



Report

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An Evaluation of the Distribution and Content of Multilingual Signs in Manchester

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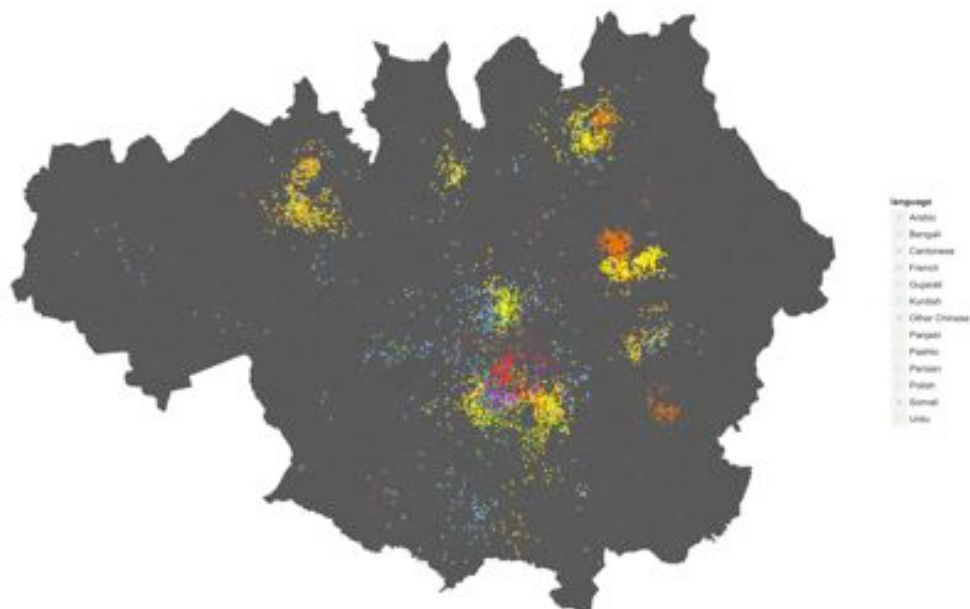
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The main focus of the project was to investigate how different community languages are represented through signage in Manchester. The overall aim was to answer three key research questions regarding the signage use in four different areas. The research questions included, are the languages spoken in an area represented through the signage? Where there are multilingual signs what information is displayed? And finally, for what reasons is this information provided?

Data was collected in four specific communities within Manchester including China Town, Rusholme, Levenshulme and Longsight. In each of these individual areas the signage in and around a variety of businesses and local amenities that were located in the central business district were recorded. For each of these areas the location of the signs and what linguistic information they displayed was documented and photographically recorded. From this, we wanted to obtain information involving the initial reasoning behind the signs and to discover some of the reasons as to the decisions behind the languages on displayed them. We were able to find this out through interviewing each business owner. In these interviews numerous questions were asked, such as what languages are on their sign, what languages are spoken in the area, what languages their customers speak and whether their customers speak English.

When it came to the information regarding which languages were spoken in the area, we compared the answers that were given in our interviews to the map shown in figure 1 to see to what extent they matched.

Figure 1. Map showing distribution of languages other than English in Greater Manchester(Deepthi Gopal, Multilingual Manchester, 2013)



Throughout the data collection the project's methodology was closely followed to ensure that the investigation was kept consistent in each of the four areas. The only aspect of the methodology that was altered was the time initially reserved to collect the data. In the methodology we allowed four days to collect the information however, from being organised and methodical with the data collection this took less time than originally expected.

Through the recorded signage information and interviews with business owners in each of the four research areas, we were able to attain a thorough insight into the reasoning and thought behind each multilingual sign. Therefore, allowing us to address the three key research questions which we initially set out to answer. We presented all of our findings for each linguistic community through the use of maps, photographic records and verbal discussion.

We will now look at the four different research areas in turn discussing the multilingual signage that appeared in each in further detail.

China Town

One of the four communities in Manchester which we researched for our investigation was China Town. In this area we documented numerous examples of signage which were found in and around different businesses including, restaurants, supermarkets, shops and business offices. From analysing the map (shown in figure 1) it displayed that the most spoken languages in the area of China Town were Chinese and Other Chinese.

The data collected in this field project generally supports this prior linguistic research as from the documented signage and questionnaires it was found that the most spoken languages in China Town were Cantonese, Mandarin and English. There was further evidence of other languages being spoken in the area including, Japanese, Thai and Korean. Furthermore, from some of the data collected there was evidence to suggest the languages Filipino and Malay were also being spoken along with a variety of other European languages.

The multilingual signs which were identified in China Town all held a different purpose in the community, whether it to inform the public of a service or to inform customers of a particular product within a shop. In a study conducted in 1997, Landry and Bourhis identified two main functions that multilingual signs serve within a community. These functions are of relevance to both official and non-official signs as well as informational and symbolic. Landry and Bourhis stated that the informational function indicates that a language on a sign can be used to obtain services and to communicate in that specific place. As well as this it was stated by Bourhis (1992), that the sign can be a marker of geographical territory of a language group. Whereas, the symbolic function of a sign is related to the idea that the presence of the group language contributes to 'the positive social identity of ethnolinguistic groups'. Additionally, they suggested that these functions are most noticeable in areas where language is the most important feature in defining ethnic identity.

In China Town many examples of multilingual signage were documented which support Landry and Bourhis's idea of signs holding different functions. From analysing the data collected it was found that the reasoning behind the majority of the signage was both for informational as well as symbolic purposes. In the area the signage outside and within a supermarket was recorded. Hang Won Hong Supermarket provides signs (see image 1 in appendix) in both English and Chinese. It sold a variety of oriental food stuffs not only Chinese foods.

The signs recorded in the supermarket were all direct translations from English to Chinese, with the majority provided to inform customers of the location of products within store (see image 2 in appendix). There were also numerous signs notifying customers of general shop procedures (see image 3 in appendix). From an interview conducted with the shop owner it was established that the customers were not only speakers of Chinese and English but Japanese, Korean, Thai, Malay, Filipino and other European languages. Although a large number of customers are not Chinese speakers the shop owner suggested that a large majority did speak or could understand English. Therefore, when deciding on what languages should appear on the sign Chinese was firstly chosen as the language spoken by the majority in the community as well as being a symbolic statement. On the other hand, the sign was then translated into English due the fact a large number of people could understand it.

The owner also commented on the idea that as well as Chinese being used on the sign as it is the majority language, it also supported the tourism aspect. China Town is widely known because of its extensive variety of Chinese shops, restaurants and culture. Due to this it is visited by many tourists and therefore keeping Chinese signage and the language alive in the community is vital in order to sustain this. Other businesses and amenities in the area which held similar if not the same attitudes and values in regards to their signage being written in both Chinese and English included Kim's Thai Food Store (see image 4 in appendix) and Row's Petals Florists (see image 5 in appendix).

From interviewing the owner and employees of JP Accountants it was found that although their signs were written in both English and Chinese (see image 6 in appendix) their customer base is generally entirely Chinese speaking and therefore, the English on the sign could be seen as unnecessary. However, the business felt that it was important to include English on the sign so that the company could be advertised to a wider client base. An interesting point mentioned in the interview was that the business has noticed that in the last 10 years Cantonese was more popularly used amongst the community however, recently the use of Mandarin is upcoming and being more noticeably used.

As well as these, various other multilingual signs were recorded in China Town. One multilingual sign which was of particular interest was that of the bookmakers, Betfred (see image 7 in appendix). The majority of signs in the area are for small local businesses and were privately designed and funded by the shop owners, Betfred is a national business with shops located throughout the United Kingdom. From interviewing the shop manger it was found that this decision behind the languages on the sign was made by the head office of the company, the languages spoken in the area were previously researched before a final decision was made.

The store manager suggested that 80% of the customers were Chinese with the remainder being mostly English or speakers of other Asian and European languages. The customer distribution is reflected in two languages used on the sign, English and Chinese. It was also noted that whereas in the other shops and businesses the majority of staff were Chinese speakers, in Betfred all of the staff were only English speakers. This may be due to the fact that the other businesses are all family owned however; in comparison Betfred is a large chain and employs their workers.

From analysing all of the signage data that was collected it can be seen that as a general trend almost all the signs in China Town are a combination of English and Chinese. From compiling the answers to the questionnaires it was found that the general reasoning behind these signage decisions was mainly for informational purposes with Chinese being used as it is the language spoken by the majority in the community and English as many people can understand it. As well being informational the use of Chinese is also a symbolic statement and can be seen as aiding the tourism aspect in the area.

Rusholme

Being one of the most culturally diverse communities in Manchester; situated near the University, a highly popular destination for Asian restaurants and a hub for commercial businesses, Rusholme is home to various different communities in Manchester. With a large proportion of its inhabitants being of Asian descent, the local amenities reflect this by supplying shops and businesses accessible to a range of language speakers. Aside from English, according to the multilingual map shown in figure 1, the largest group of language speakers are Urdu, Bengali, Arabic and Punjabi. Our project aim was to determine whether this is reflected through the signs used in shops and restaurants and discuss this in relation to multilingualism in Rusholme regarding the shop owners and customers.

Firstly a small satellite business 'Satvision' was documented. The sign was written in Arabic and translated to '350 best channels' (see image 8 in appendix). The shop owner spoke Arabic and English which was reflected in the clientele of the business who were also mostly Arabic speakers as well as some English and a variety of other Asian languages. An interview was conducted which enquired about the languages spoken in the area to which the shop owner explained that he believed that in and around the Rusholme area, Arabic was the widest spoken language, aside from English. It was also suggested that in his experience not many other languages were spoken. Although this was the first shop owner interviewed in Rusholme, from previous research that suggested that the area was not a solely Arabic community. However, this may be a reflection of the function of signs in a community, relating to the work done by Landry and Bourhis in their study regarding the symbolic and informational nature of signs. This theory puts forward the importance and presence of the in-group language that contributes to 'the positive social identity of ethnolinguistic groups' (Landry and Bourhis, 1997) and relates to using language to define social and ethnic identity. In the case of the shop owner from Satvision, due to being a speaker of English and Arabic and his signs only accessible for these languages, his social community may reflect this. Therefore he experiences conversation with mainly, if not only, speakers of these two languages.

The signs from a restaurant called Al-Madina were also recorded, it situated on the main road through Rusholme. The windows on the outside of the restaurant were covered with handwritten lists (see image 9 in appendix). The restaurant owner subsequently said in the interview that they were written in Urdu for their customers who don't speak or read English. The shop owner himself spoke English and Urdu and said that most of his customers were Arabic, followed by English and other Asian languages. Following the interview from 'Sativison' an enquiry was made about what the shop owner thought to be the widest spoken language in the area to which he also said Arabic. Another business visited supplied foreign money exchange (see image 10 in appendix), run by two Arab speakers who later informed us that although their sign was in Arabic, only a few of their customers spoke Arabic, with the majority of their customers speaking Urdu. It was suggested that this could prove to be challenging for the shop owners as they didn't speak Urdu themselves. This contrast between answers could be explained by being situated in different parts of Rusholme or by the general demands from specific clientele.

As well as this, a cafe called the Delhi Sweet Centre was documented. It had an Arabic sign which was directly translated from English (see image 11 in appendix); the owner spoke English and Urdu, with their customers mainly speaking English, Urdu, Punjabi and Asian. Following this, a pharmacy called Pharmacy & Longboom was recorded. In the pharmacy there were two small handwritten signs in the window written in Chinese script (see image 12 in appendix). With Chinese being in the lower bracket for the percentage of speakers in Rusholme, the shop employees thought that there was a niche demand for passport services among the Chinese community in Rusholme and therefore, whilst the shop owner didn't speak Chinese, he had a large amount of Chinese customers utilising this service. Another multilingual sign which was noted involving another less common script was in a small supermarket called Middle East Mini Market. It had numerous signs in Kurdish and Arabic which were directly translated to say 'mini market' (see image 13 in appendix). From the interview it was established that the shop owner believed there to be a large amount of Kurdish speakers in the area, the only interviewee to say this. As well as Kurdish customers of this store also spoke Arabic, English, Iranian, Afghani and Urdu.

From the information obtained through the photographic signage documentation and through the interviews with shop owners, it could be concluded that the languages spoken by the shop owners generally correlates with that of their customers. And while there is a general mix in terms of the majority language speakers across Rusholme, according to the data collected, it seems they all work in agreement with the multilingual map. Although Rusholme is a community of cultural diversity with many languages being used throughout, the results from the data collection suggest that there are larger groups of Arabic and Punjabi speakers in the shops and restaurants that were visited.

Levenshulme

Various examples were ascertained of multilingual signage in the area of Levenshulme. In order to illicit results from a variety of sources we examined numerous shops and businesses, amongst others, we recorded data from the following: a citizenship centre, a polish continental food market, a tours and travel agents a solicitors practice (personal injury) and a sign making shop.

The reason for including the sign shop was not to look for multilingual signage within the business itself, but rather to gain an insight into the languages spoken in the local area. The data collected from this area suggests that Panjabi is not the main language of the area as suggested by the map shown in figure 1, but instead Urdu. Romanian, Turkish and Iranian were also reported to be spoken in the area. Broadly speaking, the languages found on the signs analysed seemed to fall into one of three categories; eastern European (Polish and Romanian), African (Somali) or sub continental Indian (Urdu and Bengali). Arabic was not grouped as it was difficult to pinpoint the origin of such a widespread language. Farsi was also used, but it was unlikely that it would be represented in the local population in Levenshulme. The language used on the signs served as a direct translation from English in the majority of cases. As suggested in Landry and Bouhis's study, the signage was used in the area to fulfil a variety of purposes, both informative and symbolic. Languages that were not widely used in the area were still represented which could be seen as an attempt to strengthen its value within the community.

The sign which was documented from 'The Citizen Test Centre' was a direct translation from English into Urdu, Arabic, Bengali and Somali, the aim of the sign was to offer free English classes to mothers who are looking to learn the language (see image 14 in appendix). From interviewing an employee, it was found that Urdu is the most frequently used language by those responding to the sign, as well as the customers that use the services of the centre. The other languages advertised on the sign were reported to also be used by customers, but far less frequently than Urdu. The employee also confirmed that Urdu is the most widely spoken language in the area. They suggested that reasoning behind English being used on the advert, was due to the fact that it's likely that if a person doesn't speak any of the languages represented on the poster they may speak English.

Similar to the citizenship test centre, the sign in the window of 'Angela Taylor Solicitors Practice' (see image 15 in appendix) offered a service, but was designed to address only one section of the local speech community, being those who speak Romanian. This sign advertised legal aid for a variety of criminal offences. When asked to comment on the language of their customers, emphasis was placed on the amount of Romanian clients they have. The use of Romanian on the sign suggests there is a large enough client base to advertise in this one language, therefore representing the local language through the signage. From further research it was found that the BBC news reported there to be around 2,000 Romanians in Greater Manchester with Levenshulme home to a large community (Thomas, 2014). The interviewee suggested the rate of crime was relatively high in the Romanian speaking community, indicating motivation behind the creation of the sign.

The signage documented from Haji Tours and Travel Agency was written in Urdu and with an English translation below (see image 16 in appendix), this suggests that the sign is used to attract speakers of both languages. The language of Urdu was used for the translation of airline names, this particular sign could be said to have limited functional value, and it may be used as 'symbolic value' as suggested by Spolsky and Cooper (1991). Those interviewed in the travel agents stated that Urdu was the most widely spoken language in the area, alongside English, an opinion that is supported by the map shown in figure 1. Urdu was also the most frequently stated answer from the question 'What languages are spoken in the area?' The use of written Urdu for this occasion seemed to represent the languages prevalence in the local area.

'Marta', a Polish, Persian and continental food market had multilingual signage located above the shop entrance (see image 17 in appendix), it stated the name and details of the store in English as well as in Farsi, despite there being no prior evidence of Farsi being a language widely used in Levenshulme according to the map shown in figure 1. 'Marta' in fact serves as a transliteration from its Farsi counterpart. This would reinforce the claims made by Landry and Bourhis (1997) who suggested signs can be used to reinforce or strengthen a language. It could have also served as a geographical marker of an emerging group of speakers (Landry and Bourhis 1997) however; it is likely to be the former, especially when it was established in the interview that the shop owner is originally from Iran. In comparison to the remainder of Levenshulme, the store was somewhat of an anomaly, with the interviewee citing Iranian and Turkish as the main languages spoken in the area; a conclusion not shared by the map in figure 1.

The motivation behind visiting the sign and printing shop (see image 18 in appendix) was to gather some knowledge as to the demand for signage in locally spoken languages. Bengali, Polish, Arabic and Spanish were all mentioned as locally spoken languages and were said to be frequently requested for signs. The languages that were spoken by the customers of this shop seemed to have an effect on the interviewees' answers within the interview.

In conclusion to the data collected in Levenshulme it was found that in 3 out of 4 cases, the first language given to the question 'what languages are spoken in the area?' was the same as that reported to be spoken by their customers. This suggests a more formal data collection method may be required as we are unlikely to receive an impartial answer. However, as Urdu was mentioned by 3 out of 4 interviewees, it can be speculated that it could be one of the main languages spoken in the area other than English.

Longsight

According to the map in figure 1 the main languages other than English spoken in the area of Longsight are Polish, Urdu and Bengali as well as there being some instances of other Chinese, Cantonese, Panjabi, Arabic, Somali and Persian. When conducting interviews with people in the area the general consensus was that the main languages were Urdu, English and Bengali but Somali, Arabic, Hindi, Romanian and Polish were also cited as being spoken by some residents. When it

came to the signage Urdu was fittingly very well represented on signs as was Bengali. Perhaps surprisingly, given that it was not found to be one of the main languages of the area, Arabic also featured fairly heavily on signs and there were instances of Somali and Chinese as well as others.

As well as looking at many signs in the area we tried to conduct interviews with a variety of different types of business owners and workers to gain an idea of the general trends that might be present in the area as a whole or within a specific type of business. The main categories we investigated were restaurants or food outlets, shops or supermarkets and service providers e.g. estate agents or travel agents. We can now look at some examples from each of these categories in turn to get a more in depth idea of the signage in Longsight.

In the category of service providers two of the businesses we looked at were a law centre and an Islamic bank. In the law centre the only language spoken by the staff was English and the sign on the exterior of the shop (see appendix images 19 and 20) featured English, Chinese, Arabic, Urdu and Somali. The sign had equal amounts of each language and was all direct translation of the name of the business. When asked about their customers it transpired that they were mainly Urdu speakers but that the majority would also speak English as well or bring someone with them, e.g. a family member, to translate for them. No one working in the shop that day was aware of who had made the decision to include all the other languages on the sign, it having come from higher up in the company, but one of the girls said that as they dealt mainly with immigration law the main body of their customers was likely to be a speaker of one of these languages. In contrast to this, the signs outside the Islamic bank (see appendix image 21) were only in English or Arabic, with all the information displayed being directly translated. The man that we spoke to working in the bank was a speaker of English and Arabic himself but told us that about 70% of their customers were speakers of Urdu and that not much Arabic was spoken in the area. The decision for the languages on the sign had come from higher up in the company and was clearly linked to the service that it provided rather than any specific area.

When it came to the restaurants and food outlet category amongst others we interviewed the staff from a bakery. This was a particularly interesting case as whilst English and Arabic were featured on the main shop sign in a direct translation, there was another sign printed on the glass door that was solely in Arabic (see appendix image 22). This sign was roughly translated by the shop manager to read "There is one God and he is all and no one else". This was clearly not related to what the shop was selling and was quite forwardly expressing an identity. Upon speaking to the manager we learnt that he actually only spoke a little Arabic himself and that his main languages were Urdu, Panjabi and English. He said that his customers spoke a wide variety of languages including Urdu, Panjabi and Polish. Although they did not always speak English or have a language in common with him he said they managed to communicate with gestures and a few words. He also mentioned the fact that he felt there was a respect for each other in the area and that people made an effort to communicate with one another even if they were not speakers of the same language.

In the final category our investigation included a corner shop in the main street and a sari shop down one of the side streets. Whilst on the main printed sign of the corner shop only English featured, there was a hand written sign in the window that was in Bengali only (see appendix image 23). The man working behind the counter, who was a speaker of Bengali himself as well as Urdu, Hindi and English, told us that it was giving information about how to top up your mobile phone. He also informed us that the majority of his customers were speakers of Urdu, English and Romanian and that whilst some of them were speakers of Bengali, it was likely that they would also be speakers of English and so not need for a sign to be written only in Bengali. In the sari shop the sign was written in Bengali and English (see appendix image 24). When we spoke to the manager we found out that he had originally hand painted the Bengali sign himself and then had it translated into English and printed an English version of the sign. He and his wife who ran the shop were speakers of Bengali, English and Urdu and they told us that in that particular area of Longsight the majority of people were speakers of Bengali. Their customers were most likely to be speakers of Bengali or Urdu but they would also be speakers of English.

Overall in Longsight the majority of main, printed signs on the exterior of shops and businesses that featured more than one language were direct translations and it was only cases where there were additional hand written or separately produced signs that would feature a language other than English without a direct translation. This could be said to be fitting with Reh's (2004) finding that official signs are more likely to offer a direct translation whilst non official ones will more often feature languages displaying complementary information, if we consider the main sign of a shop or business to correlate more with an official sign and the additional, sometimes handwritten signs to be instances of non official signage. These additional signs were also usually targeted to a specific customer group or were expressing some kind of identity fitting with Backhaus' (2006) observation that multilingual private signs are often used to express solidarity. In general the main languages spoken in the area were represented through the signage although Arabic featured more than might have been expected.

Summary

Throughout all four areas many of our findings were in line with those of previous studies. Although there are not really any public multilingual signs in Manchester due to the official monolingual nature of England, those signs of larger businesses that are likely to have branches elsewhere, for example the Islamic bank in Longsight, featured fewer languages than those signs of smaller private businesses. This is fitting with Landry and Bourhis (1997) who suggested that there would be more language diversity in private than public signs. Many of the businesses we looked at featured signs that had direct translations in their respective languages but there were also several that had two languages displaying complementary information or that were partially translated. This is in accordance with Reh's (2004) study indicating that private signs are more likely to feature a mixture of different languages sometimes displaying direct translation but also showing alternative information from each other. When it comes to the symbolic and informational functions identified by Landry and

Bourhis (2007) the fact that many of the signs we looked at displayed direct translation could suggest that they were to serve more of an informational function. However, as in many cases the people working inside the shop or business were not a speaker of all or any of the languages on the signs and in addition to this the vast majority of the customers would also be speakers of English, it seems more likely that it is the symbolic function that is being served in the multilingual signage around Manchester. Languages are being displayed on signs to represent minority communities in different areas, acting as geographical markers by displaying the in-group language and through this strengthening their ethno-linguistic vitality.

Appendix

Image 1. Shop Sign for Hang Won Hong Supermarket



Image 2. Sign within the supermarket



Image 3. Sign within supermarket informing customers about shop procedure



Image 4. Shop Sign for Kim's Thai Food Store



Image 5. Shop Sign for Row's Petals Florist



Image 6. Business Sign JP Accountants



Image 7. Shop Sign for Betfred



Image 8. shop sign for Satevision



Image 9. window display for Al Madina restaurant



Image 10. Sign for money exchange business



Image 11.the shop sign for Delhi Sweet Centre



Image 12.handwritten sign in Pharmacy & Longboom in Chinese for passport services

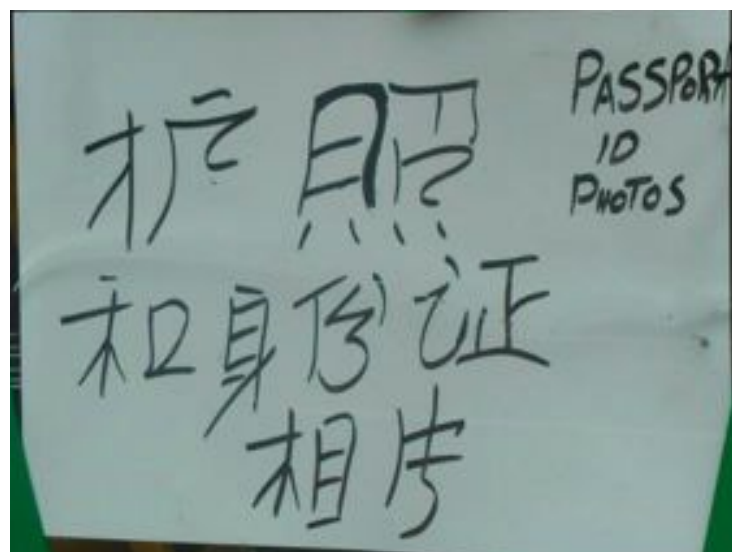


Image 13. Shop sign for Middle East Mini Market in Arabic and Kurdish



Image 14. Citizenship and TESOL test centre



Image 15. Angela Taylor Solicitors Practice

Angela Taylor
Advocatis

*Aveti problem cu politia?
Noi putem sa va ajutam.
Sfaturi legale gratuite.*

Ajutor cu toate problemele penale:

1. Furt
2. Atack la persoana
3. Infractiuni rutiere
4. Frauda
5. Infractiuni Serioase
6. Infractiuni Sexuale
7. Droguri si Stricaciuni penale

La Sectia de Politie, Magistrates Court si la Crown Court
Cind va aresteaza aveti dreptul la un avocat gratuit.

Coreti ca politia sa cheme un advocate de la Angela Taylor,
si o sa venim la politie sa va ajutam.

Sfaturi Legale Gratuite 24 de ore pe zi.
Tel: 07974 256 225
851-853 Stockport Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3PW

Image 16. Haji Tours Travel Agents



Image 17. Marta: Polish, Persian and continental food market



Image 18. Dani Printing and Design shop.



Image 19. Exterior sign of law centre



Image 20. Exterior sign of law centre



Image 21. Main sign of Islamic bank



Image 22. Sign printed on bakery door



Image 23. Handwritten sign in corner shop window



Image 24. Signs from exterior of sari shop



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Map in figure 1: DeepthiGopal, Multilingual Manchester, 2013