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Description of a Minority Language Community – Focusing on the Polish Language Community Within Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall

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Part One

The main focus of my proposed survey on a minority language community within Manchester will be the area of Cheetham Hill, as well as looking at how that language community has integrated itself upon the area of Crumpsall which closely neighbours Cheetham Hill. Described on Wikipedia as ‘the home of a multi-ethnic community, due to a result of several waves of immigration’ and as an ‘inner city area of Manchester’, Cheetham Hill is quite literally a stone’s throw from the city centre and is also very close in proximity to the city of Salford. Latest estimates of the population of Cheetham Hill give the figure as roughly 14,000 inhabitants. Cheetham Hill is an area which is richly diverse in nationalities, cultures, religions and most importantly with regards to this survey, languages. There are a whole host of languages currently in use within these areas, including Punjabi, Somali, Arabic and Urdu, to name but a few. However for the purposes of this specific survey I will be focusing on the Polish language community.

The main reason for me undertaking this study in Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall, apart from it being so diverse in nationalities and languages, is that I live in Crumpsall! Not only that but I have a part time job in a supermarket in the centre of Cheetham Hill. This places me in a wide variety of multi-lingual situations, on an

almost daily basis, and has given me countless first hand examples of all these different languages in everyday use. As for why I have chosen to concentrate on the Polish language community, and the principal factor behind this is that a number of residents on the estate on which I live are Polish in nationality, thus allowing me constant access to the Polish language in use and leading me to naturally question how this language is used in certain situations and how this language community survives, i.e. what amenities and services are available to them within not only their local community, but mine.

The latest figures released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) give the official population of Polish people living in the UK as approximately 2 million and rising. The same can be said for the Polish contingent within Cheetham Hill itself, with an ever increasing Polish presence both physically and linguistically within the area. This survey will hopefully help to shed light on how this community is thriving within the specific multi-lingual area of Cheetham Hill, as well as investigating, amongst other things, the number of people who speak Polish as a first language, how many (if any) people within the Polish language community can speak English, if age has any relevance upon the situation in which Polish is used and if the language community will have a future amongst Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall for years to come.

In my opinion Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall can be viewed largely as areas of *unstable multilingualism*, due to their being, as outlined by Matras (2011), 'the dominance of one language' which in this case would obviously be English, as would be expected within an area of Manchester. Nonetheless, I would have to suggest that both these areas are moving towards becoming sectors of a more *stable multilingualistic* nature. This is again, due to the way in which Matras (2011) describes *stable multilingualism* as 'the co-existence of linguistic systems', which cannot be in doubt when looking at the wide variety of languages which are used, simultaneously, within the two given areas.

Merely observing the Polish language community and it can quite obviously be seen as a classic example of '*within group*' (or intragroup) multilingualism rather than *between group* (or intergroup) multilingualism, that is those multilingual settings in which a single population makes use of two (or more) separate codes for internal

communicative purposes' (Fishman 1965: 89). The results of the survey I undertake will hopefully help to enlighten us as to why this is the case, in other words why the Polish community choose to restrict their language use (largely) to no more than two prominent tongues.

Another topic which is relevant with regards to this particular language community is the concept of *situation*. As Fishman (1965:91) states, himself citing Ervin (1964), 'various situations (settings) may be restricted with respect to the *participants* who may be present, the *physical setting*, the *topics* and *function* of discourse and the style employed. Each of these aspects of "situation" may shed light on certain regularities in language choice on particular social occasions'. Hopefully the results of my survey will enable me to deduce if there are specific situations, or domains, in which a bilingual member of the Polish language community chooses to use one language in preference of the other, and why it is they do so.

Furthermore, we can state that another relevant topic with regards to the Polish language community in Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall is that of *language maintenance* or possible *language endangerment*. As Nettle & Romaine (2000:5) state 'a community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. When languages lose speakers, they die'. From the results of my survey I should hopefully be able to see if the Polish language community, within the two specific areas, has a future, or if the language community in these areas will stagnate or possibly even cease to exist altogether.

Moving forward and we can now begin discussing the intricacies of how exactly the survey will be undertaken. As previously stated the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall will be the main focus of the survey, with the most salient factor in my choosing these areas being their close proximity to both my home and working life. To put it more simply, I would like to understand, in depth, more about one of the most prominent nationalities and subsequently, languages, used on my doorstep. Not only that but I feel that the access I have to members of the Polish language community will provide me with the perfect platform to undertake a survey that yields interesting results.

There are a whole host of research questions which could form the main crux of my research. However, I have decided to whittle these down to three main lines of enquiry. I will outline these below, but will raise awareness to the fact that the actual wording of the questions may change when it comes to the analysis of my results. That being said the actual questions will in essence remain the same.

Research Questions

- 1. Are there a sufficient amount of local amenities or services which cater specifically to the Polish language community?**
- 2. Does age affect the language choice of a Polish and English bilingual speaker when it comes to use in the social or home domain?**
- 3. Does the Polish language community have a future in these two areas?**

There are two options when it comes the way in which I could approach individuals with regards to eliciting the data or information I need to complete the survey and thus my research. The first would be to simply stand in Cheetham Hill or Crumpsall and pose my questions to members of the Polish language community, thus being a stratified random sampling approach to research. This would eventually provide me with enough data and would ensure that the answers are random, however, with the access to the Polish language community I have I think this method would merely consume too much time.

This brings me on to the second option, which is the one I have decided to undertake and is more of an ethnographic research approach (participant-observer). As previously stated my next door neighbours are Polish and as we are on good terms I believe I would be able to ask them to provide me with answers themselves, as well as introducing me to any friends, relatives, contacts they have established within the local area (belonging to the Polish language community) who in turn would also provide me with the information I need to complete my survey. If my neighbours did not feel comfortable introducing me to some of their friends/relatives etc then I could simply ask them to distribute questionnaires amongst these unwilling face to face participants and elicit the necessary data by that method. A preliminary draft of the

questionnaire I will be basing my research on is provided at the end of this proposal. The questionnaire will consist of eight closed questions, in order to reduce the risk of useless or vague responses. The number of individuals I hope to complete the questionnaire will be approximately forty (40).

The responses to this questionnaire will be recorded in a number of ways. The first will be manually, that is asking the interlocutor the questions face to face and recording the answers on the questionnaire sheet provided. I may also choose to record some of these interviews on a Dictaphone as this would save time when it comes to printing individual questionnaires, as I can just ask the interlocutor the questions from one individual questionnaire. To give a more fully rounded image of the Polish language community within Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall I will also aim to include photographic images of any local amenities or service which cater specifically to the Polish language community.

Questionnaire

Please circle ONE answer for each question.

1. How long have you lived in the Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall area?

a) 0-1 Years b) 1-3 Years c) 3-5 Years d) 5 years+

2. Which language are you fluent in?

a) Polish b) English c) Both

3. How old are you?

a) 15-25 b) 26-40 c) 41-60 d) 61+

4. Which language do you use in the social domain?

a) Polish b) English c) Both

5. Which language do you use in the home domain?

a) Polish b) English c) Both

- 6. Do you feel there are a sufficient amount of local amenities (shops, bars, cafes etc) catering specifically to the Polish language community?**
a) Yes b) No

- 7. Do you feel there are a sufficient amount of local services (libraries,, healthcare etc) catering specifically to the Polish language community?**
a) Yes b) No

- 8. How long do you think you will continue to live in the Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall area?**
a) 0-1 Years b) 1-3 Years c) 3-5 Years d) 5 Years +

Part Two

There were a whole host of factors which led to me deciding on my choice of language community, most of these are outlined in the proposal to this fieldwork project. Reiterating these and the most important factor in me choosing to focus on the Polish language community within the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall is the fact that I live in Crumpsall, which is no more than five minutes away from the ethnically diverse centre of Cheetham Hill. Coupled with this is the fact that I live on a twenty one house estate, on which four houses are occupied by Polish families or residents, including my next door neighbours. Further to this (and as previously outlined) I have a part time job in a supermarket in the very heart of Cheetham Hill and deal with a wide variety of language communities, including a large number of the Polish language community, on an almost daily basis. These three underlying factors, teamed with an innate curiosity, made it seem only natural for me to focus my fieldwork project on the Polish language community. On top of all this is the fact that Cheetham Hill is undoubtedly one of the most linguistically diverse residential areas within Manchester and so it seemed a perfect fit that I would concentrate my research on this particular area.

That being said and I had to decide what exactly I wanted to learn as a result of this research and so I decided to focus on three main research questions. I felt these

three questions would not only reveal interesting results but would also allow me to have a greater understanding of how this particular language community has managed to both survive and indeed thrive within my local area. As well as this I would be able to deduce if age has any effect on the language used in specific domains. The results I received would also allow me to judge whether or not the Polish language community has a future within Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall. The three main research questions I decided upon were as follows:

- 1. Is there a sufficient amount of local amenities/services in the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas which cater specifically to the Polish language community?**
- 2. Does age affect the choice of language used by a Polish/English bilingual speaker when it comes to the social domain and the home domain?**
- 3. Does the Polish language community have a future within the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas?**

The methodology I decided upon when it came to aiding me in answering these three research questions was twofold. The main approach involved meeting the participant face to face and asking them to complete the questionnaire in front of me. In other cases I asked them the questions and recorded their responses on a Dictaphone, or in a few scenarios I merely completed the questionnaire as I was asking the participant. The second method was quite simply asking the participant to complete a questionnaire, without me being present. This method was only used when the participant did not feel comfortable enough for me to be present; however this only occurred in a small number of cases.

Findings

And so we move onto the findings of the questionnaire. I will predominantly employ a quantitative approach when analysing my results, as this is the easiest way in which to clarify the data gathered from the questionnaire. Nevertheless, I will also approach some of the analysis in a qualitative manner as this may help explain the results received in greater detail. The easiest and least confusing way to present these findings will be to group together the results from the questions on the questionnaire with the research question which they mainly relate too. The obvious starting point is the first research question.

Research Question

- 1. Are there a sufficient amount of local amenities/services in the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas which cater specifically to the Polish language community?**

Question (from questionnaire)

- 6. Do you feel there are a sufficient amount of local amenities (shops, bars, cafes etc) catering specifically to the Polish language community?**
b) Yes b) No

Figure 1.1

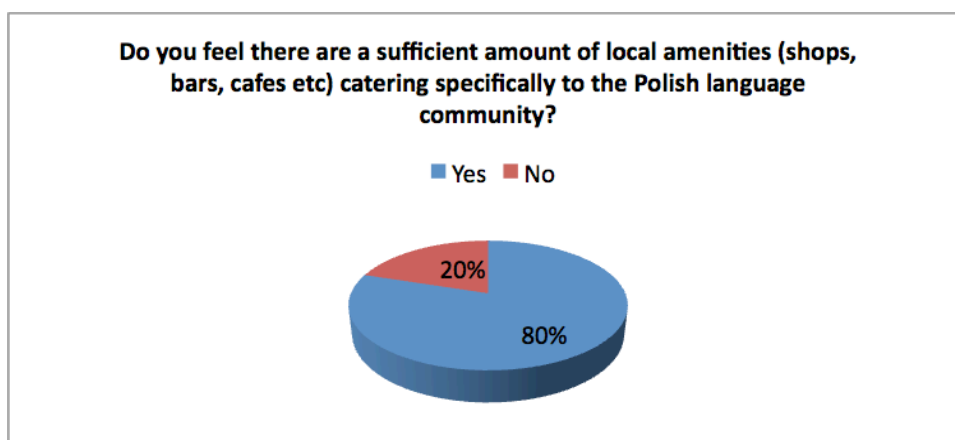


Figure 1.1 clearly shows that an overwhelming majority (80%) of the participants questioned believe that there are a definitely enough Polish specific amenities within the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas. Some of the participants who completed the questionnaire face to face with me also went as far as detailing which shops they believe to be the most useful, as well as one club/bar they enjoy visiting. As these locations were not far from where I live, I decided to take a couple of photographs detailing these local amenities, in order to provide a more complete picture of the amenities available to the Polish language community. These images can be viewed on the page below.

Figure 1.2



A shop in Cheetham Hill which caters specifically for the Polish language community.

Figure 1.3



Another shop front in Cheetham Hill, catering to the Polish language community.

Figure 1.4

A bar/club located in Cheetham Hill, again catering to the Polish language community.

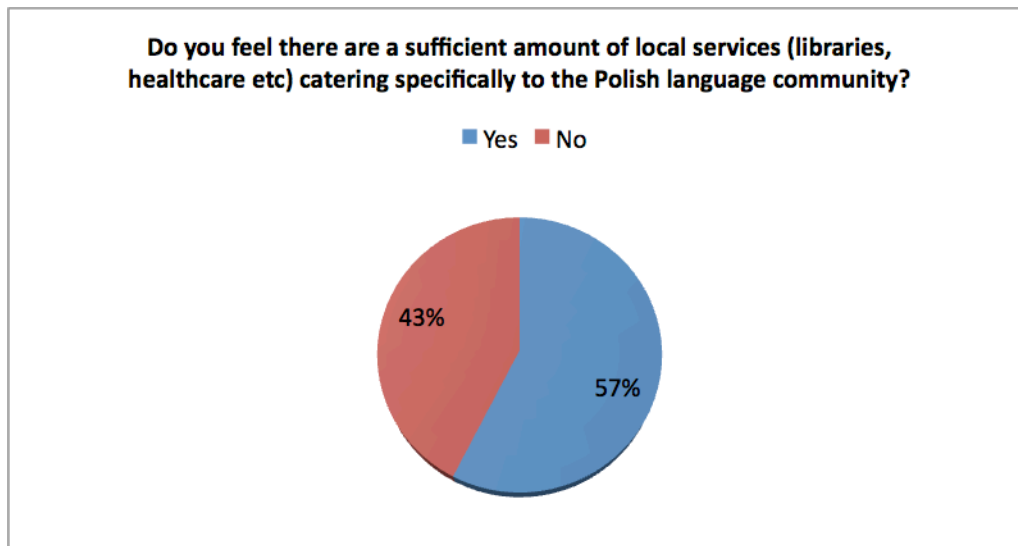


Question (from Questionnaire)

7. Do you feel there are a sufficient amount of local services (libraries, healthcare etc) catering specifically to the Polish language community?

b) Yes b) No

Figure 1.5



As figure 1.5 shows, the majority of the participants (57%) believe that there are, indeed, a sufficient amount of local services catering specifically to their language

needs. However, this is not as comprehensive as the amount of respondents who believed there were sufficient amenities available to the Polish language community. A number of the participants intimated to me that they feel there is a lack of readily available Polish literature with regards to transport times or healthcare services information etc.

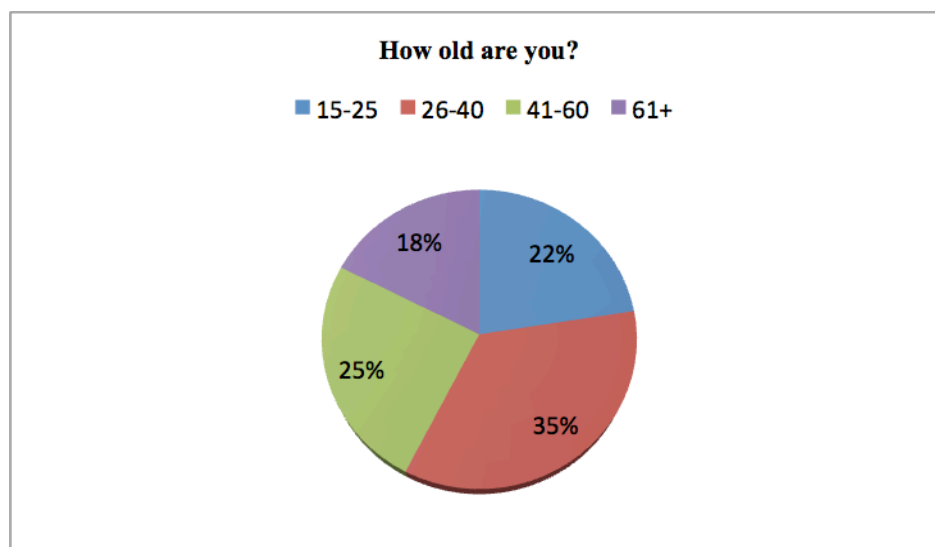
Research Question 2

- 2. Does age affect the choice of language used by a Polish/English bilingual speaker when it comes to the social domain and the home domain?**

Question (from Questionnaire)

- 3. How old are you?**
 - a) 15-25**
 - b) 26-40**
 - c) 41-60**
 - d) 61+**

Figure 2.1



As figure 2.1 shows, the majority of the people I questioned were aged between 26 and 40, with 35% (14) of all participants falling into this category. The second most frequent age group was 41-60, with 25% (10) of the participants belonging to this category. There wasn't much between the other two age groups, with 22% (9) of people aged between 15 and 25 and 18% (7) of the participants being aged 61 or older.

Having determined the exact number of people questioned that belong to each individual age group, I now need to show how each age group answered each of the other three questions on the questionnaire that relate to the second research question. The simplest way to do this will be to tackle each age group separately and present the results they gave for each of the three separate questionnaire questions (**Questions 2, 4 & 5**). This will allow us to quickly and easily compare and cross reference between each age groups set of results. Thus, we should easily be able to see whether or not age has any impact on the language used in respect to either the social or the home domain.

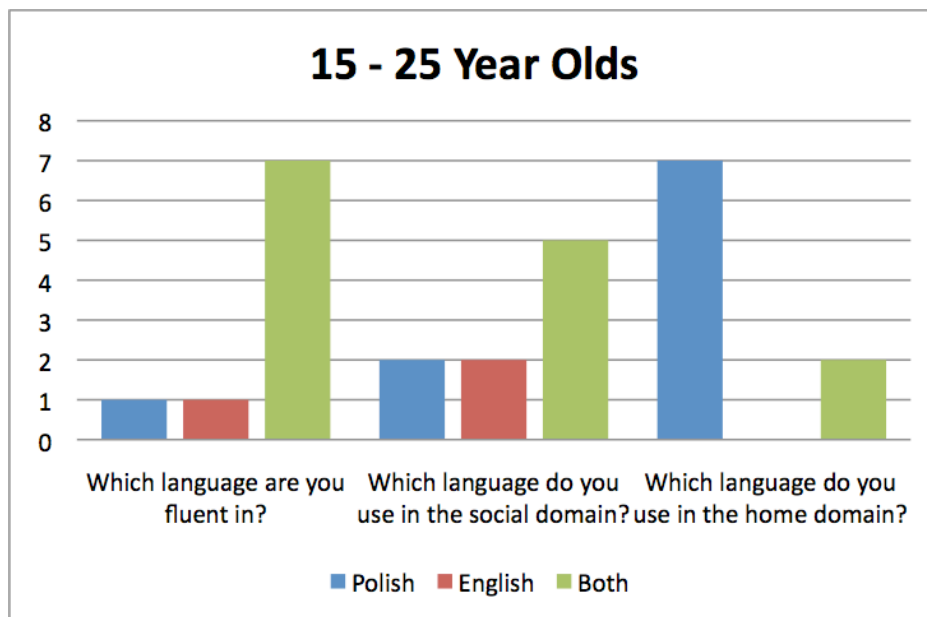
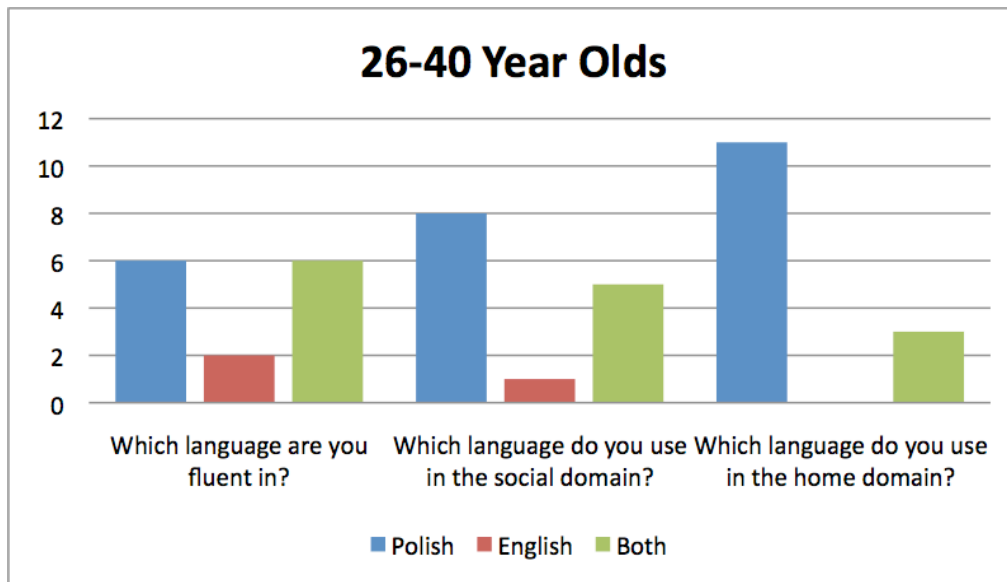


Figure 2.2

Of the 9 **15-25** year olds questioned (figure 2.2), nearly all of them were bilingual, 7 in total. Most of the participants in this age group tended to use both languages when in the social domain; however, as figure 2.2 clearly highlights, Polish is by far

and away the language of choice in the home domain, with none of the participants choosing to speak only English when at home.

Figure 2.3



Looking at figure 2.3 and it is clear to see that Polish is again the most dominant language, especially in the home domain, with 11 of the 14 **26-40** year olds choosing to speak solely Polish when at home. However, bilingual speakers still seem to alternate between the two languages when in the social domain.

Figure 2.4

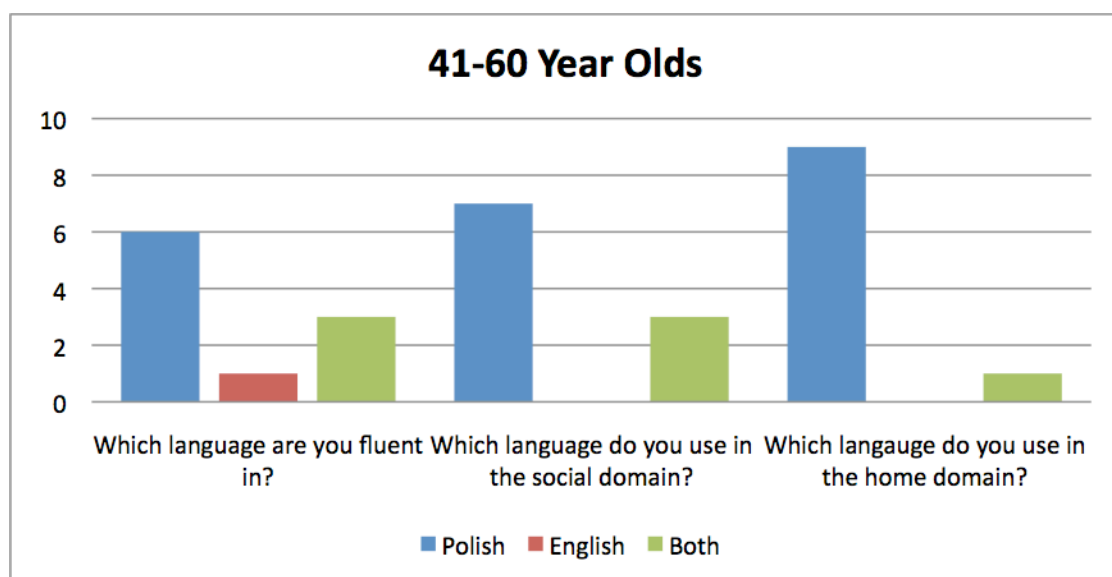
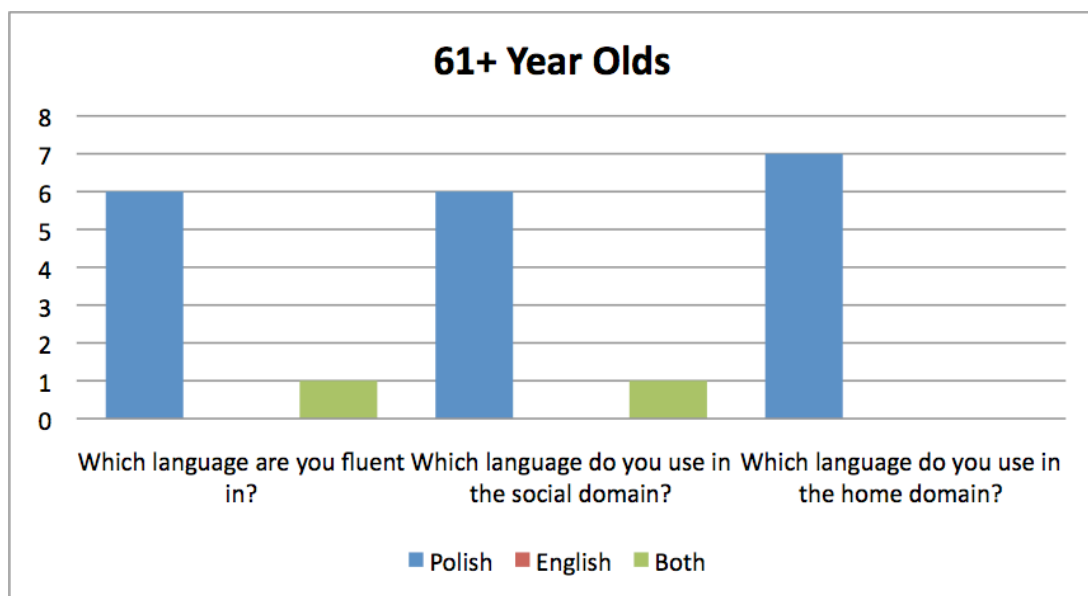


Figure 2.4, above, again provides interesting results. Unsurprisingly Polish is again the most used language, in both the social and home domains, with 7 of the 10 respondents preferring Polish in the social domain and 9 of the 10 people questioned favouring Polish in the home domain. We can easily see that English as the sole language used is becoming less and less frequent, with only 1 person in this age group being fluent in only English.

Figure 2.5



The main thing that jumps out from figure 2.5 is the complete absence of English as the sole language used. Not only that but bilingual speakers are at a minimum within this demographic, with only 1 of the 7 participants questioned being bilingual. The other most revealing statistic here is that every participant in this age group uses Polish as their primary language when in the home domain.

Research Question

3. Does the Polish language community have a future within the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas?

Question (from Questionnaire)

1. How long have you lived in the Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall area?
 - a) 0-1 Years
 - b) 1-3 Years
 - c) 3-5 Years
 - d) 5 Years+

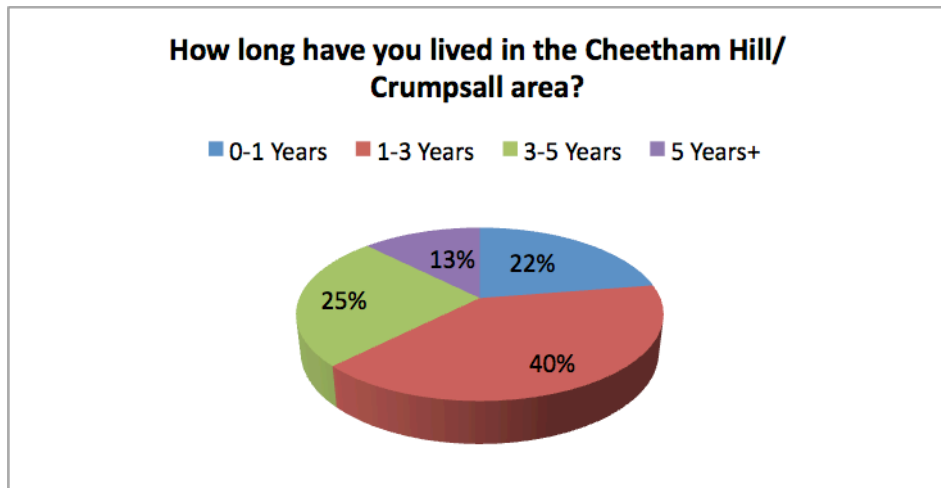


Figure 3.1

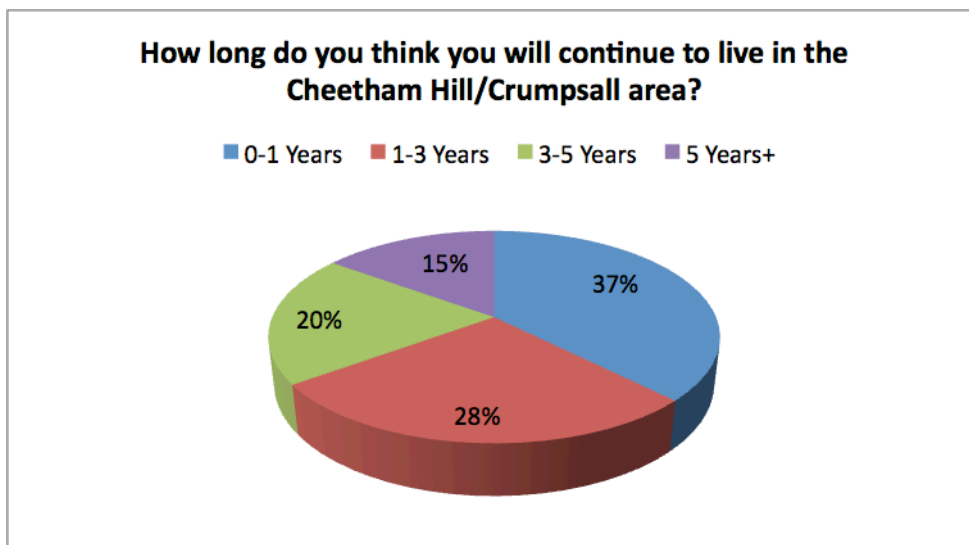
The results of Question 1 from the questionnaire, as seen above in figure 3.1, show us that only 13% of people among the Polish language community have lived in the Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall area for more than 5 years, with only 22% of the people being here for a year or less. However, nearly half of the people questioned (40 %) have lived in this area for between 1 and 3 years.

Question (from questionnaire)

8. How long do you think you will continue to live in the Cheetham Hill/Crumpsall area?

- a) 0-1 Years b) 1-3 Years c) 3-5 Years d) 5 Years+

Figure 3.2



As we can see from figure 3.2 only 15% of the people questioned envisage themselves living in these areas for more than 5 years. We can also plainly see that the majority, 37%, of those questioned see themselves living here for a year or less.

Discussion

Research Question

- 1. Are there a sufficient amount of local amenities/services in the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas which cater specifically to the Polish language community?**

Looking at the results in figure 1.1 and it is strikingly obvious that the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall do contain a sufficient amount of amenities which cater solely for the Polish language community, with 80% of those questioned believing this to be the case. The photographs provided (figures 1.2-1.4) give a small flavour of the bars, shops and cafes within these areas and speaking to the participants this is one section of the community which they are largely happy with. However, when conducting some of the questionnaires face to face it became apparent that a large number of those questioned feel the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall are distinctly lacking in Polish specific services. This is reflected in the results shown in figure 1.5, with 47% of the participants deeming the services in these areas inadequate. They relayed to me that they feel there is not enough easily accessible literature when it comes to the Polish language, for example the local surgeries (Doctors, Dentists) do not have Polish literature in the actual surgeries and there are no Polish language books in the local library. They informed me the literature was available online, but felt this was a problem as not all of the participants had access to the internet. A number of those questioned did however, inform me of an interpreter service which is also available in the local surgeries, but said this is not always available as required.

Research Question

2. Does age affect the choice of language used by a Polish/English bilingual speaker when it comes to the social domain and the home domain?

The answer to this research question lies in the results provided by figures 2.2.-2.5. As Fishman (1965:91) states, himself citing Ervin (1964), 'various situations (settings) may be restricted with respect to the *participants* who may be present, the *physical setting*, the *topics* and *function* of discourse and the style employed. Each of these aspects of "situation" may shed light on certain regularities in language choice on particular social occasions'. That being said, coupled with the information extracted from the face to face questionnaires and we can begin to understand what may affect the choice of language used in a specific domain.

Beginning with figure 2.2 and the 15-25 year old section of the Polish language community. This was the third highest demographic, with 22% of the 40 participants falling into this spectrum. We can see that the majority of this age group are bilingual, with 7 of the 9 participants able to speak both Polish and English. This bilingualism comes through in the social domain, with over 50% choosing to use both languages in social situations. When conducting the questionnaires the interlocutors provided numerous reasons as to why this is the case, with most of them having to speak English in social situations such as work, college, school, in order to communicate with their mainly English speaking peers. Nevertheless, we can clearly see that Polish is the dominant language of choice in the home domain, with 7 of the 9 participants (77%) speaking only Polish when at home. Again the participants willingly provided reasons for this trend, with most citing respect for elder family members, as well as those older family members not being bilingual, as the main factor in upholding their mother tongue when in home situations.

Moving onto figure 2.3 and the 26-40 year old subsection of the Polish language community. This was the largest age demographic questioned, with 35% of those questioned belonging in this spectrum. 6 of the 14 participants (42%) were bilingual, however, the same amount of people were fluent in only Polish. In contrast with the 15-25 age group, where both languages were largely used in the social domain,

Polish is the language most frequently used by this demographic in social situations (8 out of 14). The main reason intimated for this trend was that most social situations these people found themselves in involved Polish being the language of choice, for example, a night at the Polish social club. Nonetheless, we can quite clearly see that Polish is again the language predominantly used when it comes to the home domain, with a massive 11 of the 14 people (roughly 78%) questioned choosing to speak in their mother tongue when at home. Similar reasons were given as to why this is the case, for example respect for the language use of elder members of the family, upholding of traditional values etc.

Continuing the analysis with figure 2.4 and the 41-60 age demographic. This was the second most frequent age demographic, with 25% of people questioned falling between these two ages. Comparing the number of bilingual speakers with the 15-25 and the 26-40 year olds and it is plain to see the number of bilingual speakers is on the decline, the older the participant is. For example only 3 of the 10 people questioned in this demographic (30%) were bilingual. However a trend it follows with the 26-40 year olds is that Polish is still the most dominant language used within the social domain, in this case 70% of those questioned preferred the use of Polish in social situations. Again, though, Polish is quite clearly the overwhelming choice of language for this section of the language community within the home domain, with 90% of those questioned using Polish when at home. The reasons provided for this again included wanting to uphold traditional language values as well as the fact that it felt only natural to speak their mother tongue when in the home environment.

Finally looking at figure 2.5 and the 61+ year olds. This was the least frequent participant age group, with only 18% of those questioned belonging to this demographic. This is also the demographic which contains the least amount of bilingual speakers, with only 1 of the 7 people (14%) being able to communicate in both languages. In tandem with the 26-40 and 41-60 year olds and Polish is quite obviously the language of choice in the social domain amongst this demographic, with 6 of the 7 people questioned, a massive 85%, preferring their mother tongue when in social situations. The continuing trend of Polish being the most salient language choice when in the home domain reaches its peak amongst this demographic, with 100% of participants within this age group using only Polish when

at home. The main reason I could deduce for these results is that older members wholly believe in upholding the use of their mother tongue in all situations, especially at home. This is backed up by Yaron Matras (2011) who states: 'Within one generation, immigrant (heritage) language is likely to become limited to oral conversations with older generation, within the home'.

Research Question

3. Does the Polish language community have a future within the Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall areas?

Looking at the results displayed in figure 3.1 and we can see that only 22% of the people questioned have are relatively new to the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall, having lived here for a year or less. The majority of those questioned have been here between 1 and 5 years, with 40% of people living here for a period of 1-3 years and 25% remaining here between 3 and 5 years. However, only 13% of the Polish language community I questioned have been in these areas for more than 5 years.

These results can be compared and contrasted with those displayed in figure 3.2. Almost half of the people questioned (48%) believe they will remain living in these areas for the next 1-5 years, with 28% stating that they still see themselves here in the next 1-3 years and 20% believing they will remain here for a period of 3-5 years. However, what is worrying for the Polish language community is that only 15% of those questioned believe they will still be living in this area for more than 5 years. Marry this with the fact that 37% of the participants believe they will only live here between 0 and 1 years and it seems that the Polish language contingent within these areas could begin to decline. Speaking, again, to the respondents and numerous reasons were given for this troubling trend. These included lack of jobs in these areas, increased living costs and unaffordable housing. This ties in with one of the points made in my fieldwork proposal, as outlined by Nettle & Romaine (2000:5) who state 'a community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. When languages lose speakers, they die'

So, what can we conclude from all of this information? In terms of positives for the Polish language community within Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall we can conclude that yes, there are enough local amenities and that the mother tongue of Polish is still heralded as the most important language amongst this community, even though the younger members are increasingly speaking English. This will ensure that future generations within this community uphold the traditional values of the Polish language, especially in the home domain. In terms of negatives, the most worrying trend comes in relation to language maintenance and language endangerment. The pattern that seems to be appearing is that members of this community do not see themselves having a very long future within these two areas of Manchester. This is largely due to outside economic factors and not internal elements. However, most of those questioned who do not view themselves in Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall in the long term, did say that they still see themselves remaining in Manchester, albeit elsewhere, ensuring that on the whole Manchester's Polish language community should continue to thrive. That being said, the number of participants I questioned is relatively small in relation to this community at large, so I cannot unequivocally state that these results reflect the trends of the Polish language community within the areas of Cheetham Hill and Crumpsall, as a whole.

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