Multilingual Manchester

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How do independent supermarkets in Chinatown and Curry Mile include or exclude their customers in relation to their linguistic landscapes?

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Introduction

This report compares the linguistic strategies used by independent 'supermarkets' and their surrounding linguistic landscape, in catering to their clientele. 'Supermarkets' in this report will refer to independent shops or smaller chains that are outside the realm of major supermarkets such as Asda, Tesco and Sainsbury's etc, yet still perform the same role of providing a convenient and comprehensive range of products. Supermarkets (and their landscapes) have been chosen, as the food shopping process, and food itself, is integral to everyday life. In the Manchester area, such independent supermarkets have emerged in areas such as The Curry Mile (Rusholme) and Chinatown in order to accommodate for popular oriental and asian cuisine, compliant with the larger ethnic minority groups in the surrounding vicinities - the supermarkets in question therefore cater for the needs and routines of these minority groups. Accordingly, the supermarkets selected for our research are located in the aforementioned Rusholme (Curry Mile) and Chinatown. Since 1991 the general population of ethnic minority groups has increased by 164% in Manchester. The Pakistani community, in particular, currently constitutes for the largest ethnic minority group in Manchester and is noticeably concentrated in The Curry Mile. Amoah et al. (2011: 1) discovered that within the business context of Whalley Range- an area in which Pakistani is the second most dominant ethnicity and makes up 21.4% of the population in the area- English was the dominant language for communication. This report identifies whether Amoah's findings are replicated in the linguistic landscapes created by the businesses selected in Rusholme and Chinatown.

The linguistic landscape here refers to Landry and Bourhis' (1997: 23) definition that the linguistic landscape consists of all visible signs (including billboards, posters etc) in a selected area. Respectively, using Rexrodt et al's (2014) ideas on inclusivity and exclusivity; this report investigates whether other languages are or are not used in the commercial sector in these areas and why this is the case? Rexrodt et al stated that differences (if any) in linguistic choices are made to be inclusive or exclusive, i.e. accessible to a wider target audience or specific to a target audience. Our findings attempt to challenge this speculation. Backhaus (2007: 6) has stated that messages on signage are only useful when depicting a language understood by the community of the area - therefore, we can assume that the linguistic landscapes created by these stores may somewhat reflect the dominant community of the area, as well as the establishment's own clientele preferences and marketing strategies.

Research Aims

The aim of our research is to:
- Discover the ways in which the signage of the chosen establishments (both internal and external) shapes the linguistic landscape of the surrounding area
- Explore the reasons behind the linguistic choices made on the signage and how this supports existing community knowledge

- Document whether the linguistic choices made by independent 'supermarkets' heavily represent one particular language over other languages - how/ why?
- Note whether other linguistic choices besides signage/advertisements contribute or complement the landscapes formed, e.g. language of speakers within the store.

Side Note - Modifications Made to Original Proposal

The focus of our research question has significantly shifted due to technicalities and concerns with data collection. We had planned to investigate whether the dominant linguistic community of an area directly influenced the linguistic and cultural choices made by the independent 'supermarkets'- focussing on the linguistic differences between them in different areas of Manchester. We aimed to discover whether the dominant linguistic community of the area directly affected the choices made by the chosen establishments. An emphasis on the products and their packaging was to be made whilst also considering other aspects of the shops such as signage and advertising. A comparison on the linguistic diversity, discovering whether the dominant linguistic communities were more heavily represented than other languages, was also to be drawn.

Our original methodology included photographing a certain number of products on each aisle of two shops in three different areas - China Town, Rusholme and Longsight. Particular attention was to be paid to products that could be considered ethnic - the products along with the language on them were to be categorised into one of three ethnicities (our three dominant linguistic communities) or an 'other' category. Quantitative analysis of the percentage of these products that included an additional language on the packaging was also to be carried out, alongside qualitative analysis that would make comments on the shop in general.

Upon the first round of data collection, we realised that it would not be possible to carry out an analysis of the shops in the way that we originally wished. We recognized that the languages used on the products in independent supermarkets were not necessarily representative of a community's linguistic landscape, due to importation. This removes any linguistic relevance to the area in question, as they merely represent the linguistic choices made by the product's parent company, who have to adhere to strict UK laws on packaging in order to sell their products, e.g. requirements to have a certain amount of safety instructions and ingredients etc. in English. Therefore, we concluded that, despite their importation potentially being due to their significance to a store's target demographic, they were imported for their properties rather than their linguistic choices.

Therefore, our investigation was heavily simplified. Our focus shifted from products to signage, which during our data collection, we noticed multilingual signs were more prominent outside the stores compared with inside. A striking difference between the signage of China Town and The Curry Mile was also noticed. This shift in focus led us towards the use of the 'LinguaSnapp' app, for its ability to easily compile data to allow for successful quantitative and qualitative analysis. Our research will address similar 4

issues, with the literature referred to in the proposal maintaining relevance, although we are now challenging Rexrodt et al's (2014) statement that linguistic choices are made to be inclusive or exclusive. This has been done by building upon findings made on language in commerce by Amoah et al (2011).

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected - quantitative data was collected using the multilingual landscape app 'Linguasnapp', which combines photographs, location and linguistic information to form both quantitative and interactive data. Photographs were taken of signs and posters that were of interest for their multilingual or monolingual content, both inside and outside the stores. The photographs and languages cited were then placed onto a digital map which can be accessed via the 'Linguasnapp' website. This allowed for a more thorough linguistic comparison over geographical space. Information such as the number of languages and what languages were included on the signs was attached to the photographs and uploaded to the app, along with translations, the layout and positioning and the exclusivity or inclusivity of the signage. Once uploaded and verified, a spreadsheet was created by Linguasnapp and made available for download, from which we based our quantitative analysis.

To collect our qualitative data, we conducted a small number of interviews with employees and customers within the stores. The questions asked:
- Who is your target clientele?
- Why have the languages chosen for signs and posters around the store been chosen?
- Have any measures been made to create a certain ambience?
- If this store was placed somewhere else in Manchester, would the same language choices be made and why?

The questions asked to customers were:
- What is your native language?
- Why did you choose to shop here?
- Do you find it helpful when there are two languages? Which language in particular is most helpful?
- What languages did you expect to be found in here and why?
- Which linguistic features do you think create character in the shop? What character is that?
- Is the language inclusive or exclusive? Why do you think this?

Results

From the photographic data that we collected, we deemed 48 of them suitable and relevant for our research - 21 of them being taken in Rusholme and 27 of them being taken in Chinatown (shown *fig. 1*)

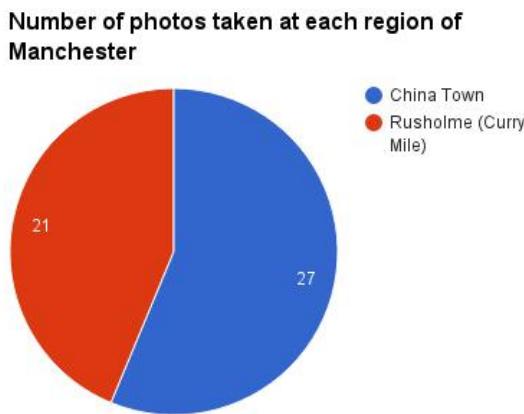Number of photos taken at each region of Manchester

Fig. 1 - distribution of data collected from the respective area

Although the main focus of our research was signs in and around supermarkets, there were signs that were placed around the areas that seemed as though they would add to our research. *Fig. 2* and *fig. 3* show the distribution of data to different types of business. In the case of both Rusholme and Chinatown, the dominant type of business, as dictated by our research aims, was supermarkets, with 12 on the Curry Mile and 19 in Chinatown. The data collected from Rusholme is slightly more varied, with 6 types of establishment studied compared with Chinatown's 3, which represents the business landscape of the respective areas. Despite the differences in collected data, we feel that our data provides a fair representation of both areas, inducing a broad demographic of establishments.
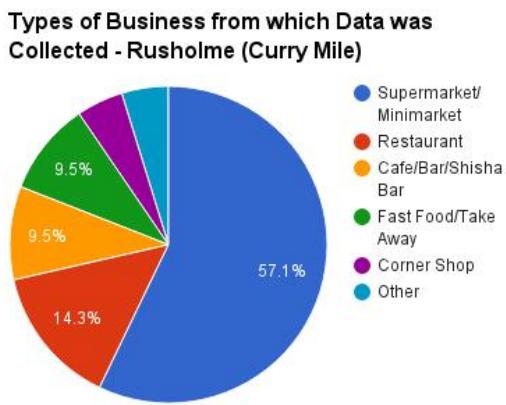
Types of Business from which Data was Collected - Rusholme (Curry Mile)

Fig. 2 - establishments from which data was collected in Rusholme

Types of Businesses from which Data was Collected - China Town

- Supermarket/ Minimarket
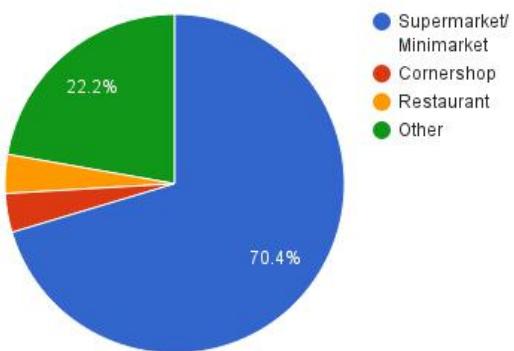- Cornershop
- Restaurant
- Other

22.2%

70.4%

Fig. 3 - establishments from which data was collected in Chinatown

In *fig. 4* and *fig. 5,* the percentage of signs from our collected data from each region that were monolingual or multilingual is displayed. It is clear to see that Rusholme had a much more even distribution of monolingual and multilingual signs compared to Chinatown, with a large majority of 81.5% of signs being multilingual in Chinatown.

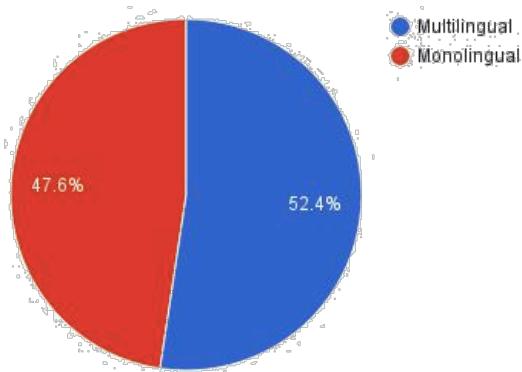**Percentage of Monolingual and Multilingual Signs in Rusholme (Curry Mile)**

- Multilingual
- Monolingual

47.6%

52.4%

Fig. 4 - number of multilingual signs compared to monolingual signs in Rusholme

Percentage of Monolingual and Multilingual Signs in China Town
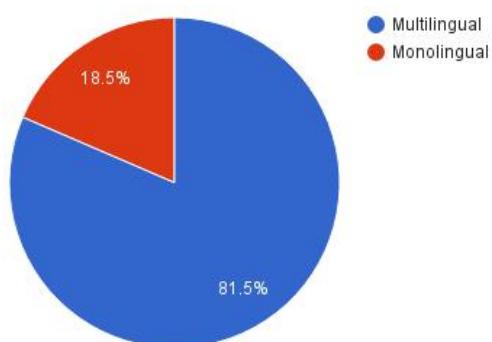
- Multilingual
- Monolingual

18.5%

81.5%

Fig. 5 - number of multilingual signs compared to monolingual signs in China Town

More intuitive to our research are the following charts, shown in *fig. 6* and *fig. 7,* which show the languages featured on the monolingual signs. English dominates the monolingual signs in Rusholme, with 80% of them being solely English, with the remaining 20% being distributed between Arabic and Urdu. *Fig. 7* displays that Chinatown shows a slight preference for Chinese-only signs, attributing for 60% of our data set, with the remaining 40% of monolingual signs being English. It may be worth noting that the monolingual data sets vary considerably in size, with monolingual signs only making up 18.5% of the overall data set from Chinatown (*fig. 5*), whereas they attribute for almost half of the data collected in Rusholme (*fig. 4*)- suggesting that this statistic may not provide a fair assessment of both areas.
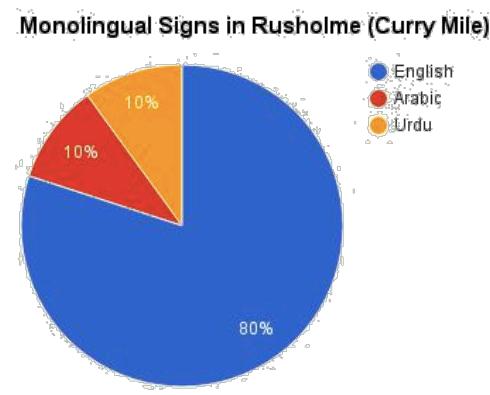

Monolingual Signs in Rusholme (Curry Mile)

- English
- Arabic
- Urdu

10%
10%
80%

Fig. 6 - languages distributed on monolingual signs in Rusholme

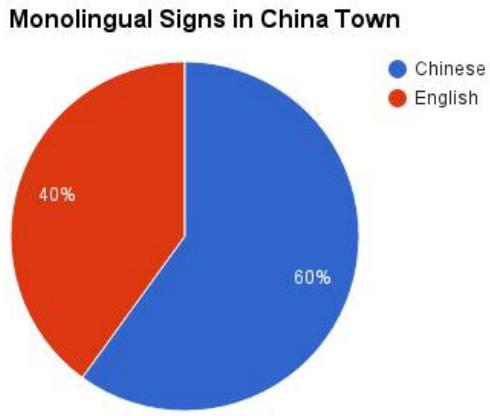**Monolingual Signs in China Town**

- Chinese
- English

40%
60%

Fig. 7 - languages distributed on monolingual signs in China Town

With regards to multilingual signs, *fig. 8* and *fig. 9* show the differences in the combinations of languages found in our respective locations. Rusholme displayed much more diversity in the combinations of languages found, with 4 out of the 5 combinations including English and the remaining one being a combination of French and Arabic. Chinatown was much more limited and only displayed two combinations - all signs containing two languages featured Chinese and English, while all the three-language signs contained a combination of Chinese, English and Thai.

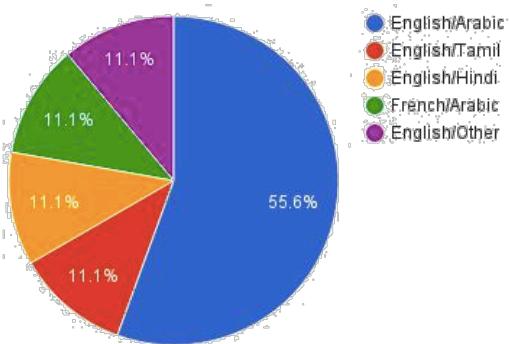*Fig. 8 - combinations of languages found on signs in Rusholme (Curry Mile)*
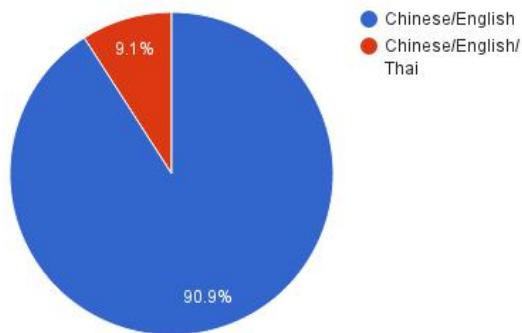

Fig. 9 - combinations of languages found on signs in China Town

Taking into account all the data that we collected from both regions, the Curry Mile displayed the most linguistic diversity in terms of the number of languages found on the signs. *Fig. 10* shows that there were five languages found on the signs on the Curry Mile, compared to the three languages found in China Town (shown in *Fig. 11*). English was very prominent in both areas, and the expected languages (eg. Chinese for China Town, Arabic for Rusholme etc.) were also found - English was found more times than Arabic, Urdu and Tamil combined in Rusholme, whereas Chinese exceeded the number of occurrences of English, with only 3 occurrences of Thai. Therefore, it could be suggested that Rusholme is also more linguistically diverse when considering the languages that would be expected to be found in our respective locations.
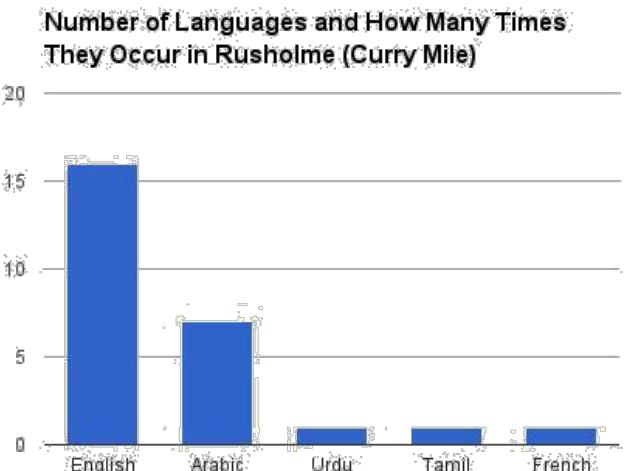
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Number of Languages and How Many Times They Occur in Rusholme (Curry Mile)

Fig. 10 - the languages found on the signs of Curry Mile

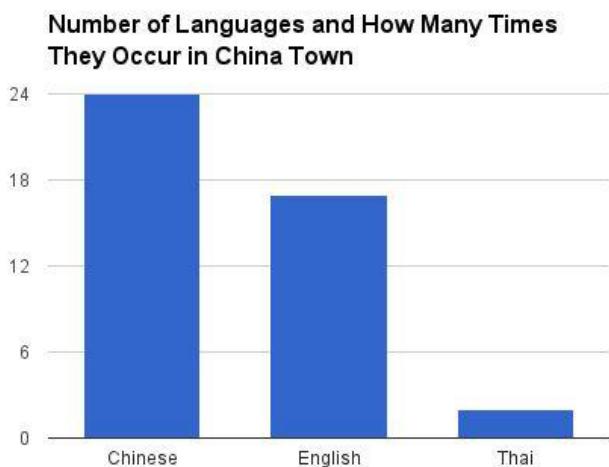**Number of Languages and How Many Times They Occur in China Town**

Fig. 11 - the languages found on the signs of China Town

Continuing on from the previous point, *fig. 12* and *fig. 13* show the alphabets found in both of our respective location, where Chinatown can be considered more diverse in this respect by having a marginally higher number of 3 alphabets, compared to Rusholme's 2. As expected due to the previous statistics in *fig. 10* and *fig. 11,* the Chinese alphabet occurs more times than the Roman (Latin) alphabet in Chinatown, whereas Roman (Latin) is more prominent in Rusholme than the Persian-Arabic alphabet.
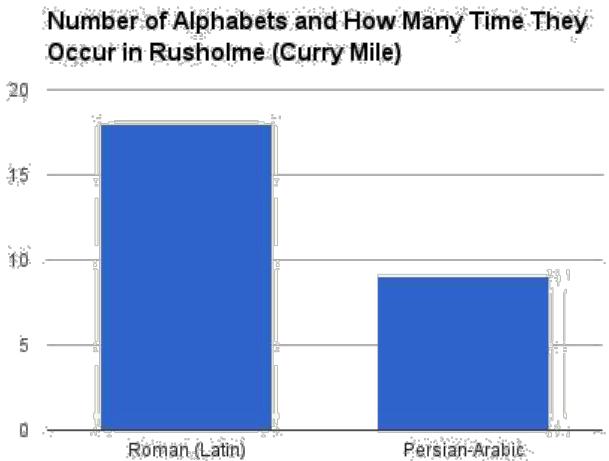
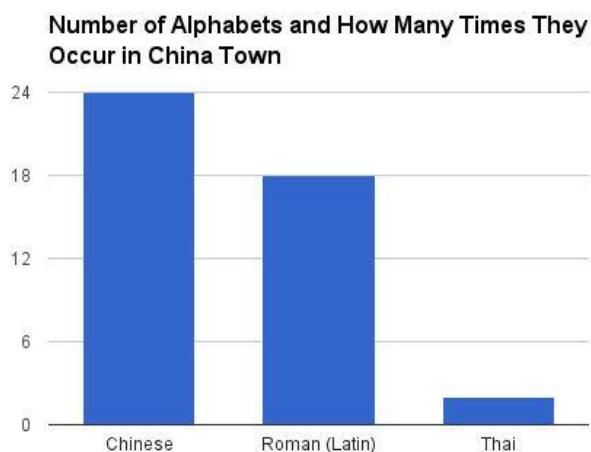**Fig. 12 - the alphabets found on the signs of Rusholme (Curry Mile)**

Fig. 13 - the alphabets found on the signs of China Town

Interviews

We conducted a casual interview with shop employees in the local area, whose identities will remain disclosed (due to request), and customers, to see what they had to comment about the linguistic behaviour of their store/ store they are in; the stores also remain anonymous.

When interviewing the shop employees and customers, it became evident that there was a language barrier to some extent; the interviewees did not always fully understand the questions asked and at times the English was not abundantly fluent. The relevant information we received below, however, provided us with some knowledge on why and how the linguistic diversity in the areas emerged. We chose the most relevant answers from the interviewees, whom remain anonymous during the investigation. As such, we will simply refer to them as A & B. The employees nationalities reflected that of the store, however for customer feedback we selected people at random, therefore different nationalities are apparent.

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Who is your target clientele?

A. "Our target clientele is any shopper who cannot find the ingredients they need in chain supermarkets to make authentic Chinese/Thai/Korean food and for customers who are used to the food that they eat at home, and cannot acquire as easily in the UK."

B. "We don't aim our shop at just one type of customer, some people shop here because the food is what they are used to in the countries they're from and some just want to find products they can't find elsewhere. There is a big Pakistani community here as well as others so we get a wide variety of customers."

Why have the languages chosen for signs and posters around the store been chosen?

A. "They were chosen to accommodate our culture (Chinese) but also make it understandable for British customers, as we are based in the UK we wanted to make sure there were enough British signs so that we have a broader range of customers, we do get a lot of British customers in our store and English is a language that is spoken as a first or second language by most people here ."

B. Our signs are in English to make it easier for people to shop as most people understand English to some extent, if all our signs were in our language we'd only be catering to one audience. We do have some posters in Arabic, however that's only for specific items.

Have any measures been made to create a certain ambience?

A. "We want customers to feel like they are emerged in our culture otherwise there would be no point, we do have the candles and incense burning during opening hours. We put up some posters in Chinese (concluded to be informative data) as we are a Chinese community, a large number of our customers do not understand written English perfectly so we tend to put up flyers and notices in Chinese to accommodate them. There's also traditional Chinese music playing, we feel like it suits the mood of the store and our culture."

B. We do have Arabic writing on most things, like the store sign outdoors and in the windows, but overall the main language on our signs is English.

If this store was placed somewhere else in Manchester, would the same language choices be made and why?

A. "If it was in a less Chinese-influenced area we would probably be a lot smaller as a business so maybe we'd include extra British products, but we are an authentic Chinese supermarket so I think people would expect a lot of our items and signs to be in Chinese. If there was a dominant language in the area we were based, like if we were on the Curry Mile, then maybe we would accommodate that language as well as English and of course our own. " 12

B. "If we were placed somewhere else we would still probably keep our signs labelled in English, because it's the language that most people speak here and Arabic too because that reflects the items we sell. A lot of the signposts on Curry Mile are in Arabic and other languages though, so they would no longer be there… There are a lot of different cultures and communities on Curry Mile."

Anonymous customer questionnaire

What is your native language?
A. Cantonese
B. English

Why did you choose to shop here?
A. To get ingredients that we use at home, being a student in Manchester is different because the food you have here is different to what we eat at home. In here I can find the things that I'm used to and they are labelled in Chinese and English which makes things a lot easier. The atmosphere makes me feel more at home because of the signs and products being labelled in my own language [as well as English].

B. It's nice to shop somewhere that isn't a chain supermarket, you can find interesting products and there's a good atmosphere that reflects the culture.

Do you find it helpful when there are two languages? Which language in particular is most helpful?
A. Yes. It's a lot easier to read products in my own language, some of the Chinese signs have English translations and they're not always a direct translation so that's funny to see (perhaps referring to the 'Betfred' sign that translates to 'BF'). It's also nice to see the posters at the front of the shop in our writing (Chinese) like the cancer charity leaflet.

B. Not really. As an English speaker I don't really need to see the information in another language, however it adds to the overall experience of being here, otherwise it wouldn't be as unique.

What languages did you expect to be found in here and why?
A. I expected Chinese as it is Chinatown after all but there's actually a range of languages in here. The signs are mostly in English which is understandable as a lot of people shop here and most people have English as a first or second language. The Chinese variation doesn't always mean anything so maybe it's there for effect? I've seen some posters that are only written in Chinese though.

B. Maybe Arabic or something like that, and that's what I've seen when I've been shopping around here. I don't understand the language and there's a few posters around that I can't understand. There's certainly a lot of English regarding the signs 13

and labels which I think is good as they are catering for a broader audience; I wouldn't necessarily understand otherwise.

Discussion

This semiotic analysis has allowed us to deduce that the high density of signing, albeit in varying contexts, in both of these areas in Manchester demonstrates that the facility owners want to make a strong effort to engage their clientele. It is most probable that considerably more data was available in Supermarket stores in Chinatown, since Rusholme offers a congregation of mainly restaurants and cafes in comparison. It is apparent that the linguistic content of the signs and posters made available to the customers contributes towards the shaping of the characterisation of the stores, in accordance with the impression that the owners want to create. This is most clearly underscored by the heterogeneity of the signing in Rusholme compared to the concentration of Chinese and English in Chinatown, an area that brands itself with a distinct identity. Both areas employ English language use in supermarkets in a strategic fashion in order to advance their commercial appeal, however the calculated choices to asymmetric language use on the signs and posters are indicative of two varying attempts to create two distinct atmospheres, catering to different communities.

Regarding the broader contexts of both areas, considering restaurants and other facilities, exclusive language use; for example, in Rusholme an advertisement for "fresh meats" that offers only Arabic and Urdu.

An overview of the interview feedback allows us to summarise that many linguistic techniques have been used by the shop-owners to communicate with the public. In both Curry Mile and Chinatown, it was mentioned by interviewees that there were signs and posters around that were exclusive to one audience, due to the use of one specific language. One customer of English descent stated that they could not understand some of the posters hung around the store, however it added to the ambience of the store. The inclusive use of multilingualism in Chinatown was touched upon by one Cantonese shopper who mentioned that the linguistic approach helped her to further understand the products, however some of the Chinese characters were in fact there for decorative purposes rather than to function in a communicative way, which is interesting to see. When asked 'Why do you shop here?' the overall response was due to the atmosphere, as well as the products available. This is reflected in Chinatown's high frequency usage of dominantly Chinese and English, which helps to advertise the culture and create generate a strong ethnic identity in the area. Considering this, we could assume that the use of multilingualism establishes Chinatown as an attraction, and exists to create an ambience, which we could refer to as emblematic; the bilingualism is apparent although does not necessarily communicate an informative message in Chinatown.

It was fascinating to find that, not only do these culture-specific stores adapt their linguistic behaviour to suit British and other English speaking customers, but British stores are adapting their own use of language to suit the linguistic landscape of the

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area. When exploring Chinatown we came across Betfred, a generally British betting store, that made use of its original logo on the outdoor sign and what appeared to be a Chinese translation below. Upon analysis, we found that it merely translated to the store initials 'BF', which is not exactly communicative or informative as it is emblematic. It appears that this store has attempted to adapt their linguistic attitude to create an ambience that suits the culture in the specific area, thus suggesting that Chinese as a language has had an effect on the surrounding landscape, as well as the British influence affecting the language on signs in and around Chinese stores. This results in broadening the clientele and functions as an invitation for potential customers.

Regarding the MacMillan poster located in Chinatown, solely Chinese has been used to communicate the content of the poster, aside from the branded "Macmillan solutions". This is interesting as no strategic linguistic decision has been made for the poster to be intelligible to English speaking customers. This is arguably due to the lack of commercial incentive, given the context of the poster, whereby the charity aims to appeal to the surrounding community rather than the general clientele of the store. The linguistic choices here are therefore not aimed to be inclusive. Other posters, such as the "Buffet City" local commercial outlet, offer English and Chinese in an attempt to attract customers to the facility, using language in an inclusive manner to interact with a wider potential clientele.

Rusholme and its independent supermarkets prominent use of monolingual English signs juxtaposes its multilingual surrounding landscape. Our findings therefore support that of Amoah et al (2011) in that we can concur that English is used more than any other language in a business or commercial context. Comparatively, Chinatown makes use of Chinese more than English, showing that this is not a general trend regarding multilingual Manchester. It is interesting to see how the supermarket in the predominantly Pakistani area, accommodates more to English speakers, than the Chinese supermarkets, who emphasise multilingualism as a more inclusive technique. The results of our data analysis inform us that, in fact, many of the Chinese characters seen on signs are in fact meaningless and only have emblematic properties; the function of them is to create an ambience as Chinatown is somewhat of an attraction, it appears. Our findings further support Rexrodt et al's (2014) conclusive suggestions that the linguistic choices are consciously made to generate inclusivity or exclusivity, in that Rusholme seems to have a lower density of sings with a wider variety of languages on, in a generally inclusive manner, compared to the linguistic choices of Chinatown, which seem to accommodate for less languages.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

Appendix 3

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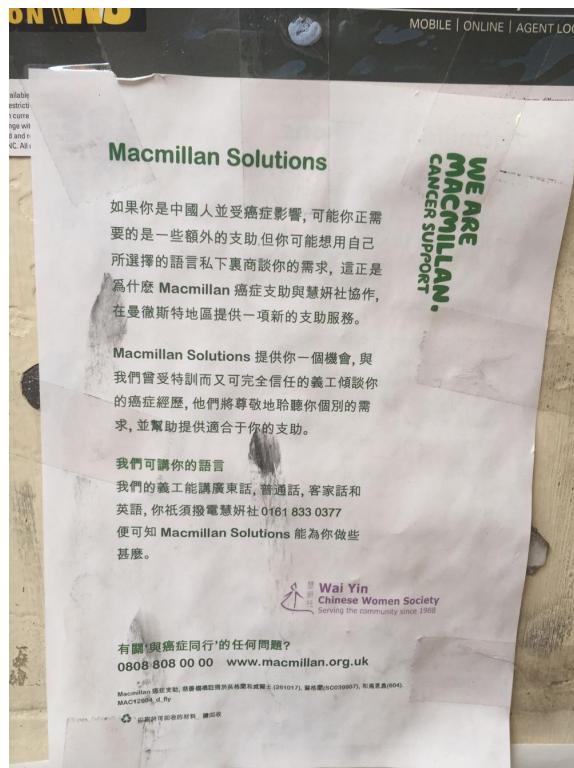
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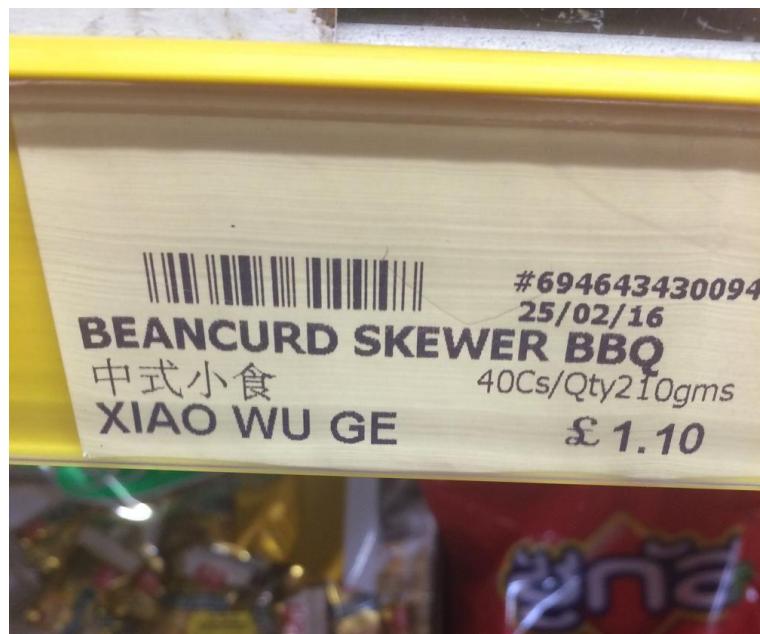

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