



Report

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How do bilingual children utilise the process of language conversion in social situations, as well as maintaining their proficiency in other languages in St. Paul's Catholic High school?

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Introduction and methodology

In this report we hope to address the issue of how bilingual children utilise the process of language conversion in social situations, including how they maintain language proficiency, by using the School Language Survey. In addition to this, we also wish to address the important issue of how bilingual children make use of language conversion in social media settings, such as Facebook and Twitter. We aim to include: findings of a quantitative and qualitative nature; interpretation of our data set along with numerical representations of the data such as graphs and bar charts; and in depth analysis of our findings and how they answer our main research question.

One of the main reasons we have chosen to focus on this topic is that bilingualism and language proficiency is not only interesting, but could prove to be a contributing factor as to how well a child is able to comprehend another language. We are hoping to unearth an explanation as to whether bilingual children maintain language proficiency throughout different languages, as well as whether they are able to utilise language switching when communicating with different people. Another reason for our choice was that it enabled us to come into contact with languages and cultures that we may not have been familiar with before.

This report aims to answer our vital research questions; is there any correlation between the pupils English language proficiency and the genetics of their home language? Is language choice affected by social prestige and cultural identity? How are social networking sites in any way beneficial to the young generation in maintaining their level proficiency in reading and writing? And whether children are able to use language conversion between family members and friends?

The School Language Survey (SLS) is a survey that addresses language use throughout everyday situations, with questions including the likes of 'What language would you use with your mother?' or 'what language would you mother use with you?' Additionally, the survey asks questions regarding language proficiency for each language the child can speak as to gain a better insight into how fluently they can speak each language, including English. The survey aims to give schools a better knowledge of their students, and helps them to give students extra lingual support.

The main body of the survey includes the questions detailed below;

General questions:

Q1 – Name

Q2 – Date of Birth

Q3 - Have you lived in countries other than the UK before? If so, for how long?

Q4 – Year of admission at St. Pauls

Language use from pupil to other:

- Q1 – What language(s) do you speak to your mother in?
- Q2 – What language(s) do you speak to your father in?
- Q3 - What language(s) do you speak to your grandmother in?
- Q4 - What language(s) do you speak to your grandfather in?
- Q5 – Do you speak to any other adults in any other languages?
- Q6 - What language(s) do you speak to your siblings?

Language use from other to pupil:

- Q1 – What language(s) does your mother speak to you in?
- Q2 - What language(s) does your father speak to you in?
- Q3 - What language(s) does your grandmother speak to you in?
- Q4 - What language(s) does your grandfather speak to you in?
- Q5 – Do other adults speak to you in any other languages?
- Q6 - What language(s) does your siblings speak to you in?

Language choice in and around the home:

- Q1 – Do you read at home? If so what language do you read in?
- Q2 – Does anybody read to you at home? (Has anybody read to you before?) If so what language was it?
- Q3 – Do you watch television at home? If so what language do you watch in?
- Q4 – Do you go to the cinema often? If so what language do you watch films in?
- Q5 – Can you write in any of the languages you can talk in?
- Q6 – When did you last go abroad? What language did you use whilst you were away?
- Q7 – Can you write anything in language(s) you can talk in below?
- Q8 – Can you translate it into English?

We also asked extra questions relating to one of our main focus points, social media.

- Q1 – Do you use Facebook/Twitter?
- Q2 – If answered yes, which language do you prefer to use for; settings, making a post, and communicating with family and friends.

The language proficiency test asks four questions, and is scored. The highest possible score is 12 – 3 points if they respond immediately and fluently, 2 if slow and hesitant, or 1 if they can't answer the question. Each language the child can speak is rated, starting with English, and continuing with Home Language 1, Home Language 2 and so on. The four questions are as followed:

Q1 – Can you name this body part in <language>?

Q2 - Can you count from 1-10 in <language>?

Q3 – Can you describe a family member to me in <language>?

Q4 – Can you describe your daily routine to me in <language>?

This report focuses on 53 students from Years 7-10 at St. Paul's Catholic High School in Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester. St. Paul's Catholic High School prides itself on being a school that welcomes diversity, and is home to hundreds of bilingual students from many different cultural backgrounds. The school acts as a safe haven for many students, and offers classes, clubs and activities for children who are not native English speakers. This was of interest to us in particular, as it shows the school is attempting to further the children's English as well as other native languages. Additionally, it helped us to presume that the children we would be interviewing would know at least a small amount of English and be able to answer our questions.

In our original plan, we aimed to look at pupils in years 7, 8 and 9, however once inside the school we decided to extend our field, by surveying children in year 10. This was to give us, and the school, a much more complete set of data to analyse. It is with regret that we did not have the chance, in two days, to survey any year 11's, mainly from time constraints and that the pupils were not excused from class as they were studying for crucial GCSE exams. This was a problem for us that we did not originally plan for.

Our research was conducted over two full days at the school (8.40am – 3.05pm). Upon arrival at the school we were given class lists of Years 7-11, that included students name and their nationality, as well as a language that the school had added for them upon admission to the school. Many included 'English?' as a language, as the school was unsure of the exact language the student would use as their 'first home language'. We then set up our chairs in an unused stairway, a more personal setting and somewhere quiet so that the child feels relaxed, in hope that they will divulge more information to us. For each individual child we explained who we are, our names, why we are conducting this survey, and what it would be used for. We also added extra colloquial questions such as 'What's your favourite T.V. programme?' or 'Who's your favourite football team?' in order to get to know the child better, and get them to feel more at ease and relaxed throughout the survey.

The class lists given to us were great in helping us to eliminate people who were of British Nationality and only spoke in the English language, as opposed to checking with each individual student. However, some children listed down as 'English?' spoke English and only English, meaning we wasted both their time and our time in calling them out of class.

As aforementioned, time was one of our main issues, and each interview lasted from 5-15 minutes depending on individual student. The class lists were a great help, however we struggled with finding

some children as they weren't in the room listed on the timetables we were given. This wasted much of our time over both days. Another issue we came across was that some children did not want to disclose so much information, for example, not stating a language they can speak fluently. This could have been for a number of reasons, such as the child associates a language with a particularly traumatic time or event, or simply that they did not feel comfortable enough to open up.

After collating the data from the surveys into a spreadsheet, we were able to analyse the results in a numerical way, and have a look at trends or patterns that may occur in some languages and cultures. Some of our main findings are detailed in the table below.

Table of results

55% (29 out of 53) of students surveyed use the same language with parents, grandparents and siblings.
15% (8 out of 53) of students surveyed use a different language to communicate with their Mother AND Father.
9% (5 out of 53) of students surveyed use a different language to communicate with their Mother, Father AND their grandparents.
28% (15 out of 53) of student's surveyed use English with their siblings and other adult figures.
38% (20 out of 53) of students state that all family members use the same language to communicate with them.
62% (33 out of 53) of children surveyed state that a language other than English is used by their immediate family members.
19% (10 out of 53) of the children surveyed stated that their Mothers and Fathers use a different language to communicate with them, then the child does with the parent.
13% (7 out of 53) of children surveyed stated that their parents and grandparents spoke to them in a different language than they use to communicate with them.
49% (26 out of 53) students surveyed stated that their siblings use English to talk to them.

Table1.Languages that are used between the child and others.

Language conversion and proficiency

In terms of the language that children use with family members and others, the following main three features have been found.

- 1) There are some children who use the same language to all family members. This same language is mostly major language in Manchester (English, Polish and Portuguese.)
- 2) The children who use the different languages when talking to their parents and when talking to grandparents use mainly English to their parents and use other languages to grandparents.
- 3) Many children use English when talking with siblings and use other language to other family members.

Firstly, some of children talk with all their family members with the same languages. Among 55% (29/53) of children surveyed who use the same language to all family members (refer to Table1), this same language is mostly major language in Manchester (English, Polish and Portuguese.) (English 10 Polish 6 and Portuguese 5). Moreover, some of them use still Polish and Portuguese when talking with non-family adults. The reason for this could be that these languages are major languages in Manchester. Needless to say, English is one of major language and Polish and Portuguese are also ones in Manchester (Gopal *et al.*, 2013, p.3).

Secondly, 9% (5/53) of children surveyed use different languages according to the different situations where they talk with parents and where they talk with grandparents, and they often use English to parents and other languages to grandparents. 5 students use different languages when talking with their parents and when talking with their grandparents.

The details are following:

1. student 6 uses English to parents and uses English + South Indian to grandparents
2. student 20 uses Ga>English to parents and uses Ga to grandmother
3. student 22 uses English to parents and uses English>Spanish to grandparents
4. student 30 uses Ndebele+ Shauna + Zulu to mother and uses Ndebele + Zulu to grandparents
5. student 38 uses Spanish to parents and uses Spanish + English > Portuguese to grandparents

Except for the case of student 30, they predominantly use languages (English) to talk with their parents and use some other languages to their grandparents.

Thirdly, 28% (15/53) of children surveyed use English when talking with siblings (refer to the table 1). There are several considerable reasons for this and this report will introduce three of them. One is that children using English in school could feel more proficient compared with their home language so that they use English more frequently to talk with their siblings (Jia and Aaronson, 2003; Kohnert, 2002 as cited in Bridges and Hoff, 2014, p.226).

Also, the children use the major language such as English when communicating with their peers in school and they extend that rule to communicating with their siblings (Bridges and Hoff, 2014, p.226). There reasons come under this research. The evidences include:

- a) The average score of English is higher than the average score of home language 1 (91% (48/53) of students surveyed got 12 marks in English and 58% (31/53) of students surveyed got 12 marks in home language 1)
- b) This school is an international school and the common language among students is English.

Hence, many students use English when communicating with their siblings. Additionally, siblings that are older may have a much better understanding of English, and use it more frequently, and on the other hand, younger siblings may only know English as they may have been born after moving from native country to the UK, and will only be taught English in pre-school environments.

In terms of language use from family members and other adults to child, the following main three features have been found.

- 1) Many children are talked in different languages by their family.
- 2) There are some children whose family members talk to them in the same language and this same language is mostly one of the major languages found in Manchester (English, Polish and Portuguese).
- 3) Many children are talked to in English by their siblings.

First of all, although 55% (29/53) of children surveyed use the same language to all family members, just 38% (20/53) of children surveyed are talked with the same languages from all family members. The cause of this difference could be that children have the tendency to choose the major language whose input is large when talking and does not choose the minority language which has restriction on input (Kasuya, 1998, p. 342).

Additionally, some children are talked in the same language by all family members and the same language is mainly one of the following languages: English, Polish and Portuguese.

(English 4, Polish 4 and Portuguese 3 out of 20 children who are talked in the same language by family members). The reason for this can be considered that English, Polish and Portuguese are major languages in Manchester as indicated above.

Finally, there are 49% (26/53) of children surveyed who are talked in English by their siblings and are talked in different language by their other family members (refer to Table1).

In addition, the relationship between daily input (Reading book, being read book, TV, Film) and the heritage language proficiency have been found in this research. This report cleared that the students

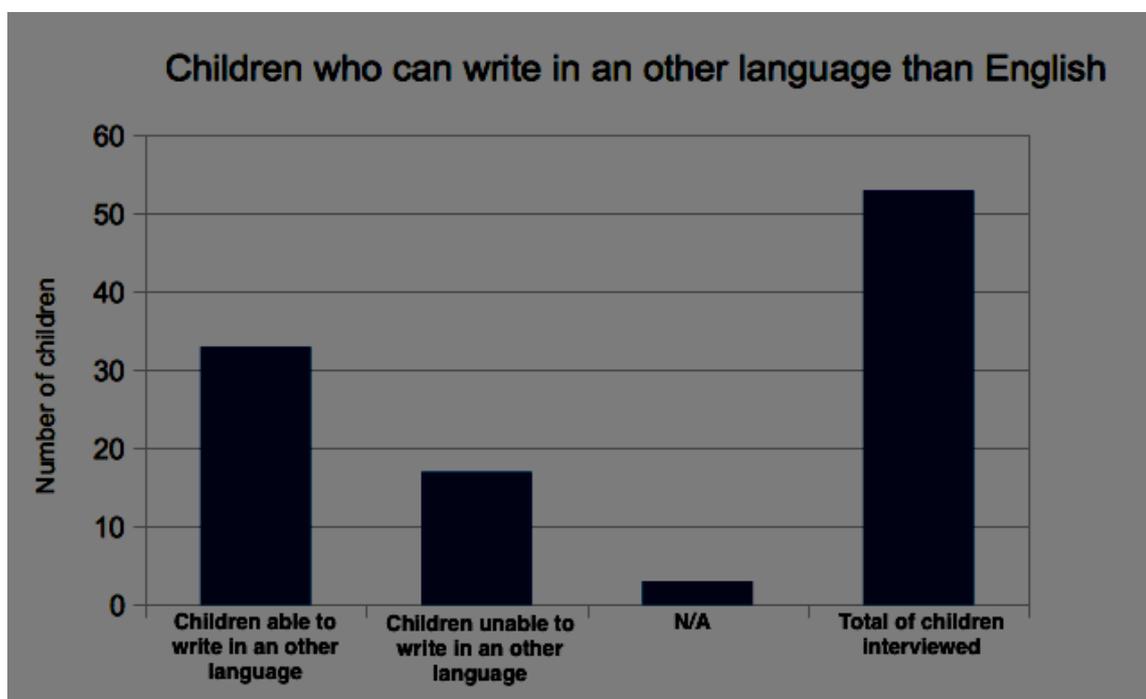
who got under 9 marks (out of 12 marks) in Home language 1 overall score and most of them use English in their daily input not their home languages. Although a few of them use their home language in this input, the portion of using English is larger than the one of using their home languages. On the other hand, the people, whose home languages is Portuguese and Spanish, who got 12 marks in the same test could be seen that they are using their home languages when reading books and watching TVs/ Films.

Thus, these daily inputs are essential for the bilingual people to keep or improve their proficiency in home languages. According to Szecsi and Szilagyi, (2012, p.268), the maintenance of these heritage languages can be achieved by family's positive attitude to these languages and family's efforts to create the situation that children could access to many opportunities to use these languages with various input including books and TVs. Nevertheless, from the home languages above, it is difficult to access to the books, TV programmers and films in these languages compared with the ones in English in UK.

Bilingualism and Social Networking Sites

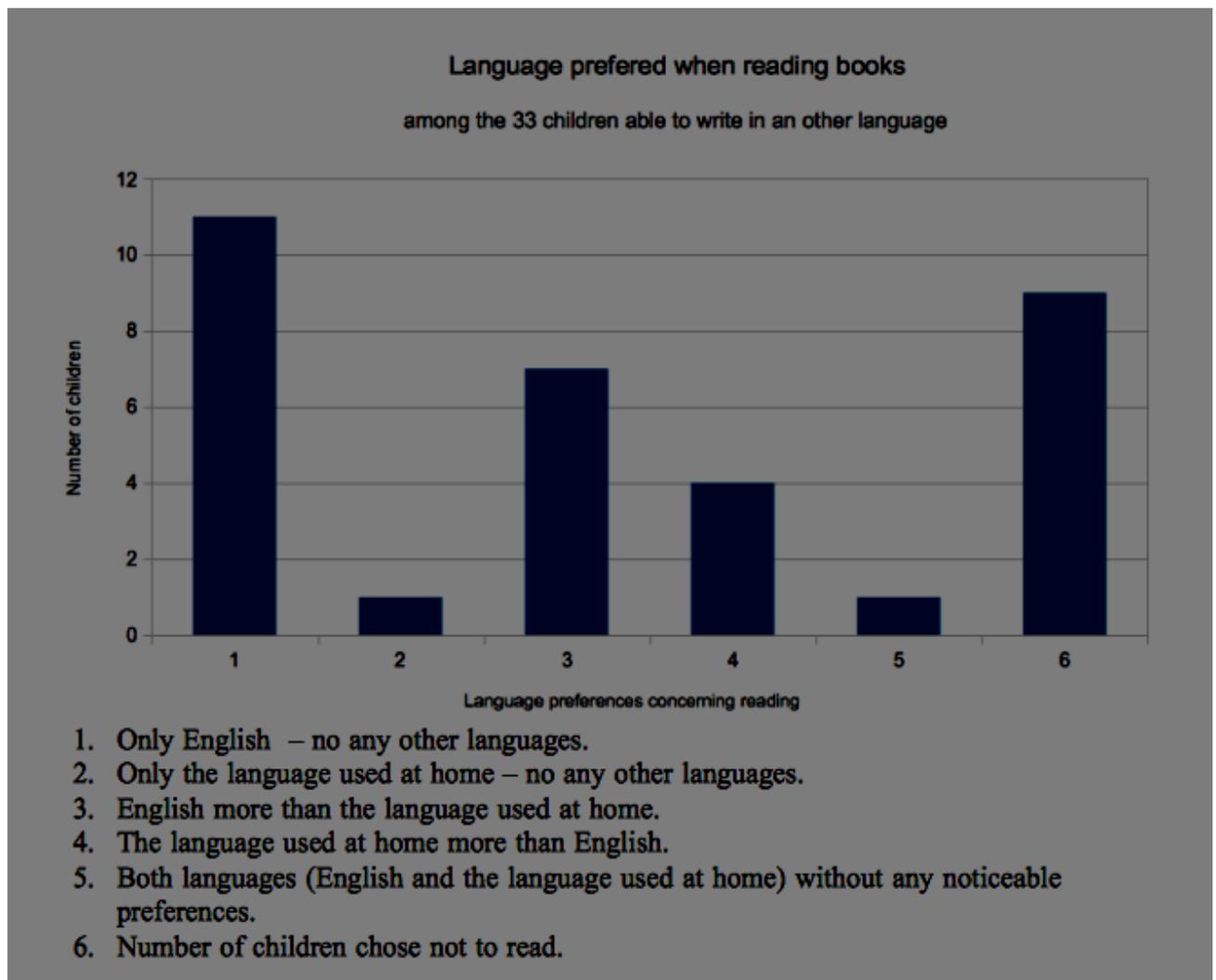
It is not rare to observe bilingual individuals in a country where one of the languages known is not the official language and is only spoken by a specific community, being only able to communicate with this specific language through oral means. In certain communities, most of the time, people are just able to speak and to listen, but have difficulties to read and/or write in this language.

Since their creation, Social Network Sites (SNSs) keep on developing around the world, allowing people to keep in touch with one another, and without language restrictions, as it is the case with Facebook, which since its birth in 2004, has translated its settings in 70 different languages, considering languages variations (as British and American English, French and Canadian French, or Castilian and Catalan Spanish).



Those platforms, because of the new way of socialise they offer, are very popular, and affects even the youngest generation, enables one to communicate, without time lag (as it was the case with regular mails), with one another in every language, by writing it and reading it on a screen through the computer, maintaining a certain level of that type of language proficiency. So, in what extent are the SNSs in any way beneficial to the young generation in maintaining their level proficiency in writing and reading? In the school we made our investigation, we noticed that many children were able to write in their home language, when different than English.

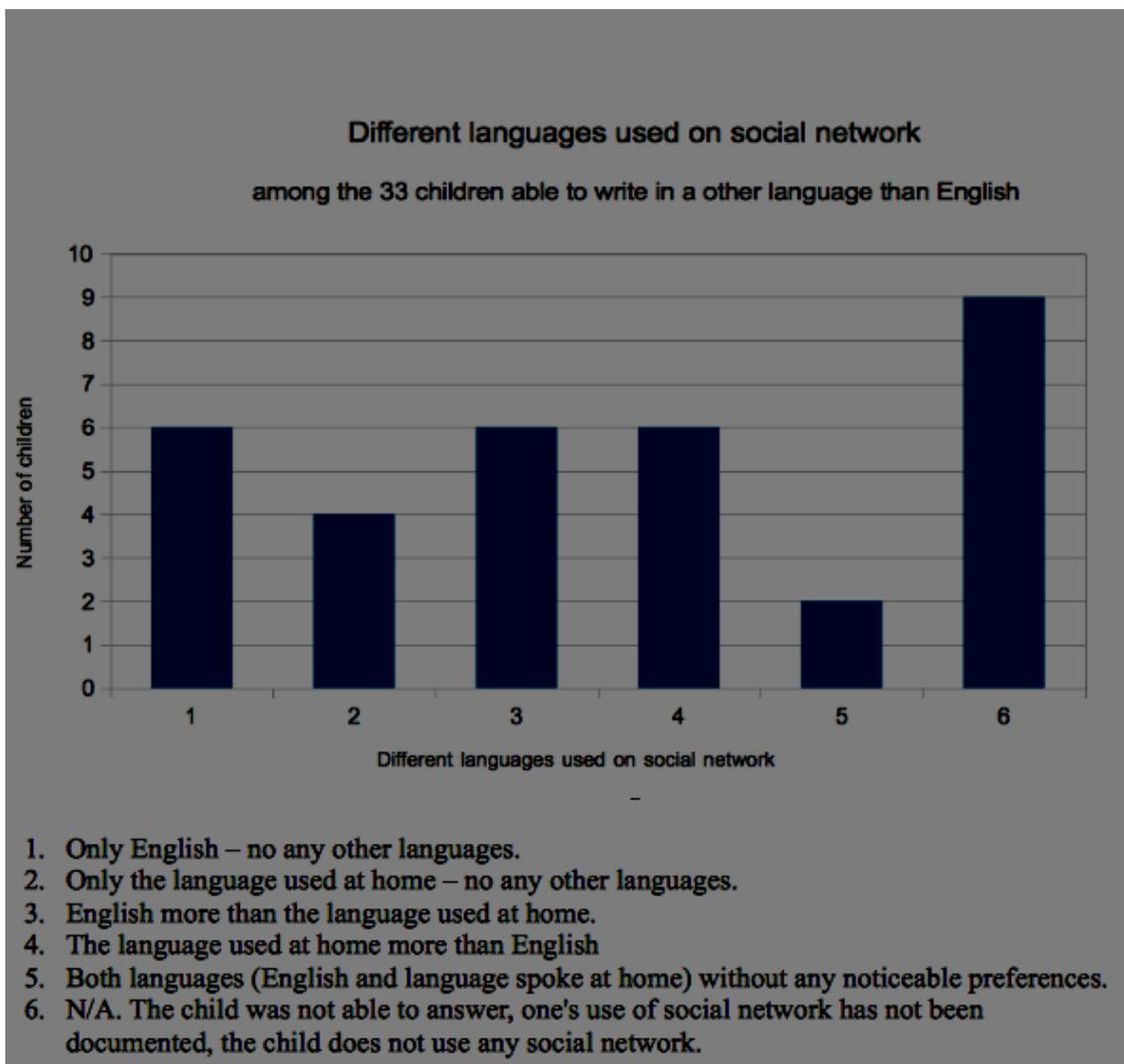
Out of 53 children interviewed, 17 were unable to write in another language, 3 of them were not documented, and 33 were able to write in a language other than English. The last figure made us question how those 33 children do maintain their level in writing and reading. There is of course television (T.V.). And books but T.V. may not be the best way to affirm that it is the way children are able to write and read in another language, as the information given on T.V are mainly audible. As for books, as the following chart will show, it may not either give the response we're looking for.



According to this diagram, out of 33 children, 11 only read in English, 7 preferred to read in English

more than in their home language, 9 chose not to read, compared to only 1 child who only read in the home language, 4 who preferred to read in the home language more than in English, and only 1 child who read in both languages without any noticeable preferences.

These numbers cannot help us to determine the reason why the children interviewed have the ability to write in their home language, as the majority of them preferred to read in English, or to not read at all. In opposition to that, when it comes to the SNSs, the children of the school are very active on it: 62% of all the children interviewed said they are active on SNSs, whereas 9% said they are not using any SNSs, and 28% are not documented. Among the 33 children able to use a language other than English online, they shown to be 73% to use the SNSs to communicate



Among those 73% who use the SNSs, 75% of them said they were using their home language online, (this percentage doesn't differentiate the children who use English more than their home language, nor the children who use their home language more than English, nor the children who only use their home language).

The results obtained in our study show that even though SNSs are not the only way to maintain the proficiency level in writing and reading, it plays a big part in one's online social life.

How Language Heritage correlates with proficiency

The question of language fluency is an important aspect to examine when looking at our data, information on language proficiency and the factors that affect this can be enormously important to helping schools identify problems in Language Learning and provide improved educational needs. As noted by Stiefel, Schwartz & Conger (2003), in their study on language usage in New York Elementary schools, limited English proficiency (LEP) "varies substantially across the 10 major home languages other than English". We thought it would be interesting to compare results from this study to ours to see if the generalisations made hold up outside in British schools, if so this could provide evidence to the hypothesis that Home Language has a direct correlation with language efficiency of English. Below I will illustrate the results of our data in respect to heritage language.

English Proficiency	Heritage Language	Sample Size
100%	Arabic	1
100%	Bulgarian	1
100%	Curundi	1
100%	Ebo	1
100%	Ethiopian	1
100%	Filipino	1
100%	French	4
100%	Ga	2
100%	Idoma	1
100%	Italian	1
100%	Jamaican Patois	1
100%	Malayalam	5
100%	Nigerian	1
100%	Persian	1
100%	Portuguese	7
100%	Shona	3
100%	Southern indian	1
100%	Spanish	6
100%	Yoruba	1
100%	Zulu	1
93%	Polish	8
83%	Hungarian	1
83%	Lithuanian	1

(Table showing English proficiency by heritage language based on fluency test results in our data sample)

This does not effectively confirm the results of the New York study (shown below)

	Number of Students	Percentage of students who are:						
		Limited English Proficient	Poor	Immigrant	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
English	369,736	0.7%	82.2%	6.7%	4.6%	58.6%	17.6%	18.6%
Spanish	192,037	26.1%	96.3%	18.7%	0.3%	1.4%	97.7%	0.4%
Cantonese	13,445	12.4%	89.7%	19.7%	98.8%	0.1%	0.6%	0.5%
Russian	12,179	12.5%	68.1%	79.2%	1.2%	0.3%	0.2%	98.2%
Haitian-Creole	6,166	23.9%	96.2%	24.6%	0.5%	98.1%	0.5%	0.8%
Korean	6,126	11.8%	60.1%	35.2%	98.6%	0.1%	0.6%	0.6%
Bengali	5,620	23.7%	93.1%	68.8%	96.0%	1.2%	0.7%	1.4%
Chinese-Dialect	5,293	12.3%	80.9%	27.4%	97.7%	0.3%	1.0%	0.9%
Arabic	5,145	23.0%	90.4%	40.5%	17.1%	2.8%	0.8%	78.6%
Urdu	4,938	27.7%	88.2%	63.3%	94.9%	0.4%	1.0%	3.4%
Albanian	3,126	24.1%	91.7%	45.2%	1.1%	0.7%	0.2%	97.6%
Other	<u>35,237</u>	20.1%	79.1%	46.1%	52.3%	13.9%	2.7%	30.9%
All	659,048	11.7%	86.3%	15.9%	10.9%	35.0%	38.5%	15.2%

which suggests that proficiency levels vary substantially across different heritage languages as there was little variation between the majority of languages in our study. It is interesting to note however that the only languages which did not have 100% proficiency (12/12 on our proficiency tests) are from a similar geographical area, 3 languages of central Europe. This could be some evidence towards the hypothesis that geographical/genetic variation in home languages play a part in language proficiency in bilingual individuals. This could possibly be linked to the "genetic roots" of pupil's heritage languages, and how dissimilar they are to English, for example, it makes sense that languages in the Germanic family would be more similar to English, and thus potentially easier to learn. However this is not evidenced in our data, as many distant language families have speakers which have acquired 100% efficiency.

Of course, this is in no way the only possible explanation, as many other factors may influence language proficiency in English, such as length of exposure time to the English Language, home language use, pupils own language abilities, etcetera.

As our data sample was relatively small, the results are potentially not statistically significant, and further investigation is needed.

Cultural identity

Another interesting aspect we can examine is related to cultural identity. In such a modern world, the globalisation of English is evident everywhere in our culture, this could be seen as a positive reflection on unity in the modern world, with each individual being able to communicate across cultures, but it also has impacts on cultural identity. Language is an important part of a user's own identity, and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity, this can be summarised in a quote: "I have... come to the conclusion that my identity does not have to be static. Sometimes, I feel Spanish and I like to

identify with the Spanish culture while at other times I choose to reinforce my German, Irish-Anglo background. In many ways the two identities have become interwoven. A part of me is expressed through speaking Spanish and singing Spanish songs which is not expressed through speaking English or playing classical music... each language I speak and each music tradition I engage in carries with it a different world of meanings." (Student respondent, quoted in Smolicz, et. al., 1998.)

It became evident from our studies however that some children seek to dissociate themselves from their heritage identity, this is evidenced in that one pupil who was fluent in Polish was initially reluctant to speak in front of his friends in his home language, providing evidence as to how language choice may be influenced by social interactions, by prestige and by stigma's attached to languages. Choice of language usage can then linked to the cultural identity the child seeks to display. It is then important to investigate this type of language stigmatising as it could potentially be detrimental to home language development, and also to the child's own sense of self-esteem and pride in their heritage. This notion will be examined further below by data analysis.

One possible hypothesis then is that languages associated with a "strong cultural identity" may more frequently choose to speak in their home language and disassociate themselves from English, whereas languages with a "stigmatised cultural identity" may be more inclined to disassociate themselves with their heritage language. To investigate this we chose to compare one representative of "stigmatised cultural identity" with the rest of the data set, we have chosen Polish as representative of "stigmatised cultural identity" due to the often negative portrayal in British Media of East European Immigrants, especially Polish. Although this is subjective to opinion, we believe this group is one of many that has been subjected to possible discrimination within Britain. We will not further defend this decision here. (But for more evidence on this perceived stigmatisation see: <http://inside-poland.com/t/exclusive-polish-protestors-in-london-to-demonstrate-against-discrimination>)

We will here compare our data on language choice in social network site (SNS) usage to home language, as social networking interactions are most likely the most influenced by social stigmatisation, as interaction via social networking is communicated across the widest group.

Language	Percentage considered as a choice of Language use on SNS
English	88%
Polish	15%
Spanish	10%
French	6%
Shona	6%
Lithuanian	6%
Italian	3%
Portuguese	3%
Zulu	3%
Hungarian	3%
Catalan	3%
Arabic	0%
Bulgarian	0%
Curundi	0%
Ebo	0%
Ethiopian	0%
Filipino	0%
Ga	0%
Idoma	0%
Jamaican	
Patois	0%
Malayalam	0%
Nigerian	0%
Persian	0%
Southern	
Indian	0%
Yoruba	0%

(Table showing Languages considered by pupils as a choice for use in Social Networking Site Interactions)

These results are interesting. As we can see from the table, only 11 of the heritage languages present in the data were considered optional for usage in SNS interactions, interestingly, Polish was actually the most frequently considered for use. This provides counter-evidence for our hypothesis that socially stigmatised languages would feature less frequent use in social interactions, in fact, it confirms the opposite. This could potentially suggest that stigmatised cultures and languages take a more direct approach, and perhaps are used more in social situations in an attempt to effectively 'stand-up' in the face of discrimination. There is however alternative explanations, such as stigmatised

languages tend to have a strong sense of unity in the community, and as such band together in these sort of social interactions, thus communicating in their home language. It could also be simply a reflection of the sample, if more pupils in our data sample had Polish as a home language than any other, then this would likely be reflected in the above data sample in SNS choice.

This is potentially an interesting area for further research, but due to the limited data available to us, more definite conclusions are beyond the scope of this paper.

To conclude, this report has answered vital research questions regarding language conversion, retaining language proficiency and the role social media has on language switching and proficiency. We have provided our data in a number of numerical forms including percentages and representations such as tables and graphs. We have looked in great detail at joint cases, as well as individual cases, and have come to the generic conclusion that bilingual children have a greater ability to maintain proficiency throughout language use. Finally, we would like to thank the students and staff at St. Paul's Catholic High School, Wythenshawe, for their hard work, co-operation and time.

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Appendix

Multilingual Manchester graphic – Multilingual Manchester website.
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