

# लपतौलिंगुवत MANCHESTER

**Report**

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# **How is language usage affected by different domains in the Curry Mile area of Rusholme, Manchester?**

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## **1. Research question and methods**

1.1. We chose to study Rusholme due to it being a diverse multicultural centre.

There are a range of languages which are frequently spoken by members of the community. The area of Rusholme experienced vast influxes of Caribbean and South Asian migrants during the 1950s and 1960s which enabled it to be transformed into a gated-community. As Kaplan and Li assert, 'many of the retail premises of the 1960s, through an evolutionary process of adaptive reuse, have been converted into "indian" restaurants.' (2006:194).

1.2. We decided to use a rapid and anonymous (Labov 1966) method of eliciting data; a questionnaire. This method allowed us to obtain quantitative data which could be plotted on visual representation showing the variance of Asian languages in the speech community.

1.3. In our initial fieldwork proposal we decided to obtain data from large supermarkets, jewellers and restaurants. However, when we began our

research we quickly became aware that neither of the two large supermarkets along the Curry Mile were willing participants and refused to take part. This may be because of the high volumes of customers and the unwillingness of managers to allow their employees to speak to us whilst they were working. Therefore, we devised a contingency plan where we focused our attention towards smaller independent newsagents and convenience stores. By doing this we felt it was of benefit as they were on the whole run by the proprietors. Consequently, because the shops were smaller than the supermarkets and therefore had less customers it enabled us to obtain a better rapport between the shop workers and ourselves resulting in us obtaining not only quantitative data but also qualitative data.

Additionally, we noticed a flaw in our fieldwork plan with regards to the title: "How do speech communities in the area of Rusholme co-exist?" We felt that this question was too broad and wasn't a specific research question. Therefore, we mutually decided to change the research question to: "How is language usage affected by different domains in the Curry Mile area of Rusholme, Manchester?" This question allowed us to be precise in our fieldwork as well as outline to the reader what we wish to investigate.

Regrettably, we failed to devise a pilot study which would have checked the feasibility of our research and outline any problems that might have arisen. This therefore meant that we had to change our questionnaire after handing in our initial fieldwork plan as we realised that numerous questions were worded incorrectly.

## **2. Quantitative Data**

During our research into the languages in the Curry Mile area, we collected data, recording which languages were spoken and in what contexts. The three types of establishments we collected data from were curry houses, Jewellers and small shops.

2.1. From the six surveys we collected from curry houses, we found that 100% of participants listed both English and Urdu as spoken Languages, along with

33.3% (1/3) speaking Pakistani, and 33.3% also speaking Hindi. 66.6% of speakers cited Punjabi as a spoken language, and 16.6% (one participant) spoke Arabic. The curry house workers ranged from speaking three to five languages each, with a total of six languages being spoken between them. When looking into their language use in particular contexts, we found that each participant had virtually the same language use, excluding a few anomalies. In the home environment, 100% of participants used Urdu as their main language, with then 50% saying they would use English as a second language at home, one participant (16.6%) used Punjabi as their second language at home, and 33.3% only using Urdu at home, and with no use of a second language. 100% of curry house workers used English as their main language when interacting with customers and when texting.

2.2. When visiting jewellers along the Curry Mile, we again surveyed six workers. We found that 100% of workers spoke English, with 83.3% also speaking Urdu. 66.6% then also told us that they were able to speak Punjabi. Other languages spoken by workers in the Jewellers were French, Hindi, Spanish, Swahili and Gujarati. All workers spoke at least two languages, and this ranged from three to five languages in 66.6% of participants. At home 100% of workers spoke English as their main language, with 66.6% citing Urdu as their second language in the home and 16.6% (one participant) speaking Gujarati as their second language at home. 100% of workers in the Jewellery shops said that they would use English as their main language when talking to customers, co-workers, friends and texting. With no other languages being cited for a second language used with customers, 33.3% using Urdu as a second language between co-workers and friends.

2.3. Originally, we planned to survey workers of supermarkets on the Curry Mile area. However, it quickly became apparent that they were not willing to participate, and we therefore had to modify our study, replacing the supermarkets with smaller shops in the area (such as newsagents and small grocery stores) in order to collect our data. Through these we found, interestingly, that 100% of people spoke English, Punjabi and Urdu, and no

other languages. 83% of workers said that the main language that they spoke to customers was English, with the other 16% using Urdu as their main language for customer interaction and English as their secondary. Those who used English as their main language for customer interaction in each case then used Urdu as their second language. 83% of workers used English as their main language between co-workers with just 16.6% using Punjabi. Not all small shop workers used a second language between co-workers, but in the 50% of cases where they did, two workers would use Punjabi as a second language between co-workers, with just one saying they would use English. Between friends 83.3% of participants said they would use English as their main interactive language, with just 16% saying they would use Punjabi. All participants said that they would use English when texting.

### **3. Qualitative Data**

The most complex results came from the small shop participants who spoke English, Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati but it varied from one participant to the next who spoke what language in which situation. The participant who spoke Punjabi as their main language at home spoke Urdu as their main language at work, and Punjabi with friends but their text language and secondary language in all situations apart from in their place of worship was always English. From this we can infer that the participant is comfortable speaking all three languages as all occur at some point as a main language, but favour their mother tongue in their place of worship and at home.

Another interesting result came from the jewellery participants' data; two out of six use English as their main language at home, Urdu as their secondary language at home, with co-workers and with friends. The same two participants use Urdu as their main language at their place of worship but English when speaking with customers. Their main language at home is English, even though both were born outside of the UK and have lived here five to 20 years. These results could indicate that the two live with younger members of their family that have been born in the UK and to whom English is their first or at least predominant language. It is possible to suggest this from

these results as the same pattern occurs with a participant from the small shops group. A different participant uses English, Urdu and Punjabi but as with the previous participants, six use English as their main language in the majority of situations, including at home, whilst they were born outside of the UK and have lived here for five to 20 years. It is not possible to state this as an empirical claim but it is possible to predict this is the case from the data.

The participant enables us to see an interesting case of results in that they have lived in the UK for over 20 years, they are now over 60 years old, and speak English as their main language in every scenario apart from in their place of worship, where it is Hindi. They only state a secondary language for at home which is Gujarati, this result makes it difficult to speculate the participant's situation other than they possibly live with family that only speak English and in a predominantly English speaking area.

Specific detail was given in some instances. An employee of one of the small shops studied stated that whilst they may initially speak English with customers, but upon realisation of the language of their customer they would immediately change their discourse. Another said that whilst they might mostly use English, they would use Urdu in particular situations, such as when telling jokes, and would use Arabic phrases when making religious statements such as "god forbid" and "god willing".

We can summarise from our data that English is considered the prestige language in the work place, but the mother-tongue of the participant is the language of prestige in the place of worship.

#### **4. Discussion**

4.1. Within the category of curry houses and restaurants along the Curry Mile, the results showed the prevalence of Urdu as the primary language of all the speakers that completed the questionnaire, as all were Pakistani in origin. Interestingly, all the participants had only been residents of the UK for less than five years, and this may be seen to correlate with their language use. Across the categories, there was little variation, as all the participants without fail used English to address customers, and primarily Urdu when speaking with co-workers.

Among the participants' comments, it was generally agreed that to speak to customers in anything other than English, as to do so would appear impolite. It was said that if a customer were to instigate another language, the waiters would hesitantly accommodate this, though they would much prefer to use English.

The results also show that the participants would send text messages in English, simply because it is much easier given the technology of English mobile phones, though they would use abbreviations and text-based colloquialisms in Urdu. Predictably, the language of choice in the participants' place of worship seemed universally to be Urdu, traditionally for historically religious reasons. One survey indicated that English was also used, though this may be infrequently and in conversational and social contexts within the mosque.

All the participants were able to speak three to five languages fluently. English and Urdu were universally known, and thereafter various combinations of Urdu, Punjabi, Pakistani, Hindi and Arabic. This exposes the large-scale multilingualism of the area surrounding the Curry Mile, which was again something we expected when instigating our project.

The mother tongue of each of the participants was not noticeably prevalent, rather each of their separate languages was used relatively equally in the various situations. Interestingly, there were no Gujarati speakers among those we interviewed in the restaurants. This may be seen to correlate with age, as all of the restaurant workers were within the 19-30 and 31-45 brackets. It is also interesting to note that despite the general use of Urdu in the homes of the participants, every participant in this category chose to speak English with friends.

From information gathered during the interview, it was apparent that despite the relatively short time each participant has lived within the UK, each was very interested in applying themselves to learn conversational English as

quickly as possible, not only for better career prospects, but also with the intention of truly integrating themselves in their wider society.

4.2. The category of jewellers along the Curry Mile seemed to show that the jewellers in this area are perhaps the most ethnically diverse of the different groups analysed. However, as with the other types of places studied, each participant we analysed was able to speak English. Five of the six could also speak Urdu, with only the participant who was from India not speaking Urdu. This Indian participant did, however, speak Gujarati, Swahili and Hindi, and the first two of these make him unique amongst each participant we interviewed: none spoke Gujarati or Swahili besides him. This could either be taken as meaning that the either the curry houses and the smaller shops along the Curry Mile are more selective or that the jewellers along the Curry Mile perhaps favour more specialist employees, hence why an Indian employee is working there.

Another interesting detail which sets the jewellers apart from the other areas studied is that half of those studied were born in the UK, while only one of the other 12 participants from the other two venues was born in the UK. If our hypothesis of the jewellers being the high end retailer favouring the English language is to be correct, we can assume that the jewellers, who also stated that at all times they will use English to speak to customers, are less associative with their roots than the restaurants and the small shops.

The information articulated regarding place of worship also provides an interesting detail. Unlike the restaurants, three of the employees of jewellers stated that they use the English language in their places of worship. These are the same three employees that were born inside the UK, and so we can conclude that there is a direct link between these two factors. Workers who were born in the UK perhaps do not retain a connection to their roots as much as those who have immigrated to the UK: the place of worship might be considered a place where a language such as Urdu would prosper due to its significance in the religion. However, this detail has exposed one flaw in our research project: it would have been interesting to note what generation

immigrant those born in the UK are, so we could make an attempt to analyse how the multilingualism in the immigrant families has degraded over time.

Earlier on we speculated that the jewellers along the Curry Mile would contain the most prestige. We linked the use of the English language in with this, suggesting that the English language would be the prestige language spoken in high-end situations. As with elsewhere, each jewellery shop employee is fluent in English. However, we can perhaps imply that their degree of fluency is greater than that of participants we analysed in restaurants – of the six we interviewed, three were born in the UK, one has been living in the UK for longer than 20 years and the final two have both lived in the UK for a period of five to 20 years. We can assume that, for those who have immigrated, after living in the UK for such a long period of time they will have developed their language greatly and, if they were not already, will now possibly speak the English language as well as a natural speaker.

4.3. Within the category of small shops along the Curry Mile, the results highlight that the ethnicity within this area is predominately Pakistani, with all the respondents asserting that their nationality is British. Interestingly, all of the participants we asked spoke three languages; English, Punjabi and Urdu which show the popularity of these languages amongst the Pakistani community.

The participants would alternate between their main language being either Urdu or English and their second language also being either the other of the two at home, as these are the languages which may feel more natural and we can speculate that these are their mother tongue.

There is an assumption that most people can speak English due to its inherent level of prestige. This is evident in our results, which show that the majority of the participants would speak English as their main language when interacting with customers. Additionally, speaking English within the

small shop wouldn't exclude customers who perhaps do not speak languages such as Urdu or Punjabi. Though, when participants would speak to their customers in their second language, they would speak in Urdu. This may be because they are familiar with certain customers and have build up a personal rapport, making them aware of the language they tend to speak.

The results also show that in the small shops the majority of the participants would speak English to their friends. This may be due to the fact that some individuals are brought up in a household where the language habitually spoken was Urdu, whereas other families may speak Punjabi as their main language. By using English, it establishes a common ground in which all friends can use to communicate, without favouring one language or another.

## **5. Literature Comparison**

After scanning various sources we have been unable to locate any relevant literature linked with multiculturalism on the Curry Mile. Instead, we have found similar methodologies used in other sociolinguistic research such as Sankoff and Milroy.

Sankoff (1974) elucidates that in order for good data elicitation it is necessary to have three different kinds of decisions about data collection on the researcher. These consist of; choosing what data to collect, stratifying the sample and deciding on how much data to collect from how many speakers. With reference to our devised method of obtaining both qualitative and quantitative we fulfilled Sankoffs notion of "defining the sampling universe" by researching the "social context in which the language data is gathered" (Tagliamonte: 2006: 21). In order to reduce the effect of bias on the surveying of participants we used random sampling through rapid and anonymous sampling, a method which Milroy (1987) finds conducive to gathering a range of data.

Due to our time constraints in the fieldwork project we felt it necessary to use a quick and effective way of obtaining data, through questionnaires. If we had more time and the relevant resources we would have implemented Milroy's (1980) concept of 'social networks' where the fieldworker attaches themselves

into a social group and monitors the trends in language use and their adopted vernacular.

## 6. Summary

To summarise our fieldwork project we discovered that the curry houses and the jewellers were more prestigious with their usage of English, as they only spoke English to their customers. We had hypothesised that the jewellery shops would be prestigious, but not the curry houses. Due to our deferral to our contingency plan we did not have a hypothesis for the small shops. However, we have been able to view the small shops in comparison to the jewellers and the curry houses, and deduce that the participants use less English towards their customers.

## 7. Appendix

Key:

ml	Main language
sl	Secondary language
P.O.W	Place of Worship

### 7.1. Curry Houses

Interviewee #	Age	Born outside UK	Years in UK	Ethnicity	Nationality	Language #	Languages spoken	2	3	4	5
1	19-30	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	3	English	Urdu	Pakistani		
2	19-30	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	3	English	Urdu	Punjabi		
3	19-30	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	3	English	Urdu	Punjabi		
4	31-45	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	5	English	Urdu	Punjabi	Hindi	Arabic
5	31-45	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	4	English	Urdu	Pakistani	Hindi	
6	19-30	y	0-5	Pakistani	Pakistani	3	English	Urdu	Punjabi		

Interviewee #	Home (ml)	Home (sl)	Cust (ml)	Cust (sl)	Co-wo (ml)	Co-wo (sl)	Friends (ml)	Friends (sl)	Text (ml)	Text (sl)	P.O.W (ml)	P.O.W (sl)
1	Urdu		English		Urdu	Punjabi	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	English
2	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	English	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	
3	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	English	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	
4	Urdu	Punjabi	English		Urdu	Punjabi	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	
5	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	Punjabi	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	
6	Urdu		English		Urdu	Punjabi	Urdu	English	English		Urdu	

### 7.2. Jewellers

Interviewee #	Age	Born outside UK	Years in UK	Ethnicity	Nationality	Language #	Languages spoken	2	3	4	5
1	31-45	n	-	Pakistani	British	2	English	Urdu			
2	19-30	n	-	Asian	British	5	English	Urdu	Punjabi	French	Spanish
3	45-60	y	5-20	Asian	British	2	English	Urdu			
4	60+	y	20+	Indian	British	5	English	Hindi	Punjabi	Gujarati	Swahili
5	31-45	n	-	Pakistani	British	3	English	Urdu	Punjabi		
6	45-60	y	5-20	Pakistani	British	3	English	Urdu	Punjabi		

Interviewee #	Home (ml)	Home (sl)	Cust (ml)	Cust (sl)	Co-wo (ml)	Co-wo (sl)	Friends (ml)	Friends (sl)	Txt (ml)	Txt (sl)	P.O.W (ml)	P.O.W (sl)
1	English	Urdu	English		English		English		English		English	
2	English		English		English		English		English		English	
3	English	Urdu	English		English	Urdu	English	Urdu	English		Urdu	
4	English	Gujarati	English		English		English		English		Hindi	
5	English	Urdu	English		English		English		English		English	
6	English	Urdu	English		English	Urdu	English	Urdu	English		Urdu	

### 7.3. Small shops

Interviewee #	Age	Born outside UK	Years in UK	Ethnicity	Nationality	Language #	Languages spoken	2	3	4	5
1	45-60	y	5-20	Muslim	British	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		
2	45-60	n	-	Asian	British	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		
3	19-30	y	20+	Pakistani	British Pakis	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		
4	31-45	y	20+	Pakistani	British	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		
5	31-45	y	5-20	Pakistani	British	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		
6	31-45	y	20+	Pakistani	British	3	English	Punjabi	Urdu		

Interviewee #	Home (ml)	Home (sl)	Cust (ml)	Cust (sl)	Co-wo (ml)	Co-wo (sl)	Friends (ml)	Friends (sl)	Text (ml)	Text (sl)	P.O.W (ml)	P.O.W (sl)
1	Punjabi	English	Urdu	English	Punjabi	English	Punjabi		English		Urdu	
2	English	Urdu	English	Urdu	English		English		English		English	
3	Urdu	English	English	Urdu	English		English		English		English	Urdu
4	Urdu	English	English	Urdu	English		English		English		English	Urdu
5	English	Punjabi	English	Urdu	English	Punjabi	English		English		Urdu	English
6	English	Urdu	English	Urdu	English	Punjabi	English		English		Urdu	English

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