Multilingual Manchester

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A study of language policy in Longsight, Cheetham Hill and Moss Side

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1.Introduction

Manchester's rich linguistic diversity makes it the ideal place to carry out a study on multilingualism within the community. For our study we selected three different boroughs to focus on, namely Cheetham Hill, Longsight and Moss Side, as their high levels of multi-ethnicity and multiculturalism render them representative of Manchester's multilingual panorama, with less than a third of each of their populations identifying as White British (Bullen: 2015, 26). For our study we aimed to find out the motivations and needs behind the signs, as well as to discern the distribution of multilingual signs among the three levels: meso, macro and micro within each of the wards to find out which services are most catered for.

We used LinguaSnapp to take photos and record details of signs present in the three boroughs. These details include the languages present on the sign, its translation into English and the alphabet it is written in. We proceeded to conduct an interview with the owner or worker present in the respective institution or shop, based on questions on our questionnaire in appendix A, to gain qualitative data on people's motivations for using multilingual signs. The main crux of these was to find out why the sign was created in the first place; if the subject considers it a necessity or rather an assertion to represent certain speech communities or their own heritage.

2.1 General Revisions to research aims

Our initial aim was to explore how linguistic landscapes were affected by the level of English proficiency in Moss Side, Longsight and Cheetham Hill as these were the three areas where proficiency in English as a second language was at its lowest, according to the 2011 census, which correlated with them being amongst the wards with the highest population growths of immigrants between 2001 and 2011 (Cheetham highest, Moss Side 4th highest, and Longsight 6th highest). However, we realised that this would not be viable due to the problematic nature of defining language proficiency.

The definition of language proficiency is a cause of controversy amongst linguists and institutions, as Brindley notes "most scales of language proficiency appear to have been produced pragmatically, by appeal to intuition and those scales which already exist" (1991: p. 6-8), which means that there is not one global framework for defining or measuring language proficiency. Therefore we would not have had a set definition or model to base our research on. Furthermore, our data on language proficiency within our chosen wards is based on self-defined proficiency of census participants, instead of a language proficiency test based on a tested model, such as the Cambridge English proficiency qualification (CPE). Given that the definition of language proficiency varies wildly at academic and institutional level, it can be assumed that the attitudes towards this would differ between individuals, which weakens the validity of the census data, especially as qualifiers such as "well", "very well" and "poor", which are ambiguous and vague, were used to produce this data set.

Furthermore, there are no previous studies which we would have been able to base our own research on or form a hypothesis from, making it difficult to link English language proficiency and the presence of multilingual signage. Also, a study using our initial aim would involve collecting data on the English language proficiency of individuals within these wards, which is not what we intended to do, as this is a study on multilingual landscapes of areas with a high immigrant population, not on the English language proficiency of individuals within these wards.

Therefore our revised aim was "to explore the use of multilingual signage in areas with a high immigrant population". This way we were specifically looking at how an immigrant population affects the needs for multilingual signage. Our other two aims remained as follows:

To explore users' needs for signs and to explore the motivations for providing multilingual signs from the point of view of providers.

Also, as we aimed to discover whether multilingual signage was more present at macro, meso or micro level, we felt it necessary to add a fourth aim:

To discover whether multilingual signage is more prominent at meso, macro or micro level.

2.2 Amendments to the questionnaire from the first assessment

For our questionnaire (cf. appendix A) we made some amendments to the previous version that we had used in the first part of the assessment (cf. appendix B). We encountered some difficulties regarding a technical term and also realised that we needed to add a question that was missing in the previous version of the questionnaire, in order to investigate one of our aims.

Questions six and seven of the first version of the questionnaire refer to the term *speech community*, which is unlikely to be understood by the respondents, as it is a technical sociolinguistic term. We therefore replaced question seven *Do you feel your speech community is represented in Manchester?* by the question *Is this language visible in Manchester?* since it is easier to understand for the respondent. We then related the latter to the question *What is your mother tongue?* to investigate the respondents' perceived visibility of their mother tongue instead of their speech community. Moreover, we deleted question six *What speech community do you identify with / are you part of?* as it was not relevant for our research aims.

Furthermore, we added the question *Why was it made?* as it relates to one of our research aims, the providers' motivations for the creation of the respective sign(s), to the questionnaire. A question referring to this research aim was missing in the first draft of our questionnaire.

3 Language Planning & Language Policy

The two different concepts of language planning and language policy are related as they share features such as how they are both 'top-down' which means that there is conscious effort implemented to tackle language barriers. These two concepts differ mainly because language planning is only a 'macro' activity amidst the government or administrative body of a nation, whereas language planning policy can be 'macro', as previously mentioned, or 'micro' activities at an institutional level. After analysing the distribution of multilingual signs by their domain within each of our chosen wards, we aimed to see whether catering for different speech communities is something that is mainly taken on by the public sector or by the initiative of individual business owners. This will give us a clear idea of language policy in the three wards.

4 Areas

Our research consisted of analysing the areas within each ward that were most likely to have higher numbers of multilingual signage. We were able to triangulate these areas based on the number of the non-residential properties such as shops and small businesses, religious institutions and public service buildings such as hospitals and community centres. By gathering this data and focusing on specific locations prior to our fieldwork we hoped to be able to remove the time-consuming process of travelling through each ward searching for areas with high levels of multilingual signage.

Each of the three wards has its own high street where the majority of its small businesses and shops are located. For Longsight this is Dickinson Road, for Moss Side it is Princess Parkway and Cheetham Hill being the largest of the three wards has two locations which could be classed high streets, Bury New Road and Cheetham Hill Road. Whilst we were analysing the wider Cheetham Hill area, we were able to conclude that Cheetham Hill Road was the better choice for multilingual signage due to the larger variety of establishments located on the road; Bury New Road was made up of mainly private clothing retailers, thus we focused our attention on the Cheetham Hill Road area.

In Moss Side, however, it turned out that this previously determined high street was not the area with the highest density of multilingual signs. Therefore, we had to travel through the ward in order to spot a higher number of multilingual signs. As a consequence, our researched multilingual signs are spread over the ward. The borders between the wards in Manchester are often a bit blurred. For this reason, the spreading of the multilingual signs in Moss Side makes it difficult to precisely define the wards in which certain signs are located.

In each of the three wards, alongside private businesses there were public service buildings that provided help and assistance to residents, and both cases displayed instances of multilingual signage. Longsight and Cheetham Hill were the areas that had a greater distribution of religious institutions, mainly mosques, whereas Moss Side had a higher proportion of shops.

Besides the blurred borders between the wards, we encountered some more difficulties in the process of conducting our research. Whereas we anticipated some of these difficulties in the first part of our research, we also came across some unexpected ones.

In our field research we encountered the problem that the number of signs we found in the three wards was lower than we expected. Due to this relatively small sample size of multilingual signs in the three wards, we used absolute figures for our graphs rather than percentages. After collecting our data we quantified the results in order to first see the distribution of the languages present in our signs across the different wards. However, we chose not to include any statistical analysis of trends in our data, because we had a relatively small sample size of data; small sample sizes don't offer much in terms of reliable statistical analysis, we would need a much larger sample size to find reliable statistical trends. The data that we quantified was categorised into two groups 'public' or 'private' sector, this was done in order for us to distinguish how language planning/policy is reflected differently in those different sectors. Also, having a small sample size limited our abilities to fully fulfil our study, we weren't able to collect more data, as time and man-power were limiting factors.
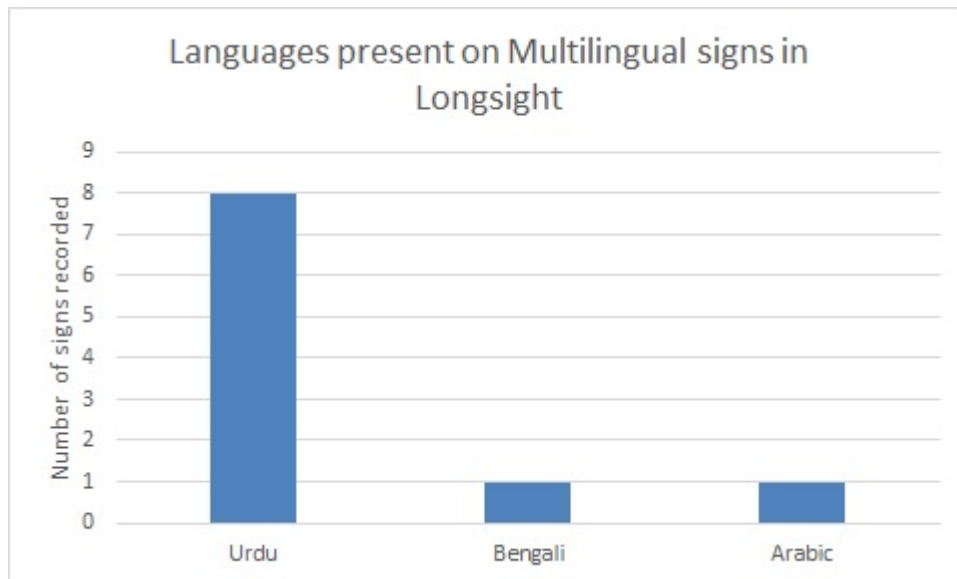
Another problem was that not all our informants were able to provide information about the researched signs. One informant in Moss Side, for example, did not understand our questions, due to a low level of English. Another informant could not provide us with the information regarding the motivation of the creation of its takeaways' sign, as he was not the owner of the take away when the sign was put up.
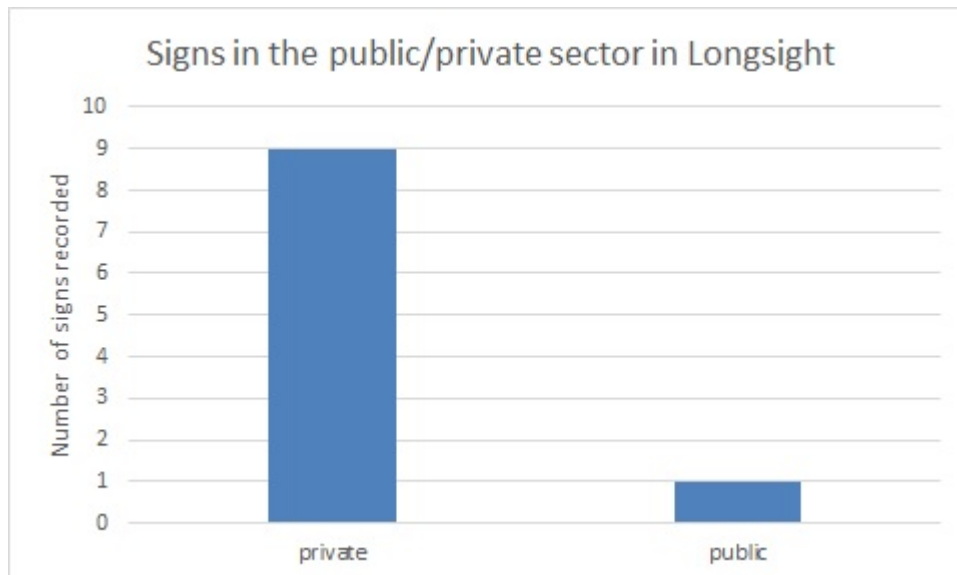
5 Findings

We found fewer instances of multilingual signs in the areas of the wards than we expected, finding 24 signs overall. Although we found a similar number of signs in each ward, each neighbourhood showed its own unique pattern regarding language policy.

5.1 Longsight

From our research in Longsight it is clear that the multilingual landscape of the ward correlates with its large Pakistani and Indian population. After English, Urdu was the second most visible language in signage, appearing on signs of retail units, cultural institutions and within public sector buildings. The uses for Urdu on individual signage also varied greatly.

Languages present on Multilingual signs in Longsight

Number of signs recorded (vertical axis, 0–9)

Urdu: 8, Bengali: 1, Arabic: 1

In contrast to Moss Side, where the majority of multilingual signs featured just the shop name in a second language, Urdu was used both for emblematic and communicative purposes in Longsight, as it was used to display the shop name, but also product information, which suggests a need for Urdu within this community for communicative purposes. This relates to Bullen's claim that this popular with south east Asian immigrants, however the dominance of Urdu over Bengali is surprising, as Longsight has a long-established Bangladeshi Community (Bullen:2015,17). The motivations behind displaying signs in Urdu reflect the large southeast asian population within the ward, as all respondents answered that it was due to the ward being an Urdu speaking community. This shows both a desire to reflect the heritage of the ward's largest ethnic group and the fact that businesses and institutions think it is worthwhile to spend money on multilingual signs. The majority of respondents were Urdu native speakers, which also explains the desire to represent their language and heritage in the signage of their business.

Signs in the public/private sector in Longsight

Number of signs recorded (vertical axis, 0–10)

private: 9, public: 1

Bengali and Arabic were present on one sign each on private sectors, which were both cultural organisations; the Bangladeshi Women's Organisation and Longsight Islamic Centre. As with its use in other two wards we investigated, Arabic was used for religious purposes on the Islamic Centre, which correlates with its associations with the Islamic faith. Arabic was used alongside Urdu and English on the sign for the institution's name, however, for all other information Urdu was used.

Here the use of Arabic is for religious purposes rather than for general communicative purposes, as it the official language of Islam and therefore a symbol of the faith. The use of Urdu for general information highlights its use for communicative purposes within the ward and the centre's desire to address and cater for Longsight Urdu-speaking community, as the main religion of Pakistan is Islam.

As with Moss Side the majority of multilingual signs were found on private sector businesses, however, in contrast to Moss Side, the majority of these were cultural or religious institutions rather than retail units. Centres such as the Pakistani Community Centre and Bangladeshi Women's Organisation reflect the city's higher than average Pakistani and Bangladeshi population in comparison to the rest of the UK, (Bullen,29) as well as a need to include and provide services for these communities. Both these centres displayed posters advertising social groups that catered for these ethnic communities such as the South Asian Women's Support Group, which demonstrates the thriving south Asian community in Manchester and the ward's high population of this ethnic group. However, all these posters were solely in English, which shows that English remains the lingua franca even in wards with a high immigrant population. This also highlights the long-established south Asian community in Manchester, as the city has seen consistent immigration from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh since the 1970s (Bullen,3), therefore it is likely that a majority of this community are able to speak English. Indeed when asked about what languages they spoke in the domains of home, with friends, with colleagues, at work and with family the majority of respondents in Longsight used solely English in the majority of domains rather than their mother tongue, as the majority had English spouses. Although this is a small sample of individuals, it suggests why English is still the lingua franca within a ward with a large immigrant population.

Within Longsight we found two public service centres which displayed multilingual signage: Longsight health centre and Longsight library. Although neither displayed languages other than English on exterior signs other languages were visible inside, which suggests a need to cater to non-English speaking residents within public sector services. In the health centre this was seen on an NHS poster giving instructions about how to spot a stroke, which explained the signs in both English and Urdu. In the library signs monolingual signs were used to indicate books in other languages, including Urdu and Bengali, which suggests demand for literature in these languages. This reflects both the consistent wave of first generation of south asian immigrants, but also the preservation of these languages and their associated cultures within Longsight. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to take pictures or conduct an interview, so this information is not represented in our data.

5.2 Moss Side

When reviewing the census in order to find out about the ethnic background of the three boroughs we investigated, we discovered that Moss Side was known for being representative of a predominantly Afro-Caribbean culture. This was evident when we went out to conduct our field research and observed many market stalls and food outlets providing Afro-Caribbean food and products at Hulme Market. Having said this, the signs on these shops and market stalls bore no language other than English. Whilst we recognise that this is most probably due to English being the lingua franca in the vast majority of the Caribbean, we can assume this is a result of many of the Afro-Caribbean community in Moss Side now probably being second or third generation immigrants, thus entailing little if any need for local languages as means of communication or a necessity.(Bullen,3)

**Languages present on Multilingual signs in Moss Side**
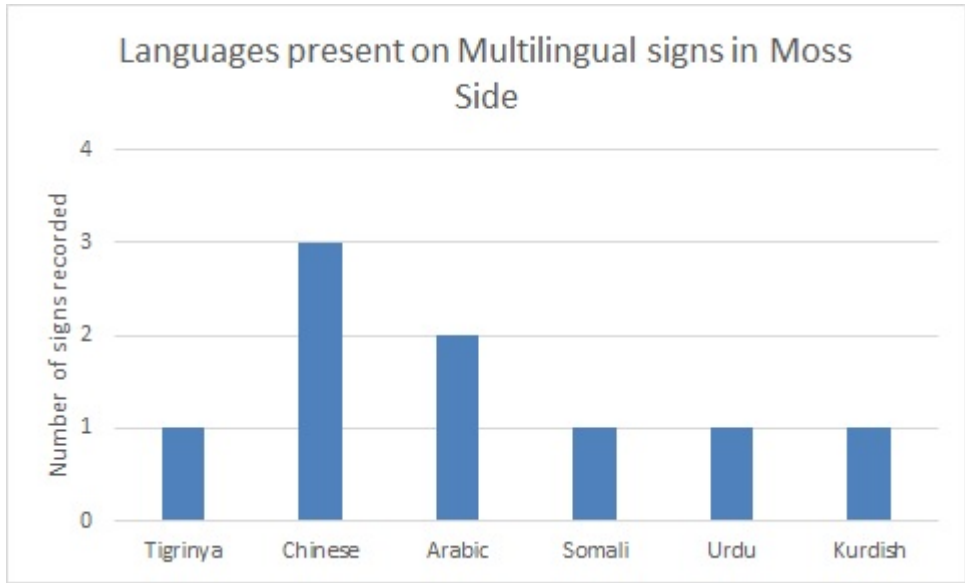
It is worth noting that of the three boroughs, Moss Side is the one which displayed the widest range of languages present on the multilingual signs. The table reveals the majority language present in the signs we recorded in Moss Side as Arabic, though only by two signs. Due to our sample size, we cannot interpret this as representing a larger arabic-speaking community in Moss Side. This was closely followed by Chinese. We located a Chinese Christian Church displaying Cantonese on its welcome board but with this exception, all of the signs we located in Moss Side were from take-away shops or other food outlets. Upon interviewing the staff we discovered that some of them were second or third generation immigrants continuing a family business, and that not all of them had native command of the languages on the signs. This suggests that the main purpose behind the signage is emblematic and a marker of heritage. On two occasions, shop owners informed us that the Arabic on their shop windows displayed a blessing and they believed it to be not only good for business but also for those entering and purchasing goods from the shop, again proving to be an emblematic purpose as opposed to for communicative purposes or a necessity.


Signs in the public/private sector in Moss Side
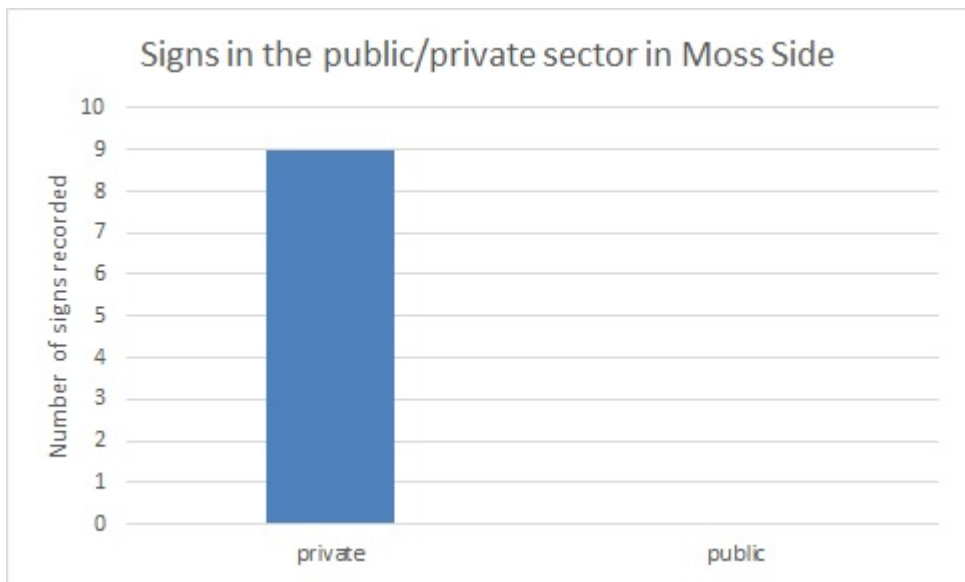
5.3 Cheetham Hill

When analysing the Cheetham Hill ward it was clearly evident that Cheetham Hill Road was heavily influenced by its multicultural heritage. This is what we expected to find prior to our investigation of the ward due to Cheetham Hill having one of the most diverse linguistic backgrounds based on our previous data analysis, which showed that 43% of the district's residents stated that that their country of birth was not England; with the majority of these being non-EU states (ONS, 2011), and it would correlate that being the ward's epicentre Cheetham Hill Road would display many instances of multilingual signage.
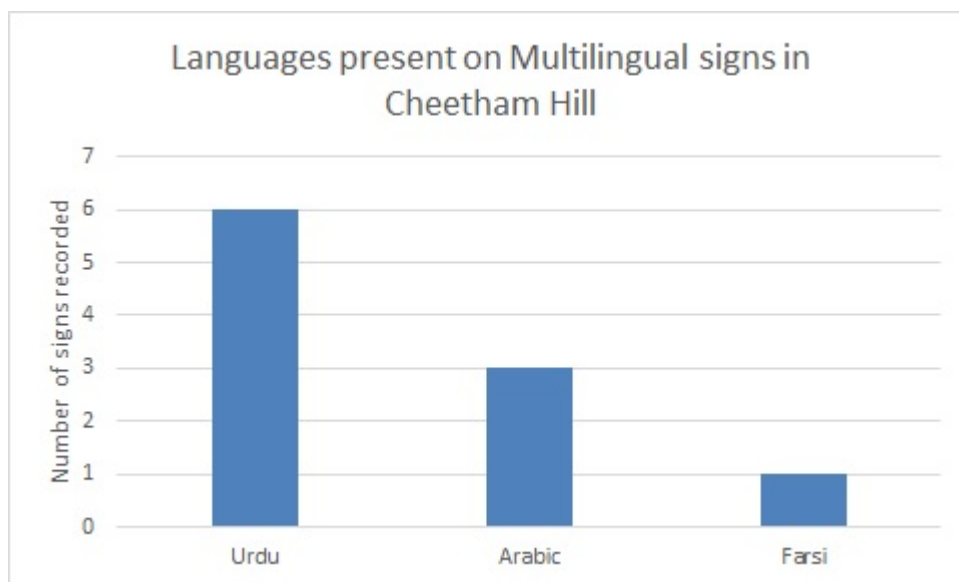
Upon completion of the sign translations we were able to elicit that Urdu was the most populous language of multilingual sign usage in the area, which can be attributed to the large number of South Asian immigrants who have settled in Cheetham Hill over the past two decades. This integration of the South Asian population is solidified by the inclusion of the public sector Northwards housing association building which displayed all its information in English, Urdu and Arabic parallel texts on signs throughout the building. The staff informed us that due to the large Urdu and Arabic speaking community in the area it was necessary to publish signs in this multilingual format. With the office being a public institution the majority of the staff were native English speakers and this shows the influence of the Urdu speaking community within the area as it was necessary for housing service information to be made accessible to speakers whose first language is one other than English.

Signs in the public/private sector in Cheetham Hill
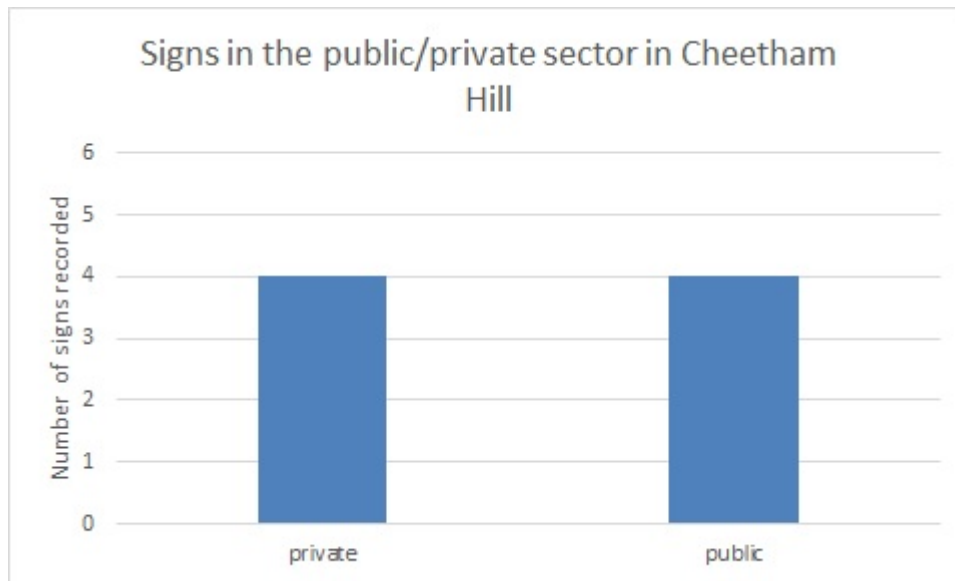
When looking at Arabic script within the ward it became apparent that aside from the signage on the Northwards housing building it was mainly utilised within religious contexts such as printed blessings above shop windows, whereas Urdu was used in the literal translations such as the shop's name and the services it offered. This is made more evident when analysing the feedback we received from our questionnaires; the majority of shop workers did not state Arabic as a language which they spoke fluently although they recognised it as the language of their faith. That being said, it is an interesting observation that Arabic is used outside of religious contexts more frequently in the Cheetham Hill area in comparison to the other two wards in our analysis, which reflects Cheetham Hill's residency of the largest Arabic speaking population in Manchester, and the need for this language to be visible within different contexts.

Cheetham Hill also represented the only instance of the Farsi language, which was present in a local bakery on Cheetham Hill Road. After further correspondence with the shop owner we were informed that his bakery was the only establishment in the area that sold authentic goods from the Afghan region advertised in the Farsi language. Due to the bakery focusing on its Afghan heritage with the sale of these specific products, the shop has become well known throughout the larger Manchester area. This could be seen as an emblematic projection of the owner's culture and one which he is able to amalgamate within the already multilingual backdrop of Cheetham Hill by also displaying signage in both Urdu and English; the two most populous languages within the ward.

6 Conclusion

From analysing our data it is clear that the multilingual landscapes of Moss Side, Longsight and Cheetham Hill vary not just in the languages that are visible, but for which purposes they are used. In Moss Side languages are used emblematically on signs to display the heritage and, in the case of Arabic, the religion of most of the business owners. Although Moss Side was the most linguistically diverse neighbourhood out of the three, two thirds of the language appeared only once, therefore it is impossible to make assumptions about the need for these languages in multilingual signage, as it is more a personal decision of the business owner. However, the occurrence of cultural and spiritual institutions such as the Manchester Chinese Christian Church and the Kurdish Cultural Centre illustrate the presence of these ethnic groups in Manchester, though they do not necessarily just cater to Chinese- and Kurdish-speaking residents in Moss Side.

Both Longsight and Cheetham Hill showed instances of languages being used for emblematic and communicative purposes. Urdu, the most visible language in our study, was present in the signage of

both private and public sector signs, which reflects both the desires of business owners to acknowledge their own heritage and that of the community, as well as the recognition of public sector services to cater to Urdu-speaking immigrants. This correlates with the consistent influx of Pakistani and Indian immigrants to these areas. In terms of signage on public sector buildings such as Longsight Library, Longsight Health Centre and Northwards council housing centre, all multilingual signage was in the form of temporary signs or on inside services, which suggests that even in wards with a high immigrant population English is the lingua franca in public sector buildings. In contrast to Longsight and Moss Side, Cheetham Hill was the only one to display Arabic outside of the context of religion, seeing as in the other two wards this language's usage was restricted to religious buildings and as a blessing on shops, which relates to the beliefs and faith of Islam.

Due to a small sample size in all three wards, our information can be treated more as observations rather than clear patterns regarding the treatment of language policy in the wards, however, as the majority of multilingual signs were present on private sector businesses, the visibility of languages in wards with high immigrant populations is seen as a personal decision of the business owners, rather than the initiative of local authorities.

Bibliography

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Office for National Statistics. 2011. *Neighbourhood statistics, Cheetham (Ward), Main language 2011* [Online]. Available from: http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=6074491&c=bury&d=13&e=13&g=351287&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1458684489359&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2528 [accessed 19 May 2016]

Appendices

Appendix A - Public questionnaire (new questionnaire for 2nd part of the assessment)

To be used to conduct informal face to face interviews with business owners on the nature of their multilingual signs. We ourselves will fill in the information and will adjust the wording of questions when needed to accommodate for second language English speakers.

1. What language(s) is the sign in?

2. What does it say?

3. Why was it made?

4. What is your mother tongue?

5. Is this language visible in Manchester?

6. What languages can you speak?

7. What languages are you fluent in?

8. What languages do you use in the following contexts?
    With customers
    At home
    With friends
    With family
    With staff

Appendix B

Moss Side

Figure 1: Coffee Shop (Tigrinya)

Figure 2: Food shop Moss Side (Urdu)

Figure 3: International supermarket (Arabic)

Figure 4: International supermarket Moss Side (Arabic)

Figure 5: Internet cafe Moss Side (Somali)

Figure 6: Kurdish cultural centre Moss Side (Kurdish)

Figure 7: Chinese takeaway Moss Side (Mandarin)

Figure 8: Manchester Chinese Catholic Church Moss Side (Mandarin)

Figure 9 :Chinese and Vietnamese Takeaway Moss Side (Mandarin)

Appendix C

Longsight
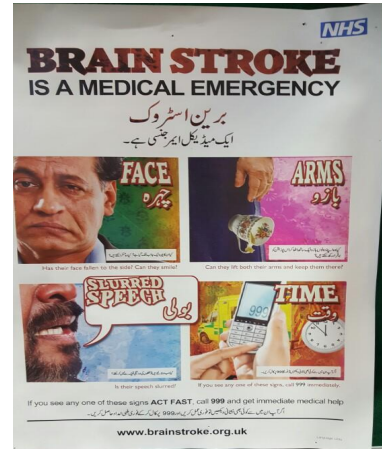

Figure 10: Urdu Book Shop Longsight (Urdu)

Figure 11: NHS poster on strokes Longsight health care centre (Urdu)

Figure 12: Longsight Islamic Centre (Urdu and Arabic)

Figure 13: Longsight Sight Centre (on entrance) (Arabic)

Figure 14: Manchester Bangladeshi Women's Organisation, Longsight (Bengali)

Figure 15: Manchester Advice centre Longsight (Urdu)

Figure 16: Pakistani Community centre, Longsight (Urdu)

Figure 17: Takeaway, Longsight (Urdu)

Appendix D

Cheetham Hill

Figure 18: Bakery Cheetham Hill (Urdu)

Figure 19: Signs inside Bakery, Cheetham Hill (Urdu, Arabic, Farsi)

Figure 20: Tailors Cheetham Hill (Arabic)

Figure 21: Council Housing centre Cheetham Hill (Urdu)

Figure 22: Council Housing centre Cheetham Hill (Urdu)

Figure 23: Council Housing Centre Cheetham Hill (Urdu)

Figure 24: Sign for immigration services Cheetham Hill (Urdu)

Figure 25: Tailors Cheetham Hill (Urdu)