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**A Comparative study of language use within the
business sectors of 'The Curry Mile' with China Town**

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Introduction

Our investigation was based in China town in Manchester city centre and on the 'Curry Mile' in Rusholme. We chose to conduct our research in these areas as they are both hubs for linguistic diversity. As both of these communities are relatively new in Manchester, we thought it would be interesting to see how they have grown and to try and highlight the main differences with how each community uses their language(s) in terms of business and communication with its target audience. Another factor for choosing these communities was geographical location, as both of these communities are microcosms as all of the businesses reflect the need of that community and obviously due to the size of each area, the amount and assortment of businesses varied.

We decided that we would focus on a number of businesses that included supermarkets, small shops and also after an insightful conversation with a Lebara Mobile worker we looked at how they work in each of the communities as mobile communication and internet cafes seem to be quite a prominent area for trade in both areas.

Expectations

The largest community in Manchester is Pakistani, so as Arabic and Urdu are official languages of Pakistan we were expecting these to be the most commonly spoken in Rusholme. This preliminary expectation was correct as Urdu is the most spoken language after English in Manchester. Although, from observing the linguistic landscape of Rusholme it appears to be changing with more Turkish, Somali and Kurdish being spoken due to more immigration from the Middle East and African countries. It is interesting that so many different people come together to live in one area and a common language is a possible reason for that. Not only this but also a common religion and similar cultures may also be contributing factors for this. This is something that is not necessarily as prominent in China town as there is not really a religion that unites the people who shop there, neither is there a culture that affects things such as clothing or type of food (Halal signs are quite noticeable on the curry mile).

From the 1950s, due to job opportunities in the cotton mill industry, many southern Asian immigrants began to settle in Rusholme, predominantly on the Wilmslow Road. The main transformation of this area occurred in the 1960s and 70s when more Asian families began to set up businesses, it then became a hub for Indian and Pakistani Cuisine.

Prior to conducting research in China town we had some initial expectations of what we would find from our investigations. China town in comparison to Rusholme's Curry Mile is relatively small, so we were not expecting there to be as much diversity in the language spoken. As the majority of migration from China has come from Hong Kong in previous decades, we expected there to be a lot of Cantonese spoken rather than Mandarin as that is the most common language in that part of China. However, since 1986 and China's 'Open door policy' more and more Chinese people have been able to leave and visit or migrate to other countries including the UK. The official language of China is Mandarin, although there are estimated to be over 200 languages spoken in China. Due to more and more international Chinese students coming to the universities in Manchester, it appears that more and more Mandarin is being spoken in China town as well as across the city. Chinese immigration to Manchester began in a slow wave in the early 20th century, however increased rapidly in the 1950s when the Chinese government began to build on Hakkanese land to accommodate the growing population (Wong, 2009). This combined with a significant drop in wages due to post war unemployment drove people to immigrate to Britain and many became settled just south of Manchester's City Centre. From the 1970s immigration peaked again, with family and friends coming over to help expand the popular Chinese food trade.

Manchester continues to be a popular destination for Chinese immigrants due to the long haul flights to Manchester airport. Nowadays, many Mandarin-speaking Chinese come to Manchester for further education and work opportunities.

Methodology

After conducting research into linguistic fieldwork we decided that the best methods for collecting data would be a questionnaire for customers and to conduct an interview with specific business owners. Lawrence's study (2012) on the Korean/English linguistic landscape photographed linguistic signs and analysed them according to the percentage of English, Korean and Chinese recorded. This provided him with solid statistical data which we assume to be easily analysed. We considered conducting our study in this way, however, after much discussion decided we were more interested on the social effect linguistic signs have on Manchester multi-lingual inhabitants. It was for this reason that we decided to conduct interviews and questionnaires with business owners and customers, to find out what impact multi-lingual signs have on people's lives. We did, however, adopt Lawrence's idea of photography, as we thought having a physical reference to the signs would be a helpful reminder throughout our study, not to mention a brilliant opportunity to extract some numeric data.

Joshua Fisherman (1997, 237 cited in Garcia and Schiffman, 2011) explored multilingualism, more specifically focusing on 'immigrant minority language communities. In the UK languages such as Urdu and Chinese are used increasingly in Rusholme and Chinatown. It was interesting to study these communities to relate to multilingualism not in the UK, but in specific regions which consist of many immigrants from the western continent.

In regards to methodology when conducting research Fisherman claimed that 'a good bit of any observers values and beliefs rub off on his or hers observations', therefore it would be vital for us to gain an insight to other peoples opinions that reside in the area by conducting a questionnaire that will allow them to voice their opinion. This prevented us from being biased by taking into account views of people in the area. Fisherman's model consists of carrying out ethnographic observations in which behaviour and attitudes towards different languages are hypothesised. These views can then be used to analyse further in regards to 'observations, questionnaires, interviews and attitude scales'. We used this model to analyse linguistic landscapes in Chinatown and Rusholme to gain an unbiased representation.

Fisherman states that researching the 'domains' that the languages are spoken in are crucial as he believes that 'multilingualism often begins in the family' and that without the 'generational mother tongue transmission, no language maintenance is possible.' Our questionnaire explored the impact of the business owner's mother tongue and the use of the language chosen for the sign to identify whether this corresponds to their mother tongue or not. We believed that if it did not correspond, it would show that multilingualism can scope beyond family traits, as choosing to have a sign that is in a different language to the mother tongue shows maintenance of a different language. A potential reason for business owners learning a new language is that the particular language they need to learn in order to communicate with the majority of people and customers may be the dominant language in the surrounding area, or they may have come to learn it by making friends in that region that speak a particular language. Modern day technology also allows people to take courses online and self-teach a language, in a domain such as China town or Rusholme, immigrants may find it useful to acquire the predominant language in order to read signs and communicate on a day to day basis. However, Fisherman insists on the 'power of family, over the power of the internet'. We wanted to analyse whether linguistic landscapes are there to reflect the family roots of the business owners by being in their mother tongue or whether they cater for the customer's needs by moving to use a more dominant language that is in use in that area.

Diglossia was proposed by Ferguson (1959) and suggests that there is a high and low variety of language use in a society. Rusholme and Chinatown consist of many different languages, it was of interest to find out if a certain language prevails in an area for functional purposes; particularly if one language is used by the business owners for all the signs and to visually communicate whilst another may be used to verbally communicate with customers. If so, why is a certain language over another used on linguistic landscapes consistently?

We decided to display our findings in pie charts and graphs so that we could clearly identify any trends in the data. We found that this was the clearest way to do this, and the graphs are displayed throughout the report and some are also attached in the appendix.

Business Interviews

A total of six businesses were interviewed on the Curry Mile. Five of these businesses use multilingual signs which are written in Arabic. The languages that are native to the business owners include Kurdish, Punjabi and Urdu.

It was found that the answer to our proposed question, **'Who is the sign targeted at, and why?'** is affected by the type of business that is being run. For example, supermarkets along Wilmslow road target Muslims who eat only Halal meat, whereas shisha café's such as Wanasah, explicitly said that their target customers are of Middle Eastern and Arab descent.

Consequently, this provides us with further information about why Arabic is used and not any other language - particularly those that are native to the owners, like Urdu. Since Shisha, also called 'hookah' is an Arabic – derived term, it is only natural for the sign to be in this language. Furthermore, the scripture of the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an, is also in Arabic. Therefore, Arabic would be the most appropriate and official language to use.

An additional reason for Arabic being the chosen language was due to practicality, as mentioned by the supermarket, Midway. The owner told us that the employees are able to converse with customers in both Punjabi and Urdu. They are not, however, fluent in Arabic and therefore the signs are there to guide customers who only understand Arabic.

Worldwide, on the other hand, did not display any signs in any other language aside from English. This is unusual since it is the largest supermarket on the Curry Mile and the majority of customers come from ethnic backgrounds. The owner expressed that the reason for this is due to the fact that the majority of customers can understand and speak English, and for those who cannot, the bilingual staff are on hand to help.

It is clear that religion plays a major role in the use of signs in this area of Manchester. In fact, one business, 'Top Jewellers', even revealed that the signs they use hold purely religious content and have no purpose in attracting customers. Their signs are transcriptions taken from the Qur'an, and can be seen on the door of the store as well as on the walls inside. In English they translate to 'God is greatest' and 'MashAllah', and as such they are simply there to bless the store.

All of the businesses used external companies to create their signs, except for Ravi food store, where the sign was hand painted on by a previous generation; the owner's father. As such, the sign also holds sentimental symbolic value for the owner. In addition, the smaller signs placed in-store of Midway were also produced by hand.

In China town it was far more difficult to get business owners to agree to participate in our interview due to a number of reasons such as a language barrier or that they were too busy, however, we did interview two business owners in China town. Although this is not a big enough sample to be reflective of the area as a whole, we were still able to gauge some idea of how decisions are made in terms of the multilingual signs.

The first business that we interviewed was part of an international company, Lebera Mobile. The employee was able to speak Mandarin, Cantonese and English. He said that he uses Mandarin the most to speak to customers as the majority of business comes from international students from China looking for cheap ways to contact their family back at home. The signs were in a mixture of Mandarin and English, and when translated state advice and how the product works, as you can see from the picture in the appendix. One of the things that Lebera as a company believe in is to 'Always be **empathetic** to the needs of diverse communities' and one of the ways that they do this is to offer multilingual signs and also employees that are able to communicate with potential and existing customers. Lebera's target customers are 'first generation ethnic consumers, differentiated by country of origin, other migrants needing to phone home e.g. ethnic students, ex-patriot workers, economic migrants and knowledge migrants, 2nd and 3rd generation ethnic consumers who also use Lebera Mobile for international calling and Anyone with friends and family abroad.'

The other company was a bakery that used an external company to produce the external sign and the more 'professional' ones inside the shop. The owner's native tongue was Cantonese and they could also speak English. She produced hand-written signs in cantonese daily for the products as the baked goods change frequently. The owner is currently learning how to speak Mandarin so that she will be able to communicate to more people as it appears that Mandarin is the most prominent language in the China town in Manchester at least.

Customer Interviews

We managed to interview ten customers along Curry Mile. We proposed the question '**Do shops in this area accommodate for your language?**'. Since there is not a lot of diversity in terms of the language that the signs are written in, and only Arabic is used, it could be assumed that only Arabic fluent customers will answer yes to this question, and there will be a greater number of people who feel that their native tongue is not accommodated to. However, 80% people who were asked answered 'yes', of which 30% stated that their native tongue is Arabic. For the remainder 20% who answered 'no', their native languages consisted of Turkish and Urdu. This tells us that generally people in this area feel that their language is accommodated to.

In order to further evaluate the impact of multilingual signs, and the difference that shared language can make, we put forward the following two questions '**Are you more likely to shop in places that can speak your language?**' and '**Are you more attracted to a shop/supermarket with a sign in your native language?**'. The majority of the customers answered 'no' to both questions. A vast 90% of customers stated that the use of signs in their native language does not make a difference to their decision to shop at a particular business. In fact, one customer even expressed that since he is residing in a foreign country he does not have any expectations for a sign to be in his language and as such signs make no difference to him. Furthermore, 80% of customers express that they are not more inclined to shop in businesses that can speak their native tongue.

Overall, it appears that multilingual signs nor the businesses' ability to speak their native language does not influence the customer's decisions. This could be due to the fact that the majority of people visiting these businesses can also communicate via English, and as such the signs in their language are not a necessity. This is further reflected by the data; generally most people feel that additional signs, even in different languages, would not benefit the community.

When we were conducting research in China town it was difficult to get people who were willing to take part in our questionnaire. It seemed as if the older generation of migrants were not willing to participate, this could have been for a number of reasons, including a language barrier and that we are not part of what appears to be quite a tight knit community. However, the younger generation of people seemed to be more willing to participate, and we have presented our findings in a chart. As you can see in figure 1.

Percentage of each age group who participated in the China Town

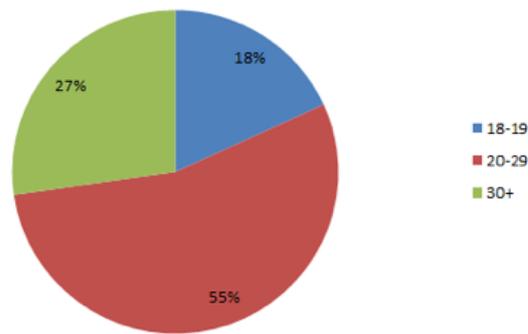


Figure 1

As expected the majority of the Mandarin speakers that we asked preferred to communicate with business owners in their native language and liked that signs were displayed in their native tongue also as it makes it easier for them.

We found it interesting that there were quite a few Korean people, who despite not having their language catered for in China town still liked to be part of the Chinese community hub. This could be because they share a similar culture to the Chinese and they are able to buy products that they like from this area. However, in terms of language and the signs in China town, they are of no use to Koreans and they choose to use the signs in English. This highlights the importance of having multilingual signs as they are able to appeal to a wider audience, even if their native language is not being accommodated.

As suggested by David Ryan (2011:2) the presence of written objects reveals much more than just the language of the people occupying a particular area. We agree with this statement as when interviewing customers in Chinatown and Curry Miles we discovered that signs provoked dissimilar responses on the status of the language of signs. For example in figure 2, we can see that a majority of customers agreed that signs should be in more varieties of languages. Speakers of Korean, Cantonese and in fact Mandarin generally agreed that signs in just one language in such a culturally diverse city like Manchester could be problematic, and it would be useful for more signs in more languages.

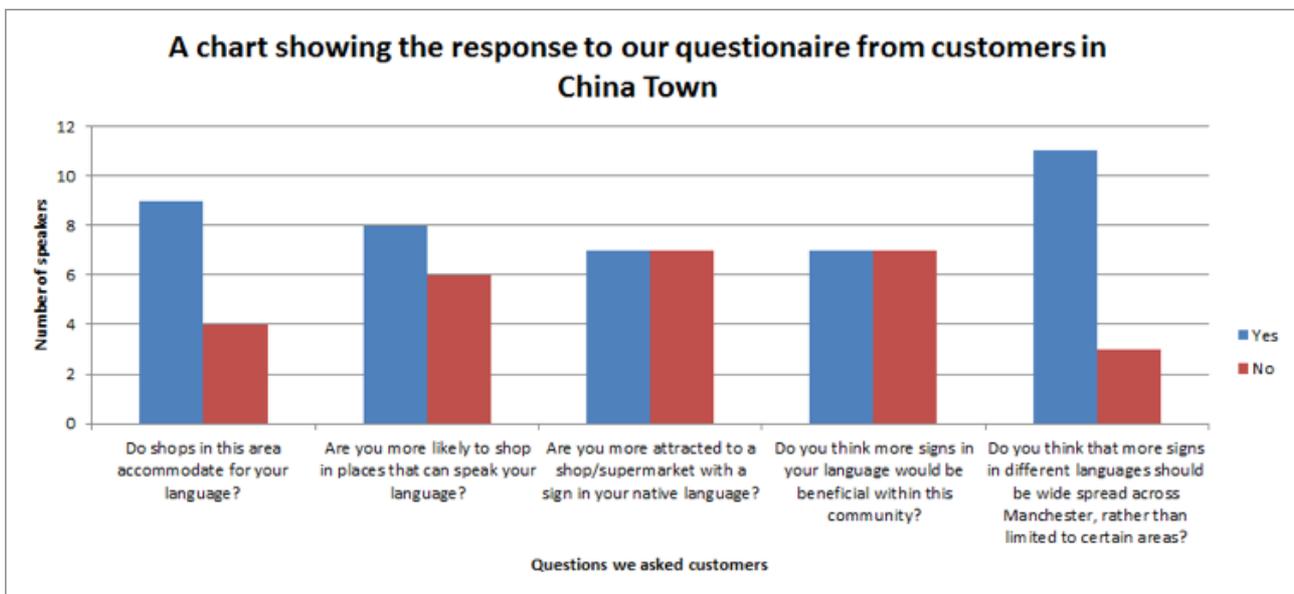


Figure 2

Ryan (2011:2) also claims that “debates on language visibility can create schisms within a community”. Again, we agree with this. For example in the Curry Mile, the majority of customers in fact disagreed, and suggested that signs should in fact be restricted to one or few languages. We can see this in figure 3.

Ryan’s (2011:3) major aims are quite similar to our own. First he documents multilingual signs in two specific communities. We have done this by taking photographs. Like Ryan, we then interviewed customers and business owners on their preferences and, in the case of business owners, why they chose that particular language for their sign.

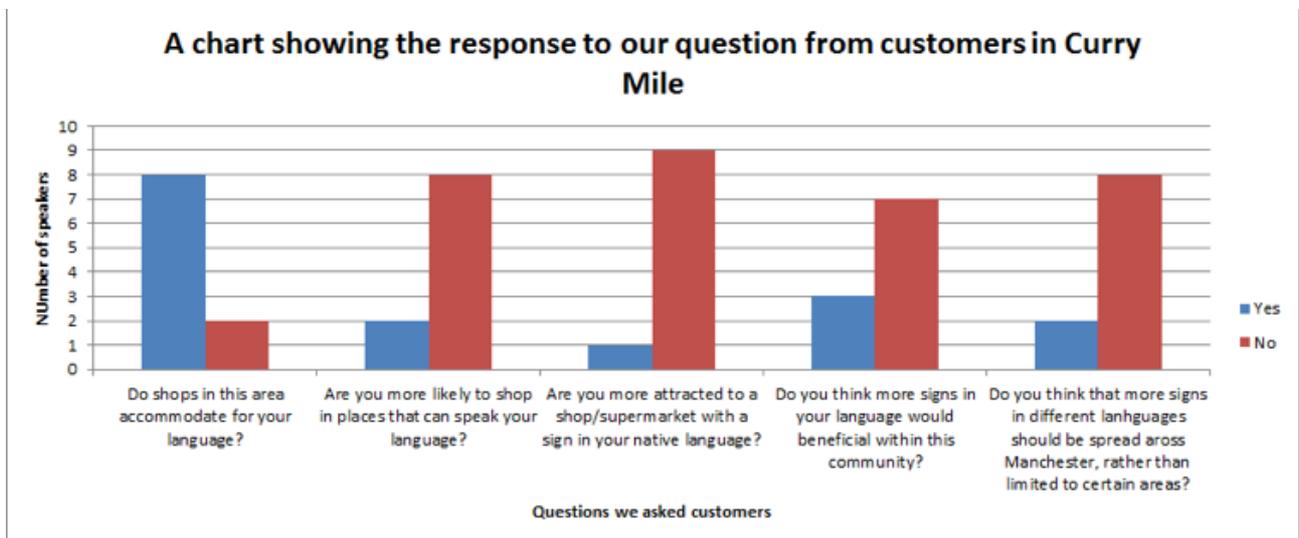


Figure 3

By comparing and contrasting Curry Mile and Chinatown we suggest how these linguistic and culturally diverse communities differ in customer preferences towards the linguistics of signs, and preference to how business owners want to advertise their shop. This can also be seen to follow Ryan’s (2011) study.

Evaluation

In terms of the data that we were able to collect, we have been able to make some clear conclusions as to the reasons why businesses make certain decisions in regards to multilingual signs. It is also evident that customers show a clear preference for signs in their own language, although many have agreed that they are not entirely necessary as the majority of them speak English. One issue that we had was that our sample sizes are quite small and therefore not entirely reflective of each community as a whole, however, given the resources that we had and the difficulties that we faced trying to get people to participate we have still been able to come up with some conclusions based on our findings.

The initial framework that we planned to carry out seemed to work quite well, we had already anticipated some of the difficulties that we might encounter and many of them were correct, such as language barriers and also many people did not want to participate, which is obviously a decision that we had to respect and ensure that our research was being conducted in an appropriate and ethical manner which respected people's right to privacy and also to not participate. Regarding the times that we planned to conduct research, it seemed to work well on the Curry Mile as there seems to be quieter parts of the day for businesses. In China Town on the other hand, it was very hard to anticipate when it would be busy, we tried several different times of day to varying degrees of success.

Conclusion

The aim of our investigation has been to find out the way in which businesses make decisions on whether to use multilingual signs and also whether they are in any way beneficial to the business and the customers alike. Furthermore, we wanted to explore whether there was a difference in the way that two separate ethnic minority communities use multilingual signs and language for business purposes. From our findings we conclude that in both China town and the Curry Mile there seems to be a preference for one language to be more prominent, which is Mandarin in China town and Arabic on the Curry Mile. There appears to be a greater variety of languages actually spoken on the Curry Mile than in China town, but Arabic is mainly used as these people are united by religion, Islam, to which Arabic belongs as their holy book is written in this language.

Based on the responses we had from our questionnaires, we believe that multilingual signs appear to be more of a visual aid for existing customers rather than a method of attracting new custom. Signs were often not in the mother tongue of the shop keeper or business owner, as they are already able to communicate in those languages and chose to use a different language on their sign to appeal to a wider audience, on the Curry Mile this is especially the case.

There is currently a language shift taking place in China Town, with Mandarin becoming increasingly more popular than the original Cantonese that was used by the majority of Chinese migrants when they first moved to the UK. Despite many of the signs in China town being written in Cantonese, we saw many shop keepers either learning to speak Mandarin if they could not already as this is the language that they use most frequently with customers. This increased use of Mandarin rather than Cantonese is for a number of reasons, namely the ability of Chinese people to travel more freely since the Open Door Policy of 1978 and the rise in Chinese international students coming to study at the universities in Manchester, as well as the rest of the UK. There are, however, some similarities between Mandarin and Cantonese, especially the characters that they use to write. Although they are not completely mutually intelligible, most Mandarin speakers can understand some Cantonese and vice versa.

The purpose of the multi-lingual signs in both China town and on the Curry mile appear to be fairly similar. They want to cater for native speakers of their language as they believe that it is more attractive to customers. One of the main differences is who the signs are targeted at. The majority of people that shop and live around the Curry Mile are families and migrant workers united by

things such as a common culture and religion, whereas in China town there appears to be a lot of younger people who are here to study. This has an affect on the types of signs used, as some signs on the Curry Mile were in Arabic purely for religious reasons, this was not something that we found in China Town.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for Customers

Age..... Gender.....

1. What is your native language?
2. Do you speak any other languages? If so, which ones?
3. Do shops in this area accommodate for your language?
4. Are you more likely to shop in places that can speak your language?
5. Are you more attracted to a shop/supermarket with a sign in your native language?
6. Do you think more signs in your language would be beneficial within this community?
7. Do you think that more signs in different languages should be wide spread across manchester, rather than limited to certain areas? If so, why?

We are students from the University of Manchester conducting a study on the linguistic landscapes of local areas; Rusholme and China Town. The answers you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential throughout the duration of our study and destroyed once the report is completed, however they will be presented in graphs and discussed as a generalisation in some depth in our final report. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in this study please give written consent below

I confirm that I have agreed to take part in this questionnaire and that the data collected will be used for a report on societal multilingualism by students at the University of Manchester.

Signed.....

Date.....

Interview with Business Owner/Supervisor

Type of Business.....

Business Name.....

We are students from the University of Manchester conducting a study on the linguistic landscapes of local areas; Rusholme and China Town. The answers you give in this interview will be kept confidential throughout the duration of our study and destroyed once the report is completed, however, they will be presented in graphs and discussed as a generalisation in some depth in our final report. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate in this study please give written consent below

I confirm that I have agreed to take part in this interview and that the data collected will be used for a report on societal multilingualism by students at the University of Manchester.

Sign..... Date.....

1. What is your mother tongue?

2. What language(s) is your sign in?

3. What does it translate as in English?

4. How was the translation for the sign produced? (Did you use external company or in house production)

5. Who is the sign targeted at, and why?

6. Is the sign in the language that you mainly use to communicate with customers?

7. Do you feel like the sign is profitable as it attracts a wider range of customers?

8. Can you speak any other languages? If so, which ones?

9. Why/why not have you chosen to put that language on your sign?

10. Do you speak the same language as your parents/grandparents? How will you ensure your sign appeals to the largest audience when there is a language shift.

Photographic Evidence of Multi-lingual signs



This is an example of a Cantonese Sign



This sign is from the Supermarket pictured above; they have decided to produce signs in both languages inside for the main food products. Whereas in another shop they produced hand written signs as pictured below, also in Cantonese but the shop owner explained that most Mandarin



This sign is also from 'Hang Woo Hong' and it has Cantonese but in roman script and the rest is entirely in English. This could be a more popular product with British born Chinese who are more likely to speak English.



This is one of the Lebera Mobile signs and the employee told us that it translated to advice about the types of contacts that they offer. The sign is in Mandarin.



This door is part of an internet cafe and the sign is in Mandarin. It translated to 'Our computers have a genuine Chinese Language system'.

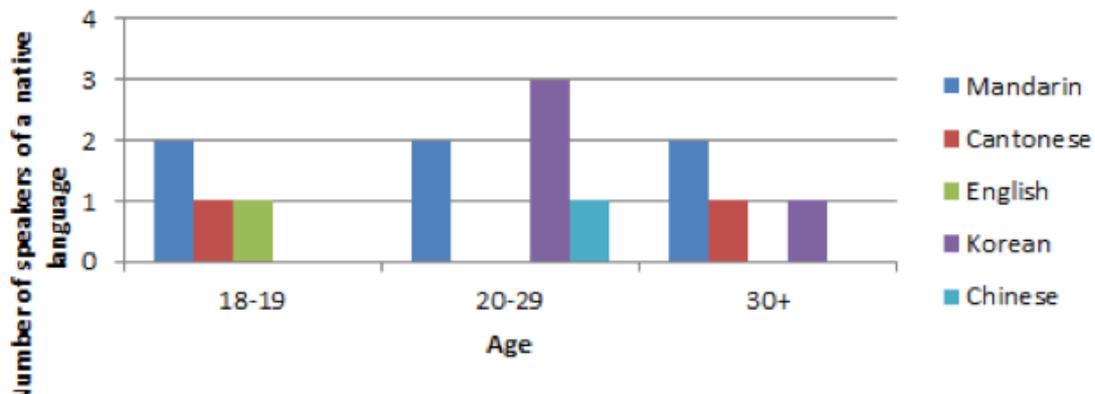


Midway Food Store. Both signs are hand written in Arabic.

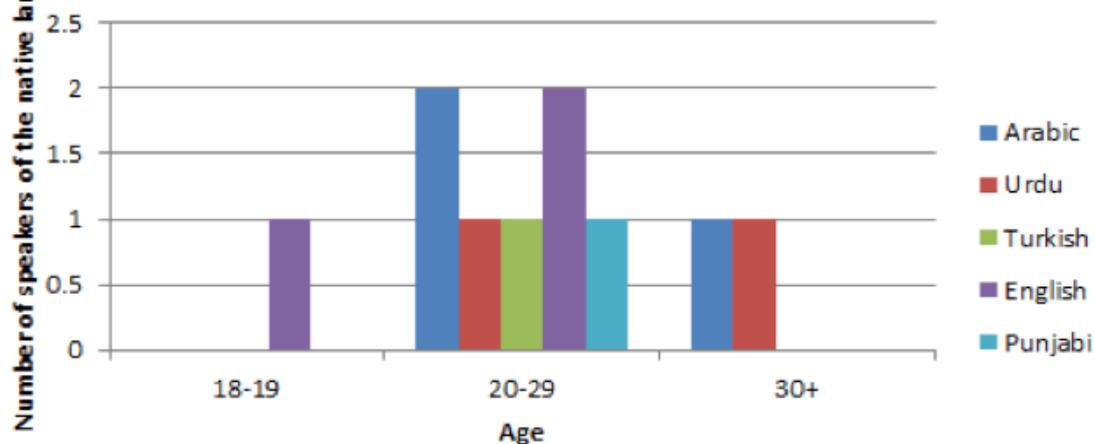




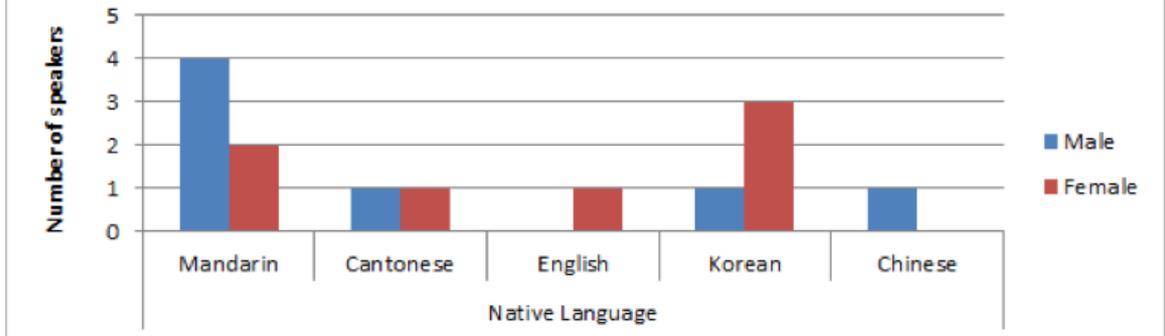
A chart showing what native languages are spoken by each age group of customers in China Town



A chart showing what native languages are spoken by each age group of customers in Curry Mile



A chart showing the number of male and female customers and their native language in China Town



A chart showing the number of male and female customers and their native language in Curry Mile

