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**Not Too Spicy: How The Linguistic Landscape of
Stockport is Influenced by the Demand for
Emblematic Multilingual Advertisement**

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The initial purpose of this research was to answer the question "How is the linguistic landscape of Stockport influenced by the demand for multilingual advertisement, and representative of the languages spoken by both locals and immigrants?" To discover this, we conducted fieldwork in Stockport itself, looking for shop and restaurant signage in languages other than English and interviewing the managers of establishments with those signs. The original intention was to also interview passers-by and customers of those establishments, but this was found to be impractical, as it would cause disruption both to the customers and to the smooth running of the businesses in question. Several planned interview questions were therefore discarded and the question was streamlined, focusing on the impact of demand for multilingual advertisement on the linguistic landscape.

Observation and interviews with managers indicated that the overwhelming majority of the customers were native British people who spoke English as a first language, which aligns with the monolingual and ethnically homogeneous nature of Stockport. According to the 2011 census, 93.2% of Stockport's population was born in Britain, and at least 96% have English as a main language (Office for National Statistics, 2011). The ethnic minority and immigrant population that do exist in the borough of Stockport live in outlier towns such as Cheadle, Gatley, and Heald Green, rather than in central Stockport, which is where we conducted the research.

These observations led us to believe that Stockport lacks a demand for multilingual signage for communication. Stockport's homogeneity means that businesses can assume their customers are able to understand English signage. What we found was that, rather than being communicative, almost all the multilingual signage we encountered was emblematic.

From our literature review, we found Matras and Gaiser (2016) particularly valuable with this new focus on emblematic language use: their findings in Manchester's Chinatown that "the presence of the [Chinese] script itself attracts the attention of potential customers, commodifying a given outlet and the area as 'authentically Chinese' " are relevant to our findings in Stockport. While no non-English language dominated our findings as Chinese does in Chinatown, the use of multilingual signs was still intended to attract attention and commodify the multilingual outlet as non-threateningly "authentic" or "exotic" – only to an extent that monolingual English speakers can participate in without having to venture out of their comfort zone. This degree of multilingualism seems perfectly pitched at an English customer base that wants a bit of an adventurous meal but, as the stereotype goes, "not too spicy."

We photographed and mapped over twenty multilingual signs. There are certainly suggested elements of clustering on particular streets as can be seen in Figure 1. St Petersgate had 4 establishments with multilingual signs, the next nearest examples being several streets away and appearing in only individual instances. These instances of multilingualism will be the focus of our findings. The low amount of multilingual representation in Stockport gives us an

insight on its Linguistic Landscape, mainly showing that it is not particularly varied and does not deviate too much from being monolingual.

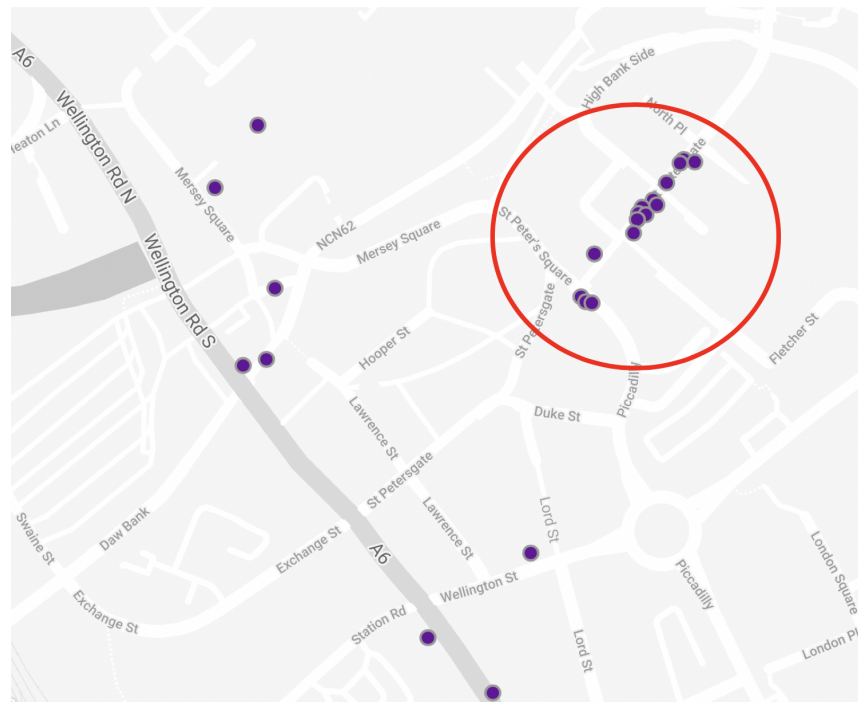


Figure 1. A suggestion of a Multilingual Cluster in Stockport

Convenience stores often contained personal ads, such as the one in Figure 2. These were often advertising either a service (e.g. driving instructor) or offers of employment (e.g. cleaner). They were exclusively in Polish and are therefore proof of differing linguistic communities in Stockport as they intended solely to communicate with speakers of that language. However, overall there was a lack of evidence supporting communicative multilingualism in Stockport. The principal goal of the interviews conducted with shopkeepers was to determine their motivation in using both emblematic and communicative multilingual signs.



Figure.2 Picture of a personal ad placed in *Scar Convenience store*

Our findings include several interviews, mostly with restaurant owners and workers. A noticeable trend emerges when these interviews are compared to each other, as *Aquila Nera*, *Athena*, *Rozafa*, and *Baekdu* all had no specific target demographic beyond what they defined as “locals”. This would include the general population of Stockport, which, as can be verified in our reading (Office for National Statistics, 2011), mostly consists of people who were born in Britain, or consider English their first language.

The motivation for multilingual advertisement in restaurants was, according to our interviews, to attract people who associate the language being used - such as Italian in the case of *Aquila Nera* - with the cuisine being served. Meanwhile, interviews with other types of establishments showed different trends. Workers in *Scar*, a convenience store near the Merseyway shopping centre, informed us that, instead of attracting any local who can afford their products, they specifically wanted to attract people from Poland; therefore, they used Polish in their signs and personal ads (See Figure 2). In order to attract other international customers, international flags were used as accompanying images. These non-restaurants use languages to demonstrate the representation of different foreign groups, and in turn, therefore, attract these groups as well.

Figure 3 shows a church flyer that uses multilingualism in a rare instance of communicative intent. It invites the reader to visit the *Lady's and Apostle Church* on Holy Saturday, in Polish, as well as in English. While we could not interview anybody to gain concrete qualitative data, it could be assumed that a religious institution, like a church, would want to inform, and recruit groups of people. However, given the high amount of people claiming English as their first language in Stockport, this could also be an indication of an emblematic use of multilingualism, to show the Polish population of Stockport that they are represented in a culturally important place like a church.

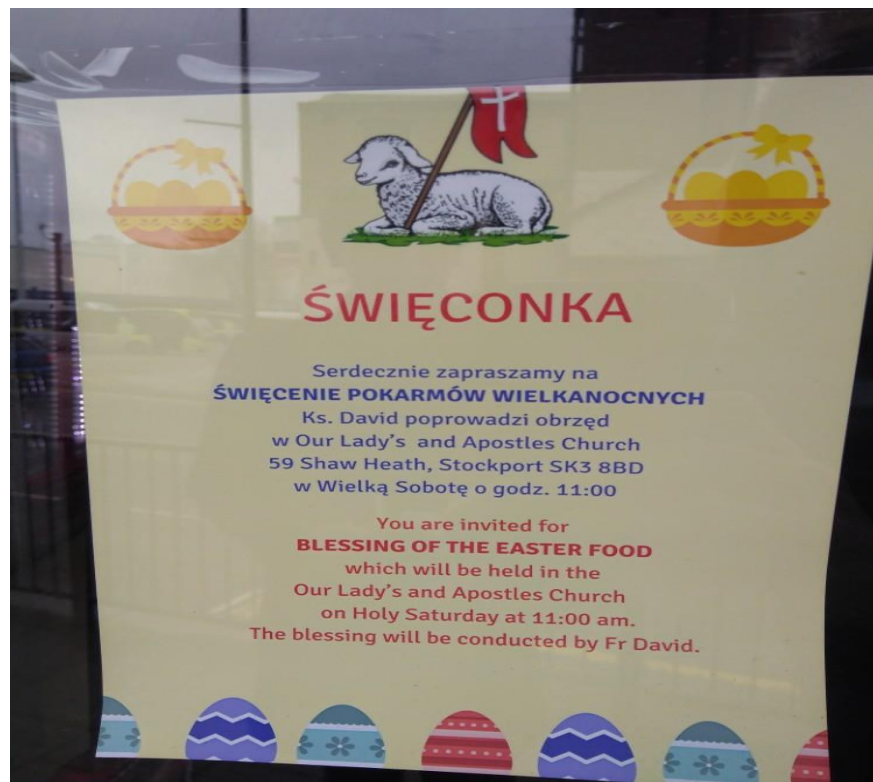


Figure 3: Multilingual Church Flyer in Polish and English

Meanwhile, *Virgin Phones* used a Polish sign simply because they had one staff member who speaks Polish and they wished to advertise this fact to any customers wishing to use that language (Figure 4). Our interview revealed that these signs are available in other languages - only Polish happened to be relevant to this particular shop - and that they're available to all *Virgin Phone* shops in the country, not a local initiative. Shops from larger brands such as this provide the rare uses we found of multilingualism with communicative rather than emblematic intent in the linguistic landscape of Stockport.



Figure 4: Virgin Phones Multilingual Polish Sign

One street in particular featured a large number of multilingual signs, almost all of which belonged to restaurants. This cluster of multilingualism is not due to a specific ethnicity or a specific language being spoken there, but rather because this was a restaurant district, containing a variety of international cuisine. *Rozafa*, *Aquila Nera*, and *Athena* were three of the establishments in this area.

Brighter Futures (Figures 5 and 6) was one of the few non-restaurants with evident multilingualism. It is an educational establishment that featured signs drawn by the pupils: the staff member we spoke to said one was in Libyan Arabic and one was in Japanese.

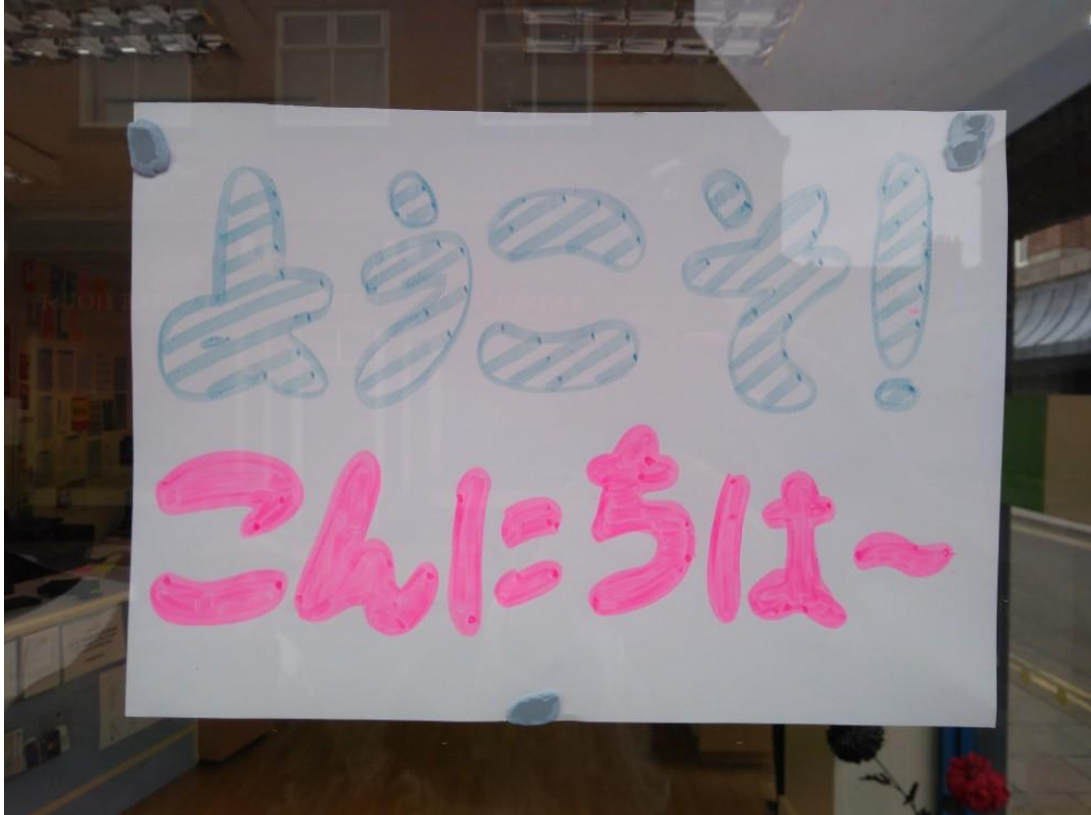


Figure 5: Brighter Futures Sign (1)



Figure 6: Brighter Futures Sign (2)

Rozafa and Aquila Nera are particularly interesting examples of the emblematic use of languages. The owner of Aquila Nera is Albanian, and the food they serve, according to our interview, is a hybrid of Italian and Albanian food. Yet the name, and the accompanying Italian flag (Figure 7), advertise the establishment as Italian, with the intention of making it accessible to an English population that might not know what to think of Albanian food, but finds Italian food familiar and appealing. While the name of the restaurant, Aquila Nera, is Italian for “Black Eagle”, it was chosen because it’s a symbol of Albania, present on the Albanian flag. So while the emblematic intent of the Italian name is at the forefront, there’s an underlying communicative meaning there for people who know enough about both the Italian language and Albanian culture.



Figure 7: Aquila Nera

Similarly, *Rozafa* serves Mediterranean food, but advertises itself as a Greek restaurant. Both explanations for this were similar: both Italian and Greek are recognizable cuisines that the “locals” would recognize, and want to go to. While both restaurants change their menus,

Rozafa never actually changed the original sign, which included an Albanian flag (Figure 8). Instead the establishment simply added new, Greek-language advertisements to supercede what was there before without replacing it (See Figure 8).



Figure 8: Rozafa and The Flags Presented



Figure 9: Rozafa Menu, in Greek

Baekdu, a few streets away, is a prime example of a multilingual establishment that targets no group in particular, having both Korean signs (its name, Figure 10), as well as menus with no intention to specifically target Koreans, despite being a Korean barbecue. A waitress informed us that Baekdu used to be an establishment in Manchester city centre, then Fallowfield, but the owners moved to Stockport specifically to be a more local, less-commercialized establishment, and therefore their advertisement is minimal. This shows that the commodification effect of emblematic multilingualism can continue even when an outlets' ownership intends for it to be non-commercialized.



Figure 10: Baekdu, a Korean mountain range and pun on the owner's name

However, despite being told that these restaurants intend to target no particular group, we can conclude that, just like the convenience stores like *Scar*, they do actually target a specific group of people. Unlike these stores however, this group is not people from the country of origin of the product, but rather a native British demographic in search of authenticity or exoticism on their own terms: something that allows them to feel adventurous without threatening their monolingualism. The multilingual advertisement is not used to show foreigners or non-English speakers that they are represented, as in the case of *Virgin Phones* and *Scar*, and possibly *Brighter Futures*, but instead mould into the perception of what the local community believes to be international, exotic food.

As demonstrated by our research, the linguistic landscape of Stockport is extremely homogeneous, as we found fewer than 30 manifestations of languages other than English in the area we covered. 97% of Stockport residents reported English as their main language on the 2011 census and more than 89% of respondents said they are British (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Though this data may be flawed in its request for a “main” language - in a BBC interview (2013), Yaron Matras suggests several possible flaws, such as misunderstanding the

question or “fear of stigmatisation” - it is clear that Stockport is majoritively English. We must consider then, the multilingual landscape features that are present and address their function. Since there is little to no apparent communicative need for non-English linguistic landscape features, why do these instances appear at all?

Leeman and Modan (2009) address the commodification of language in the linguistic landscape in their study on the Chinatown in Washington DC, where the presence of Chinese in the landscape serves a primarily emblematic purpose. As a tourist attraction in the USA, the implementation of Chinese is used to create a sense of coherence and authenticity, to the extent that American chains such as McDonalds and Starbucks have Chinese signs. While Stockport has no such clusters of non-English language commerce, the theory behind using other languages as signifiers of authenticity and cultural value is replicated in much of the linguistic landscape of Stockport.

A linguistic landscape forms based on decisions by the government and property owners, most prominently large corporations or local businesses. Given Stockport’s predominantly English-speaking population, it is unsurprising that we encountered no government or council signs in any language other than English. Of the private enterprise responsible for instances of multilingual landscape features, only one was not from a local business (Figure 4). All other non-English signage appeared on local businesses, either in their own signs or through hosting non-English community advertisements. Many of the local business owners we spoke to mentioned their immigrant heritage, often speaking English as a second language. The high correlation between multilingualism and use of multilingual marketing suggests the exploitation of an English-dominated market gap by multilingual business owners, commodifying language to take advantage of a perceived exoticism and authenticity unattainable by white Stockport natives.

Restaurants such as Rozafa display foreign languages and iconography in their signage, and display their menu with dishes named in Greek but described in English. A member of staff confirmed that the image of the Parthenon is used as “an iconic Greek image” and that the use of Greek appealed to people with some knowledge of the language (Appendix). This includes not only to Greeks and Cypriots, who might recognise their home cuisine, but also English people who have previously visited Greece or Cyprus. Similarly, a staff member at Aquila Nera - an “Italian Ristorante and Pizzeria”, as seen in figure 6 - confirmed their use of Italian on the menu to ensure people recognise that the food is Italian. In fact, the Italian-ness of the restaurant is entirely business-focused. The restaurant’s Albanian owners chose to open an Italian restaurant because of the popularity of Italian food in English culture, feeling safer appropriating a more profitable culture than risking attempting to introduce their own to Stockport. Here we see concrete examples of language and culture being used not by or for their people of origin, but adapted for commercial purposes in a heavily English-dominated

environment. This emblematic language usage allows businesses to market international goods and services towards English-speaking customers without the risk of alienating them.

Despite *Rozafa* being a Greek restaurant, it is described on its sign as a “Taverna and Ristorante” (Figure 7). The use of Italian “ristorante” on a sign for a Greek restaurant has gone unnoticed and unchanged for several years, since *Rozafa* has not served any Italian cuisine for twelve years. This raises the issue of linguistic landscapes not necessarily reflecting the contemporary state of an area’s linguistic community. A given sign, especially belonging to a local business, will only change as and when its owners see fit to spend the money on doing so, which means there will be occasions where signs become outdated due to lack of incentive for change. This is also an issue with businesses that are no longer open. Stockport is home to several defunct local businesses, the premises of which have not been passed on to new owners. As a result, the linguistic landscape cannot be relied upon totally as an up-to-date reflection of a linguistic community, as there may exist multilingual signs which no longer represent the people who installed them. However, given that the majority of Stockport’s linguistic landscape is emblematic, not communicative, this does not present too great a problem. The landscape in general tells us more about the relationship between the monolingual English locals and the multilingual community than any given multilingual community itself, and how multilingualism can be used in marketing to appeal to a monolingual population.

Though the majority of the multilingual marketing in Stockport is aimed at attracting English-speaking locals, there is evidence that certain businesses deliberately seek out custom from within their linguistic community. In Blomaert and Maly’s 2014 study *Ethnographic linguistic landscape analysis and social change: A case study*, the diverse linguistic landscape of Ghent is attributed to the many ethnicities present within the city and a conscious effort to include and represent them. Despite the range of ethnicities and multilingualism present in Ghent being much larger than in Stockport, finding a variety of languages represented in stores, coffee shops, restaurants, and even government vehicles, Stockport shows a similar pattern when it comes to the use of multilingual advertisement within the local Polish community. The Polish supermarket *Scar Convenience Store* displayed personal bulletins from locals entirely in Polish, advertising rooms for rent exclusively in Polish (Appendix 3). In addition, the *Virgin Phones* employee we interviewed told us that several Polish customers had bought phones since the implementation of the sign in Figure 4. Though the content of these personal bulletins is communicative in intent, they also serve the emblematic purpose of raising the profile of the local Polish community. In these ways the linguistic landscape demonstrates the substantial presence of Polish speakers in Stockport, though in a much smaller and more condensed way than in Ghent, on account of the less diverse population overall.

Stockport’s linguistic landscape is not heavily influenced by demand for multilingual advertisement, with virtually zero communicative presence due to the predominantly English

population. The overwhelming majority of the landscape consists of English, monolingual signs, with scattered instances of multilingual representation. Of these, most come from small businesses targeting English customers, employing other languages as a marketing tactic to appear exotic, authentic or distinct from surrounding businesses, while remaining accessible and friendly to English customers. The commodification of language by multilingual Stockport residents is the primary force creating diversity in Stockport's linguistic landscape, exploiting its emblematic use in marketing non-English products and services. It is motivated more by capitalism than culture. This is the case despite the burgeoning presence of the Polish community in the landscape. The small influence of demand for multilingual marketing in Stockport's linguistic landscape is nevertheless enlightening with regards to the city's relationship with multilingualism and attitudes towards foreign languages.

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Appendix I

Questions for shops:

1) What languages do you use on your signs? Why?

→ If the sign advertises non-English goods: ask to elaborate on the choice to omit/include writing in languages reflecting the origin of the product.

2) If there are international flags, but no actual language: why?

-->If there are only flags, but no languages besides English: ask to elaborate on monolingual choice, given international advertisement. What effects do the flags have, that the languages would not have?

3) How long has it been that way?

-->How long has the sign only been in English? Always? Has it changed? For names: has the name ever changed? Were other languages ever included? If other languages are included: was there a time the advertisement was exclusively in English?

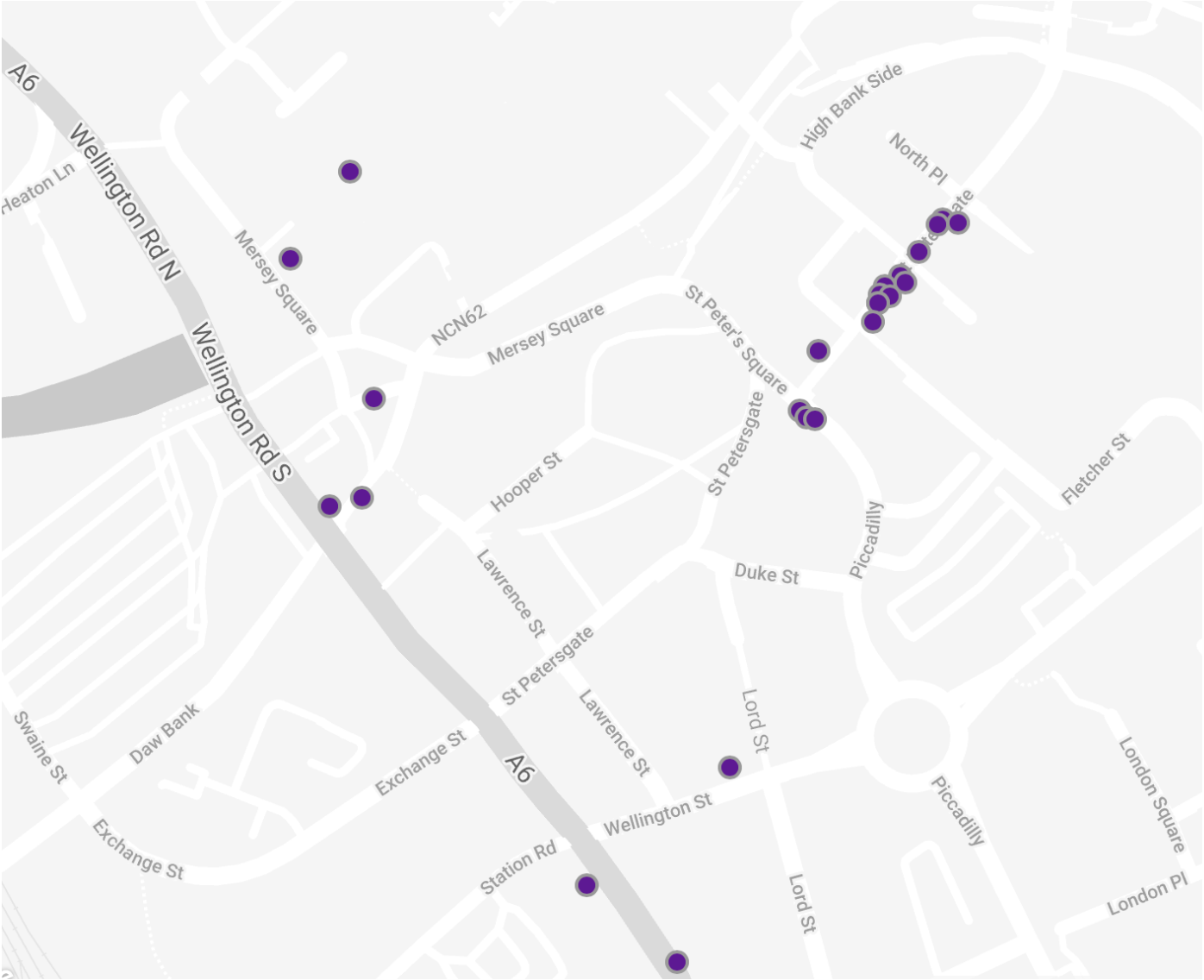
4) Have you added any recently/taken them away? When and why?

-->How have multilingual/monolingual advertising strategies changed over time? Why would a non-English product be sold exclusively in English?

5) Who is the target demographic you are trying to attract with the sign?

--> Immigrants? People from the country of origin for this product? English locals? Tourists? Ask to elaborate on why

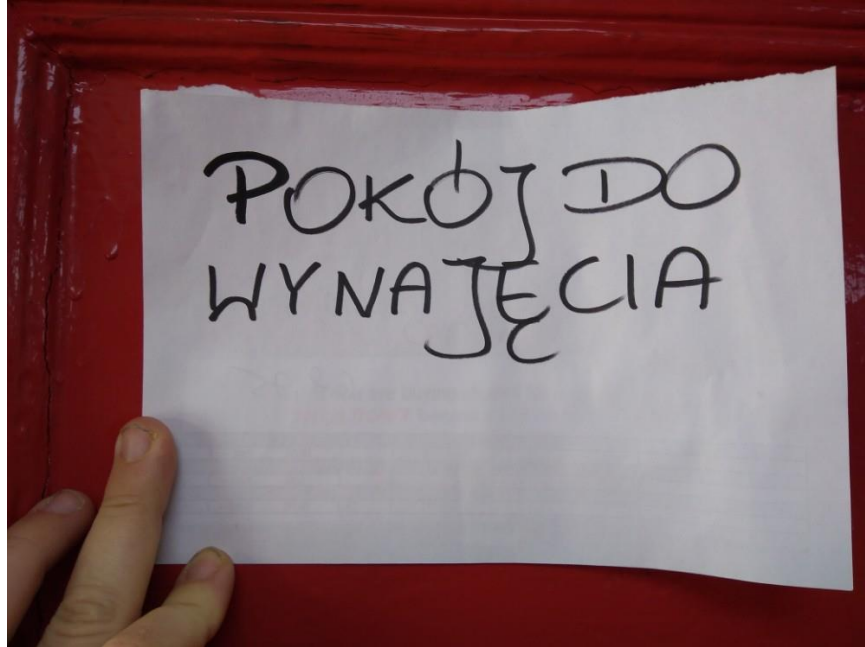
Appendix II



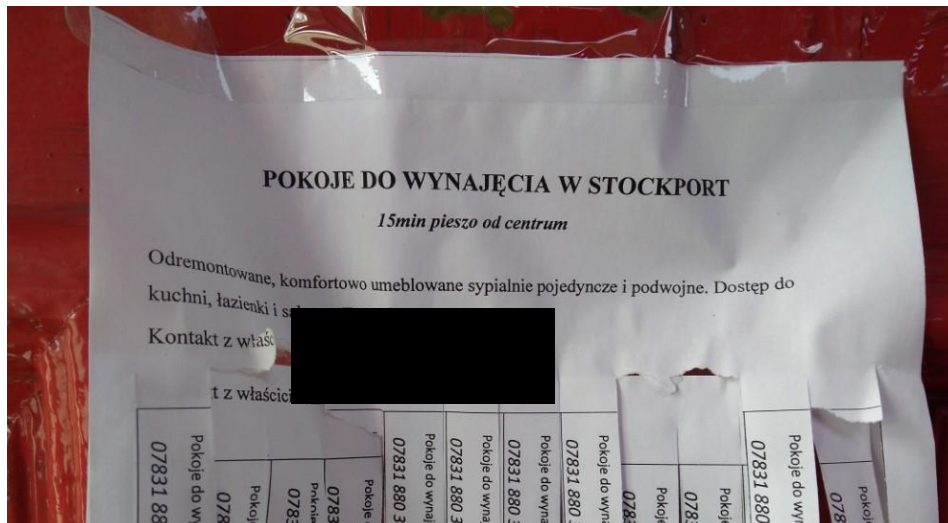
LinguaSnapp map of multilingual linguistic landscape features in Stockport.

p Apendix III
Rooms for Rent LinguaSnapp

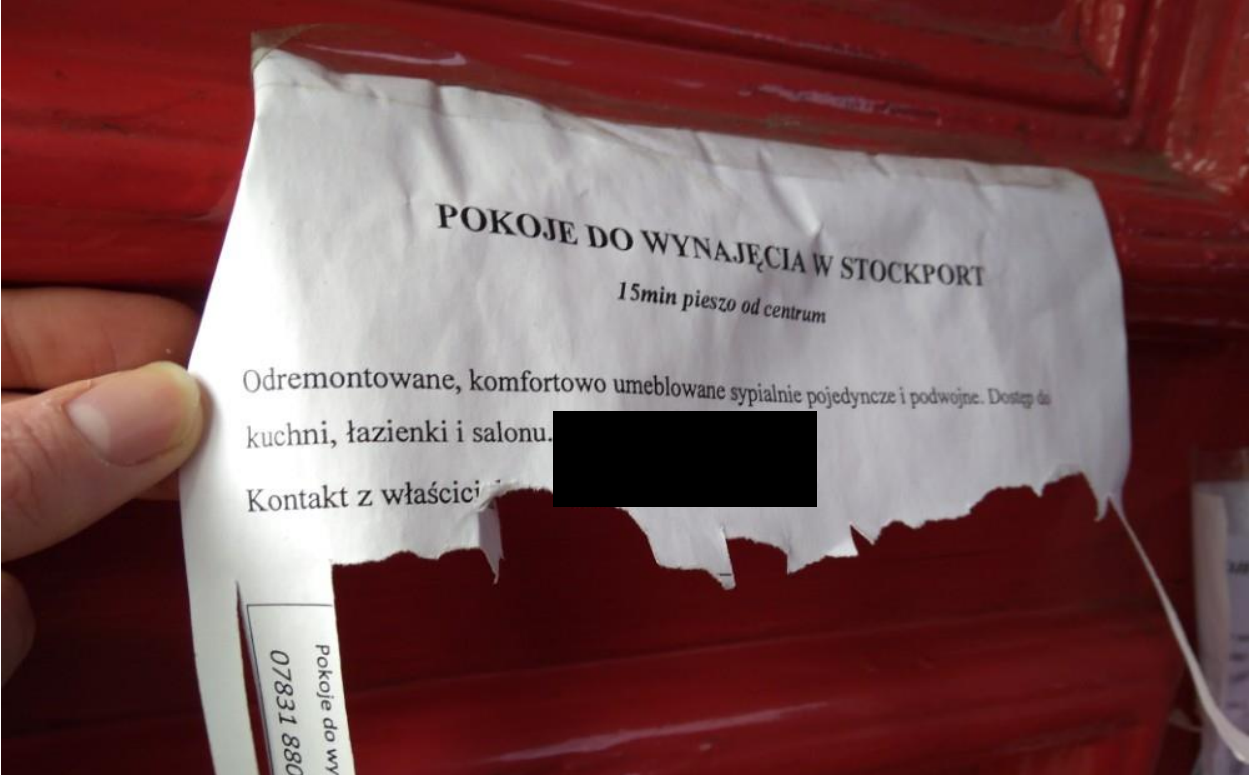
Picture 1:



Picture 2:



Picture 3:



POKOJE DO WYNAJĘCIA W STOCKPORT

15min pieszo od centrum

Odremontowane, komfortowo umeblowane sypialnie pojedyncze i podwójne. Dostęp do
kuchni, łazienki i salonu.

Kontakt z właścicielem

Pokoje do wy
07831 880