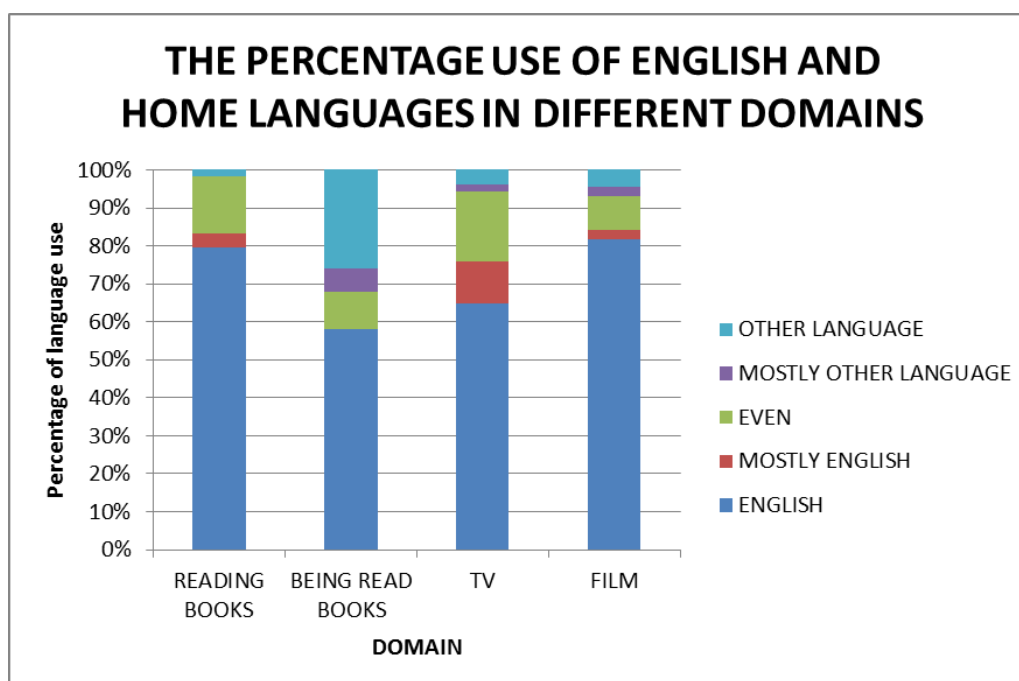


Figure 9: Percentage use of English and Home Languages depending on each domain

In reviewing the use of language in different domains, we will compare our results to those of Robertson et al. (2013), who used percentages in their data which we will also do to aid comparison. However, when comparing our results to Robertson et al. (2013) findings, it is important to note that their sample was considerably greater including data from four schools studied, that included Heald Place and therefore this suggestively accounts for any differences in comparisons. When analysing the language used in watching the television, Robertson et al. (2013) found that 46% of children reported watching television in their HL1, whereas we found that only 4% of children watched television exclusively in their HL1 and 35% of children watched some television in a mixture of English and their HL1. Interestingly, a large percentage of children (65%) only watched television in English additionally allowing us to conclude that English is the dominant language in this domain.

With regards to the language used to read to the child, Robertson et al. (2013) found that 33.7% of children were read to in their home language, our results show that 42% of students were read to in their home language which is an increase of almost 10%. Conclusively, English again was the dominant language used by interlocutors in reading to the child.

In regards to the language used by pupils to watch films, we calculated that 18% of participants watch films in their home language, with only 7% watching films mostly or exclusively in their home language. This number has declined from the reported 23.4% of students watching films in their home language from the Robertson et al. (2013) survey. It is also drastically different from Parr et al. (2014) results that indicate that 88% of pupils interviewed watch television in their home language. This difference could be down to the age of the pupils, as we conducted our study with student in year 3, whereas Parr et al. (2014) interviewed children in years 4 and above. Unsurprisingly, in our survey English also dominated this domain in terms of use.

Column and Row Totals						
	reading books	being read books	tv	film		Row Totals
English	43	29	35	36		143
Mostly English	2	0	6	1		9
Even	8	5	10	4		27
Mostly Other Language	0	3	1	1		5
Other language	1	13	2	2		18
Column Totals	54	50	54	44		202 (Grand Total)

Figure 10: The raw numbers used in the Chi square test for each domain.

We conducted a chi square test of the significance of our results across all domains. However, note that not all pupils exercised languages across all domains, thus giving different totals for each domain-specific calculation. The chi-square statistic is 39.0269 and the P-Value is 0.000104. Therefore, the result is significant at $p < 0.05$ and concludes that English is significantly dominated in its use in each domain.

2.3 Proficiency

In this section we will address the research aim of- *'What is the child's level of proficiency of each language?'*

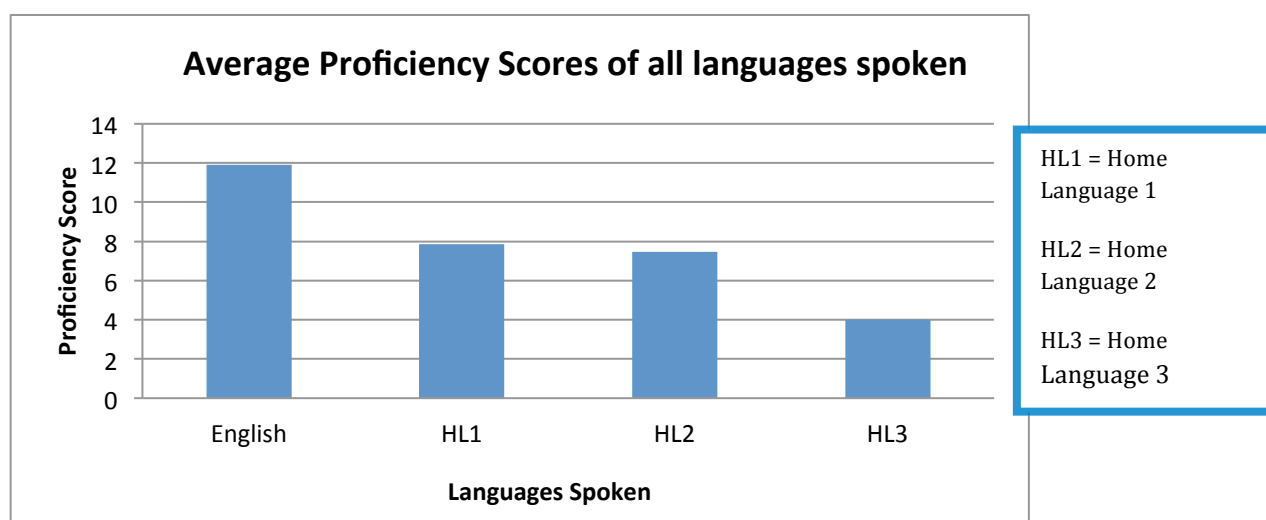


Figure 11: The average proficiency scores of all languages collected in the sample at Heald

Figure 11 shows that the pupils have a better proficiency in English than any of their other languages; the average score for English was the maximum of 12, whilst for their HL1, the pupils scored approximately 8 points on average. Furthermore, as the number of languages the pupils claimed to speak increased, the proficiency decreased, as shown in Figure 4.

This proficiency in English could be explained by English being thought of as a prestigious language in comparison to other minority languages spoken at Heald Place. The Multilingual Cities Project (MCP) carried out by Extra and Yağmur (2011) confirmed that English had a high status among primary school pupils and was thought of as a language of power and prestige.

The pupils' proficiency in their HL2 was close to that of their HL1, with an average difference of 0.4 points. The proficiency score for their HL2 is 7.45 points, which suggests a slight hesitancy despite their understanding of the production of the language. The

proficiency scores drop dramatically to the minimum of 4 for their HL3, meaning that they got the minimal score of 1 for each test question we presented them with. It is a point of interest that the children considered this HL3 to be a part of their identity, even when in some cases they struggled to produce more than one word.

It is questionable as to how useful proficiency tests are in reliably measuring the child's fluency of each language however. As children, we are often taught numbers, greeting phrases, and parts of the body in the initial stages of language acquisition. The test used in this study was made up of these phrases. It can be called into question whether or not these pieces of information are in a child's lexicon due to learning or simply repeating situational phrases for several years. Children would state that they spoke their home language to other family members, however performed poorly on the proficiency test and in some cases scored the minimum of 4. The test could be improved by using more detailed questions, regarding more general terms the child may know such as those about family members, colours and greetings, which often children that performed incompetently were aware of. Plus, as interviewers we had no knowledge of the home languages and were therefore unable to identify whether the child was proficient in their home language and instead had to use our own initiative.

3. Overview

On reflection of the results, we can conclude that there is a generational shift, as the child's HL1 is used when interacting with older generations, more specifically the child's grandparents. However, we also see its use amongst the child's parents and other adults, though to a lesser degree with English also being used in interacting with the child. Furthermore, we found that English is the more dominant language in terms of different domains. Also, children are more proficient in English than their HL1. From our time spent in the school, we can speculate that as English is the primary medium of instruction, children are constantly immersed in the language and actively developing their lexicon. Myers-Scotton (2006, cited in Dyers, 2008) refers to how the medium of instruction is used to help maintain the language and this offers reasoning for the high proficiency scores in English in Heald Place. Shaheem (2007) champions this point further in English being the medium of instruction due to how, historically proficiency in English was paramount for success.

A criticism of the study is the young age of our respondents, which resulted in difficulties such as the child being shy to talk to an unfamiliar adult and being unsure of the specific details the survey aimed to gather, i.e. the labelling of their HL1. Furthermore, children would often say they used their HL1 when interacting with their families, but their

proficiency scores were often low. This can be accounted for in terms of situational factors, as their HL1 was used in a formal setting, as opposed to a more relaxed social home environment that the child is more accustomed to and feels more comfortable using the language in.

When conducting further research, it would be interesting to also investigate the child's attitudes and perspective on both the heritage language and English. This knowledge would be feasible for providing an explanation for why different languages are used in different domains, as the attitude the child has towards the language may influence its use. This is due to how the importance of language maintenance comes from the practice of a language.

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