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An Investigation into how minority languages are used for certain purposes in different roles within businesses on the 'Curry Mile', Rusholme

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The aim of our project is to investigate societal multilingualism of minority languages, focusing on whether or not certain languages are used for certain purposes. In his study of language choice in Israel, Herman (1961) states that 'the language chosen will depend on such factors as the languages known in common by the bi-lingual speaker and his interlocutor and by the power relations between the two'.

We chose to focus our project on the district of Rusholme for several reasons. It is about two miles South of Manchester city centre and is home to the 'Curry Mile', which is an extremely diverse multicultural area. Thus, it is in an ideal location for studying multilingualism and is in close proximity to our University.

We chose to research eating establishments and jewellery/clothing shops, as we felt these were in plentiful supply. Also, we felt that an eating establishment would have a higher proportion of customers who only spoke English compared to a clothing shop selling Asian garments, thus we felt this would be an interesting contrast to investigate.

Before beginning to collect research we made the following changes based upon the feedback we received. A Likert scale was added to our questionnaire to avoid asking direct questions (see Appendix 5) 'the scale consists of a series of statements that express either a favourable or unfavourable attitude toward the concept under study, the respondent is asked the level of agreement or disagreement with each statement' (Gates, R and McDaniel, C. 1998. 247).

We also made changes to our consent form (see Appendix 7). We have now made it clear that participants' answers will remain confidential and have outlined how the data will be used.

Once we had located the establishments we were focusing on, we arranged to carry out the questionnaires at 15:30, on 3rd May 2011. We split into two groups, with one group collecting data in the eating establishments and the other in the clothing shops. We introduced ourselves and what we were researching. We chose our participants based on their roles in the business and did not specify gender, as we felt it did not influence our research. An employee and manager were given our information sheet (see Appendix 6) and consent form to complete, to ensure they were willing to participate. All the participants were agreeable and filled in the questionnaire, providing us with our data.

To follow the correct format of obtaining results from participants, we de-briefed the participants, giving them the opportunity to withdraw their data. The participants were all happy for their data to be used. We provided contact details for a member of our group, allowing them to contact us at any time in relation to the study. To avoid observer's paradox, the participants completed the questionnaire individually, without our interference.

Arbil

We chose the takeaway Arbil (see Appendix 1), because we noticed a different language displayed on the window and a different language translating the name of the restaurant on the sign above.

Manager

The manager was male, was born in Iraq and spoke seven languages; Greek, Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, English and German, with Kurdish being his native language, and that of his parents. His children spoke Kurdish as their second language with English being their first. His partner also speaks Kurdish as her first language and English as her second. Everything on the menu was written in English. This could be due to the cost of translations on the menu boards and his opinion that English is of 'high status'. He said most of his customers were working/ lower class and belonged to many ethnicities. Regarding language use, he felt he used all seven languages equally, as at work he speaks to 'many different customers from different countries' and so uses all at some point, though rarely German. He stated that English was essential in the workplace and was used sporadically at home, where they mostly spoke Kurdish. He claimed that he used English 'sometimes socially' but was 'not needed when hiring employees' as he spoke Kurdish and Arabic. When communicating with his colleagues, he spoke Kurdish and Arabic. When speaking to customers he accommodates to their language if possible or uses English. He mainly uses Arabic, Kurdish, Turkish, Italian and English in interactions with customers.

Employee

The employee spoke Arabic, Kurdish and English. His English language competence was less than that of the manager, based on our judgement and his own. When addressing his colleagues he spoke Kurdish and Arabic. Whilst his manager spoke many languages to customers, he only spoke Kurdish, Arabic and sometimes English. This may be because he interacts less with customers. Outside of work, he stated he 'rarely spoke English' unless he needed to in some social domains. At home he only spoke Kurdish, but in some social situations he occasionally spoke Arabic.

Do these results correlate with our predictions?

In our predictions, we suggested that language used by the staff with customers would differ from that used between members of staff. We found that brief interactions were usually conducted in English or, where possible, in the customer's first language. In

contrast, interactions between colleagues were almost always in Kurdish or Arabic. We predicted that the 'mother tongue' language would be dominant in the home because there is no requirement to speak any other language. Additionally, language has associations with identity, The conservation of the 'mother tongue' helps to maintain a crucial part of identity and heritage. Herman (1961), states that immigrants are 'in a position where the choice of language is often a significant indication of the group with which they wish to identify'. By using their second language, Kurdish, in their home, it helps to maintain their identity.

We predicted that the language used by the manager and the employee would differ. We believe that the manager is likely to be more competent in English than the employee. Managers have to contact people outside their business, for example, suppliers, so need a good grasp on the English language. In Arbil, we found there was variation in their competence of English related to their roles within the business. The manager would need a good knowledge of English for communication with suppliers, but mostly he needed knowledge of basic English to understand what the customer wants to order. In contrast, the employee does not need English to speak to customers or to ring up suppliers as his role does not require him to do so. While a basic knowledge of English is useful for him, it is not essential, as the manager acts as an interpreter, using Kurdish to speak to his employees when telling them what to start cooking or preparing.

Shahi Masala

We chose Shahi Masala (see Appendix 2) as we established it is a higher end restaurant, based on price, external appearance and the formal layout of the establishment. The menu on display in the restaurant window was written in English and upon arrival we were handed menus, also written solely in English. We were introduced to the manager who spoke with a strong Mancunian accent. Both manager and employee were happy to cooperate.

Manager

The manager was an Asian male born in Manchester and speaks only one language, English, however, his parents' native language is Urdu. The manager rated his competence with English as excellent and thus understandably declined the opportunity to improve his English language skills. In addition, he rated the English language with high social status and believes competent knowledge of it is essential in the following scenarios: the workplace; when hiring employees; at home; and in social situations. The manager is married with children, all of whom speak English. As he only speaks English, this is the language he uses when interacting with both employees and customers at the restaurant. The manager believed the majority of his customers were middle and working class. Also, the majority of his customers are British and Bangladeshi.

Employee

The employee we spoke to was male, of Asian ethnicity, born in Pakistan and is single with no children. He speaks four languages: English; Urdu; Punjabi; and Pashto, of these, Punjabi is his first language. The employee was not born in the UK and his native language is the same as his parents, Punjabi. He uses his native language most. In addition, he rated his English language competence midway on the Likert scale and rates the English Language with high social status. He believes competent knowledge of the English language is essential in the workplace only.

Furthermore with regards to language use in the restaurant he works in, the employee, a waiter, speaks in English to his work colleagues and his customers. Although menus are written in English, the employee writes in Punjabi when taking orders. Finally the employee believes the majority of the customers belong to the middle and working social classes and are of either White or Asian ethnicity. He speaks Punjabi at home.

Do these results correlate with our predictions?

In our predictions we suggested that the language used by the staff with customers will significantly differ from that used between members of staff. The results above oppose

our prediction; both the manager and waiter used the same language, English, for both purposes. We also hypothesised that more English will be spoken in the higher status establishment, the restaurant, as there is a requirement for the staff to have a higher level of competence in English. The fact that both the manager and the waiter use the English language when interacting with both customers and colleagues supports this prediction. Finally, we predicted that the manager is more likely to be more competent in English than the employee. Our results supported this claim, as the manager strongly agreed with the statement 'I am a competent speaker of the English Language' in the questionnaire, whilst the employee neither agreed nor disagreed. Also, the employee selected the opportunity to improve his English language skills whereas the manager declined.

Kash

We chose to study Kash (see Appendix 3), a clothes and jewellery shop, as it had lower prices compared to the other establishment Colour. Another reason we chose this establishment is due to the variety of items on sale in the shop; there were Parisian clothing and ethnic jewellery on sale as well as designer clothing and make up. This indicates that the shop is aimed at Asian and English customers. Therefore, we would expect to find a variety of languages used within the shop.

Manager

The manager was born in the United Kingdom but her native language was Gujrati, which was the language her parents spoke. She also spoke English, Urdu and Creole. At home and in the workplace, the manager spoke English. She also used it to write in when working. The manager did not associate the English Language with high social status and neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement in the questionnaire. Our questionnaire showed that the manager rated her English competence as excellent and stated that she needed no extra help to improve it.

Employee

The employee was born in Latvia and her native language was Latvian, she also speaks English and Russian. However, even though both the manager and employee's native language were different they both spoke English in the work place and at home. This contradicts our predictions, as we believed that the lower prestige establishment would be more likely to speak their native language at home. The employee, like the manager, used English when writing in the workplace. She associated the English Language with high social status. The employee rated her English speaking skills lower than the managers and stated that she would take the opportunity to improve them if offered.

Do these results correlate with our predictions?

The findings from our research proved that even though a lot of the items in the shop were aimed at Asian customers, the Manager and employee still both used English the most in the workplace. Furthermore, they also stated that the majority of their customers were Pakistani and Bangladeshi, yet they still used English to these customers. This provided interesting data as we predicted that the lower prestige establishments would use less English. We had predicted that a variety of languages would be used in this establishment as the products are aimed at a wider audience. Another interesting finding from our data is how the manager and the employee rated the English language. We predicted that they both would rate the English language as having high social status. The manager may have neither agreed nor disagreed with English being of high social status as she was born in England and therefore does not believe it is a prestigious language. The Latvian employee may associate England with high status as she has moved to England to improve her English. A finding that did support our predictions was that the manager would be a more competent speaker in English than the employee. With regard to the customers, both the employee and the manager stated that the majority of their customers are Pakistani or Bangladeshi and believed they were lower to middle class. This also supports our initial impression that Kash is an establishment of lower economic level compared to Colour.

Colour

Colour is a clothing shop on the 'Curry Mile' which sells high end clothing and jewellery (see Appendix 4). We chose to use Colour as the prices and quality of the stock reflected the higher social economic status of the shop that we wish to research. 'Colour' uses English in its name, signage, product description and pricing. This also influenced our decision to use it in our research as we predicted that there would be a correlation between the higher socio-economic status of a shop and their more dominant use of English over other minority languages. In Colour we spoke to the shop manager and sales assistant.

Manager

The shop manager was part of the family that ran the business. She was born in Manchester and her first language is English. The shop manager is more likely to come from a higher socio-economic background as she is part of a family who own a successful business. She strongly agreed that her English Language competence was of a high level as it was her first language. The shop manager classes herself as British Pakistani. Her mother's native language is English and her father's is Urdu. She speaks both these languages and also Punjabi. In the workplace, the manager used English and Urdu. She stated that the majority of customers were Pakistani or Bangladeshi and this reflected the language she used with them. She used English when writing in the work place. The manager stated that "it doesn't really matter" when asked if she rated the English language with high social status, this could be as she was born in England.

Employee

The sales assistant was born in Bangladesh and her first language is Bengali. She also spoke English, Urdu and Punjabi, as well as Bengali and Portuguese. The employee did not for a high-level of feel she had a high level of English language competence. In work the employee used a mixture of English and Bengali when she spoke and wrote. The employee was not native of England. She may associate high English Language competence with social status as it can provide non-natives with more job opportunities.

Do these results correlate with our predictions?

The socio-economic diversity of the staff at Colour reflects the pattern we predicted as higher socio-economic status correlated with their use of and competence in the English language. The Colour data goes some way towards supporting our predictions that English is more dominant in businesses of higher socio-economic status. They use English in all the shop displays and product descriptions. However, the majority of their customers are Pakistani or Bangladeshi and this is reflected in the language used with customers, which is a combination of English, and the minority languages Urdu and Bengali.

Overview of Establishments

Our main aim was to find a distinction in English language competence that correlated with the socio-economic status of an establishment. Of the four establishments we examined, we hypothesised that the restaurant and clothing shop of higher socio-economic status, 'Shahi Masala' and 'Colour', would be more likely to have English as their dominant language and a higher level of English Language competence than the lower-end businesses, 'Arbil' and 'Kash'.

Furthermore, we felt that that both the restaurant and the takeaway business would have a higher level of English language usage than the two clothing shops. This is because the typical Indian cuisine that is offered on "The Curry Mile" has become very westernised, whereas the traditional items sold in the clothing store had a target clientele of mainly Muslim women.

With regards to the staff, we hypothesised that the language use of members of staff from each of these establishments would differ significantly. We anticipated more English to be spoken by the staff of the higher socio-economic restaurant, Shahi Masala, due to there being far more interaction with the waiting staff and the majority of clientele speaking native English. We predicted that the staff of Arbil, would have a more basic level of English language competence as only a small amount of interaction with customers is required and the conversation range is small and specific to each

customer. We applied the same hypothesis to the clothes shops for similar reasons. The higher socio-economic clothes retailer, Colour, had very traditional Muslim occasion wear for sale and therefore we believed that more time would be spent in choosing the clothes and a higher level of individual attention from the sales assistant to the customer. Despite the fact that their clientele is in the main, not of native English, our expectation was that Colour would have a higher level of English language competence than Kash.

In addition, we envisaged a difference in the language use between the managers and employees of each establishment. We expected that in each type of business the manager would be more likely to have a higher level of English language. This prediction was based upon our belief that the managers would associate good English language skills with higher social status and as a way of improving their business that they have chosen to set up in England.

At home people are most relaxed and able to speak in the language that they feel most comfortable with, usually their first language. Therefore we predicted that each participant would speak his or her “mother tongue” when at home.

From our collection of data we found our results from the restaurant, Shahi Masala and the takeaway, Arbil, to conform to our hypotheses. In the restaurant there was a higher usage of English and also a high level of competence when using the English language. Arbil reflected our prediction of there being less customer interaction within the takeaway and the language choice to be customer specific. This followed our prediction of a correlation between socio-economic status, English language ability and frequency of usage. The managers both had higher levels of English language competence than their employees and all of our participants from both the restaurant and the takeaway used their native languages at home.

On the other hand, our two retail shops did not follow our prediction patterns so neatly. Although the higher socio-economic shop Colour had the only British born member of staff within the shops, we found that English was used equally in each shop, perhaps even more so in Kash. Kash chose to use English to all of their customers where as

Colour would use a mixture of English, Urdu and Bengali. This could reflect our expectation of there being more attention paid to the customer within a higher end retail establishment such as Colour. Furthermore, both the manager and employee of Kash chose to speak English at home rather than their respective native languages. The difference in competence level of English language between the manager and employee did however follow our hypothesis. Both managers strongly agreed that they were competent speakers of the English language and each employee rated their language skills less so and also stated that given the opportunity they would improve their English language skills.

In conclusion, our expectations were largely met by our participants' data of Shahi Masala and Arbil. Although Kash and Colour did not support our predictions fully, both shops did bear some results that conformed to our original hypothesis concerning societal multilingualism within Rusholme, Manchester. We also got an insight into how native English speakers that were born in this country perceive English on the prestige scale; they do not have the same view as people that have a different first language. This was seen in 'Colour', when the manager said that it did not matter, whereas the employee, with Bengali as her first language, thought that English is high in social status. Some of our expectations about how language is used in businesses of the area and how socio economic status has an effect on this came to be true. However, it does seem that all businesses use varying languages, depending on their purpose, customers and prestige.

Appendix

Appendix 1:



A photograph of 'Arbil'
located on The Curry Mile,
Rusholme

Appendix 2:



Photograph of 'Shahi Masala' restaurant.

Appendix 3:



Photograph of 'Kash' clothing store

Appendix 4:



Photograph of 'Colour' clothing/jewellery store

Appendix 5:

Questionnaire

Background Information

1. **Sex:**
 Male
 Female

2. **Ethnicity:**

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| White/Caucasian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> | Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> | If other, please state | |
| Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mixed | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

3. **Place of Birth:**

 ...

4. **How many languages do you speak?**
 1 2 3 4 5 5+

5. **Which language(s) do you speak? (You may tick more than one box)**

- | | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| English | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hindi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Urdu | <input type="checkbox"/> | Bengali | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pujabi | <input type="checkbox"/> | French | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arabic | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If other, please state:

6. **Of these, which is your first language?**
 Please state:

7. Were you born in the U.K?

Yes Please go to Question 8

No Please go to Question 9



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8. Is your Native Language the same as your parents?

Yes

Please state which

.....

No

Please state your Native Language

.....

9. Which language do you feel you use most?

Native language

English

Other

(Please specify).....

.....

10. I am a competent speaker of the English Language:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

11. If provided with the opportunity, would you improve your English Language skills? (ie through a training course)

Yes

No

12. I associate the English language with high social status:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

(Please specify).....
.....

13. Do you think competent knowledge of the English Language is essential:

(You may tick more than one box)

- In the workplace
- When hiring employees
- At home
- Socially
- No

14. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced/separated
- Widowed
- Living with a partner

15. Does your Partner/Spouse speak the same Native Language as you?

- Yes
- No

(Please specify).....
.....

16. Do you have any Children?

Yes
No

(Please go to Question 17)



17. Do your children speak the same language as you?

Yes
No

(Please go to Question 18)

(Please go to question 19)

18. Is this their:

First language
Second language

16. What language(s) do they speak?

.....
.....

Language Use in the work place

1. What Establishment do you work in?

Restaurant
Retail
Takeaway
Supermarket
Law firm
Other

(Please state)

.....

2. Name of Establishment.....

.....

3. What is your Job title within this establishment?

.....
.....



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4. In what Language do you speak to your work colleagues?

(You may tick more than one box)

English
Urdu
Pujabi
Arabic

Hindi
Bengali
French
Other

5. In what Language do you speak to your customers?

(You may tick more than one box)

English
Urdu
Pujabi
Arabic

Hindi
Bengali
French
Other

(Please state):.....

6. Are your Menus/Price tags/Product descriptions/Adverts written in:

One Language
(Please

state)

.....

Two + Languages
(Please

state)

.....

7. In what Language do you write in within the workplace

(ie Taking orders, Writing receipts)?

English	<input type="checkbox"/>
Urdu	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pujabi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arabic	<input type="checkbox"/>

Hindi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bengali	<input type="checkbox"/>
French	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Please



state):.....

8. What social class do you believe the majority of your Customers belong to?

(You may tick more than one box)

Upper class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middle class	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working/lower class	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. What Ethnicity do you believe the majority of your Customers belong to?

(You may tick more than one box)

White/Caucasian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	If other, please state	
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed	<input type="checkbox"/>	

10. Do you speak the same Language (s) at home as you do in work?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
(Please	state

language(s)

.....

No
(Please

state

language(s)

.....

**Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this
Questionnaire.**

Appendix 6:

Societal Multilingualism: Information Sheet



The University of Manchester

What is this project about?

This project aims to investigate the role of minority language(s) in multilingual societies within different businesses in the Rusholme area of Greater Manchester. The primary intention is to explore what minority languages are in use and whether or not there is a correlation between language use/choice within businesses of different socio-economic status. In this project we will be asking informants from different establishments: Restaurants; Takeaways; Clothing/jewellery Shops, to complete Questionnaires. We will speak to both employees and managers in order to find out what language(s) they use and why, in order to see if any patterns form.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been asked to take part because you work in a business in the Rusholme area where several minority languages are spoken.

You can withdraw from participation at any time and you are under no obligation to complete the Questionnaire.

What is involved?

If you agree to take part we will ask you to fill out a detailed Questionnaire covering the following sections:

- Background Information
- Language Use in the Workplace

What will happen to the information I provide?

If you fill out our Questionnaire the information that you provide will be analysed in comparison to other establishments in the Rusholme area. You may email the address below if you wish to contact us and/or see our research findings:

Appendix 7:

Societal Multilingualism: Consent to participate in research



Investigators: Chloe Anderton, Phoebe Le-Saint, Rachel Robinson-Parsons, Natalie Rowley, Phoebe Smith, Jessica Witty

The data collected in this questionnaire will be analysed in a research project on the use of minority languages in businesses on the 'Curry Mile', as explained in the accompanying Information Sheet. These reports will be published on a website. The identity of each participant will be kept confidential and the answers they provide in the questionnaire will only be used in the aforementioned research project. We will use the real names of the businesses in the research project and interior and exterior photographs of the businesses will be included to support our research.

I agree to take part in this Questionnaire, for which I have volunteered because I work in a business in the Rusholme area where several minority languages are spoken.

I have read the Information Sheet and understand:

- What the Questionnaire involves
- What the research is about
- That my name and any personal information will be protected at all times
- That my Questionnaire may be stored and used for secondary analysis as part of a wider database

I understand that I can withdraw from participation at any time and that I am under no obligation to complete the Questionnaire. By completing this form, I give my consent for the data collected to be used as has been outlined.

Name:

.....

Signature:

.....

References:

Gates, R and McDaniel, C. 1998. *Marketing Research Essentials*. Taylor & Francis. 247.

Herman, Simon N.1961. Explorations in the Social Psychology of Language Choice. *Human Relations*. 14:149-164. New York, London