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Report

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**Language use and maintenance in the multilingual area of
Cheetham Hill, Manchester**

Altuna Begona
Cook Bethany
Howell Thomas
Sill Hannah
Woollacott Nicola

University of Manchester
School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures
Samuel Alexander Building
Oxford Road
Manchester
M13 9PL

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Research questions and methods

The area that we had decided to investigate was Cheetham Hill. We chose this area as we were particularly interested in discovering how a society with such a large variety of languages operates and how the individual residents, and community as a whole, manage to maintain the languages and cultures within it.

Seth (2009:102) mentions four waves of immigration to the area in the last 100 years; Irish immigrants, trying to escape famine; Jews escaping persecution in continental Europe in the late 19th-early 20th century; Indians, and those from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies, who settled in the fifties and sixties, and more recently, immigrants from Africa, Eastern Europe and the Far East. Due to immigration following World War II, there is also a particularly prominent Ukrainian community in Cheetham Hill.

Within the realm of how the society operates we were interested in finding out whether inhabitants take an active or passive role in maintaining their languages, and intended to look into sectors such as the police, religious centres, community centres, media and events and festivals. We intended to do this by firstly e-mailing schools in the area in the hope they could inform us of the number of languages spoken in the schools, and researching local amenities on the internet to find the role they play.

The second part of our investigation was to spend two days in Cheetham Hill, questioning local residents and shopkeepers as to their linguistic habits, for which we had written questionnaires to enable us to gain information on where and with who, non-native speakers of English had chance to practice their language, and if they felt they had enough opportunity to do this. We were also interested in finding out if local residents knew of media or cultural events and festivals held in the community which raised awareness and helped to celebrate their origin.

We also intended to visit community and religious centres such as the Cheetham Hill Advice Centre to find out what work they do in the community and what resources they provide for members of the community that communicate in languages other than English.

Changes to the plan

We originally intended to use information correlated from the surveys that we sent to schools in the Cheetham Hill area, to draw our conclusions of multilingualism in Cheetham Hill. However, when it became apparent that not only were we unlikely to gain a large quantity of information, but that any information that we did gain was unlikely to give us a broad view of the languages spoken in Cheetham Hill, we decided instead to design several questionnaires, (for residents and shop keepers respectively), and use any information we received from the schools as surplus evidence to support our findings. Out of nine schools that were contacted, only one replied, though that reply did help us with our investigation, by making us aware of the vast number of languages spoken in the area.

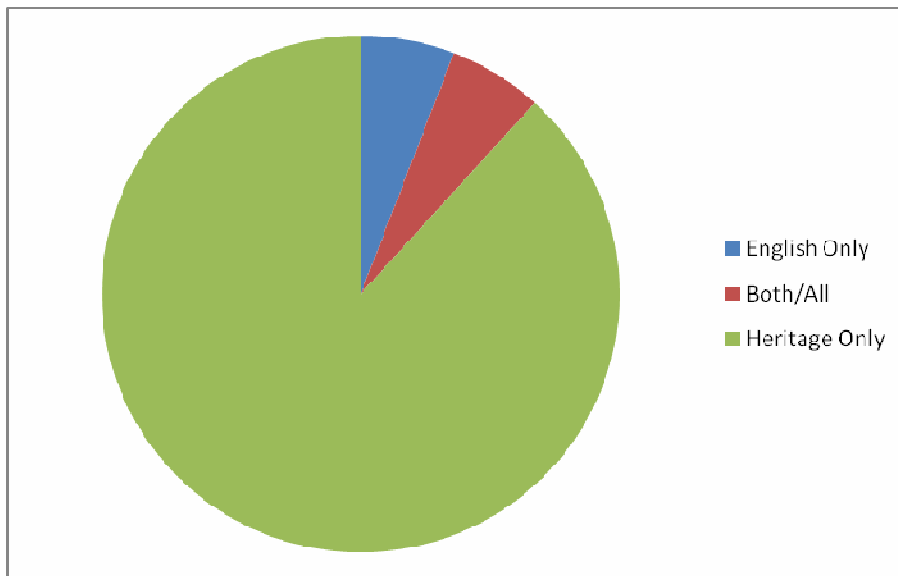
Whilst carrying out the questionnaire portion of our plan we gained 51 responses, and although we received a variety of answers, we did not manage to find representatives of all of the language groups in Cheetham Hill.

We would have liked to find out the level of language shift between first, second and third generation immigrants, from their heritage language to English, and what factors contributed to this change. However, we felt some of this information could have been perceived as sensitive by the informants and we did not want to offend anybody.

Findings from Questionnaires

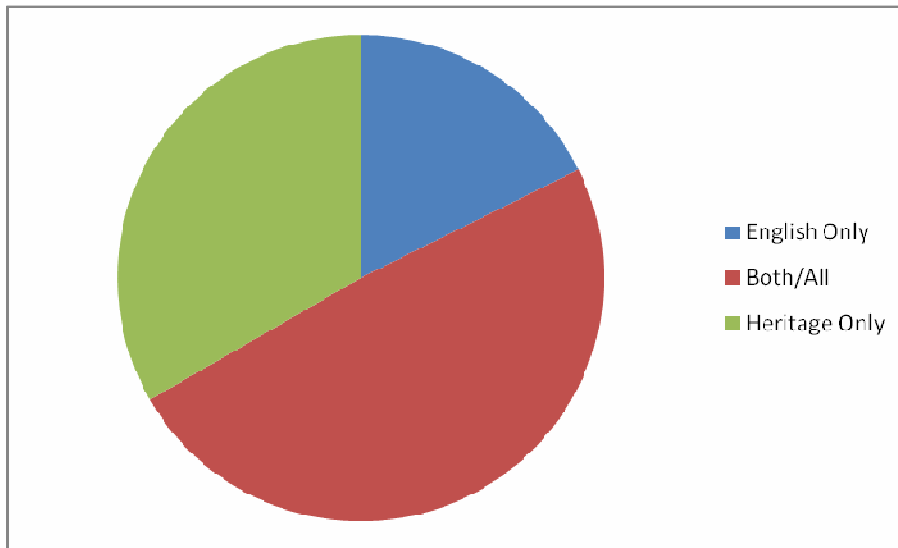
The area in which we focused our investigation was the Fort Shopping Park as well as the Cheetham Hill Road leading up to this area. This gave us a good variety of candidates for our questionnaires as the area seemed to be the main shopping area of Cheetham Hill, with a wide variety of clothing, electronics and hardware stores, as well as restaurants and 'corner shops'. The shopping park employs a large number of residents from the Cheetham Hill area.

Figure 1: Pie Chart showing language use at home



When we asked what language(s) residents used in their homes with their families, 88% of people asked used their native language with their family. 6% of the respondents spoke a combination of English and their heritage languages and the other 6% only spoke English. This is a far higher percentage of heritage only speakers than we expected. The cause of this is unknown, but it could be due to family members not speaking English very well.

Figure 2: Pie Chart showing language use in a social situation.



Half of all people asked stated that they use both their heritage language and English in social situations. Only 10% of those asked said they sometimes used their heritage language at work. We expected to find that the percentage of English being used would be higher in social situations than at home, due to the assumption that parents may take a role of promoting heritage language and culture, whereas friends would be less likely to do so. Furthermore, because English is spoken at school among peers, this would be their 'usual' language of communication. So we can assume that many of the people asked were second generation immigrants as Lieberson, Dalto and Johnston 1975 (in Portes and Scauffler 1994) say:

'In the past the typical pattern has been for the first generation to learn enough English to survive economically; the second generation continue to speak the parental tongue at home, but English in school, at work and in public life; by the third generation, the home language shifted to English, which effectively became the mother tongue for subsequent generations'

Of those asked, 32% felt they did not have enough opportunity to speak their native language in general; these were the people who tended not to use their heritage language outside of the family home.

All Urdu speakers felt their language was well-represented in the area. Other Asian languages such as Hindi, Gujurati, Punjabi were not felt to be as well represented by some people. A range of African language speakers were also found during our fieldwork, speaking languages such as Twi (Ghana), Swahili (East Central Africa, around Tanzania and Kenya Wolff 2000:325), Lingala (Congo Wolff:2000:327), Kirundi (Burundi Wolff 2000:315), Kinyarwanda (Rwanda Wolff 2000:315) and Bemba (Zambia and Zaire <http://www.isp.msu.edu/afrlang/language8.htm>).

Police

When questioned on the subject of institutional language diversity, the Cheetham Hill Police Service informed us that The Greater Manchester Police, (or GMP), are required, due to the equality legislation, to recruit officers from ethnic minority backgrounds. The GMP currently has an annual target of 10% for recruiting ethnic minority officers, and, as of 2009, 7.1% of all current officers are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Of the 519 'ethnic minority staff' employed, 363 of these are police officers, helping to 'bridge' the gap between highly populated, ethnic minority neighbourhoods and the police. The GMP also offers language resources on their website, in the interest of accessibility, 'ensuring everyone has access to the services we provide'. They highlight several web-based translation services, (Google Translate, WorldLingo, Free Translation, AltaVista), as well as the facilities of 'Language Line', a telephone interpreting service available in over 170 languages. This allows speakers of other languages to provide the GMP with their telephone number and language and they will arrange for the enquirer to be called back and conduct a conversation through the use of a translator. This service is also available through the police station enquiry counter. However, the lack of ethnic minority officers in Cheetham Hill somewhat conflicts the statistics we were given, and the admin desk did not comment on the article that the Asian News MEN ran, claiming that Police Officers in the Cheetham Hill area were learning Urdu. (http://www.theasiannews.co.uk/news/s/1178810_police_officers_are_learning_urdu)

Community centres

The majority of the results we gained for this investigation came from speaking to co-ordinators of the community centres in Cheetham; we found that the people working in these places were very helpful and happy to discuss their language community.

During our investigation, we visited the Cheetham Hill Advice Centre and spoke to the woman in charge of it. She informed us that it is part of their job to give information to new residents of Cheetham Hill, and that they have access to translators for over thirty languages, some of whom volunteer, and some that are paid. Translators are available for a wide range of languages, such as; Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Cantonese, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Mandarin Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese, among others. A variety of leaflets was available from the centre but were, for the vast majority, in English; habitants were expected to contact the council should they want leaflets in other languages.

It was made clear that the Advice Centre is an extremely useful place for members of the non-English speaking community in Cheetham Hill, but that their resources and facilities for support are limited due to the high demand of their services. This really exemplifies the significance of linguistic diversity in Cheetham Hill and how important it is for further support to be provided within the community.

Each community has its own community centre, sometimes linked to a religious centre. The AWAAZ Association, for instance, offers courses and advice for Indian people, Ukrainian people have their own society, there is an Iranian Cultural Society and a Vietnamese School, a Libyan school and mosques have their own advice and language centres, to give a few examples.

There is a large Pakistani community in Cheetham Hill; this community manages four of the six mosques in the area. In the mosques, apart from the religious services five times per day, there are a wide range of services for the community giving religious education and advice offered usually in Arabic, but available in English. The Jamia Mosque also hosts the Lbadur Rahman Trust which offers Arabic and Urdu evening and weekend language courses for adults and children. When we phoned the Pakistani community centre, the greeting was in Arabic but the conversation was held entirely in English.

In our initial research we were surprised to discover the presence of a fairly sizeable Ukrainian community in Cheetham Hill, we wanted to investigate this further and look into their position within the wider community.

When out on research in Cheetham Hill we did not encounter any members of the public who were Ukrainian but we were able to contact one of the group co-ordinators, who said that there is a 'great deal of pride and unity' in the Ukrainian Community and that there are a number of meetings and national holidays shared by Ukrainian people across Manchester, with the main focal point being the Ukrainian Centre in Cheetham Hill. The gentleman we spoke to also said, 'We do have opportunities to speak in Ukrainian, as we have gatherings at our Cultural Centre and also attend church'.

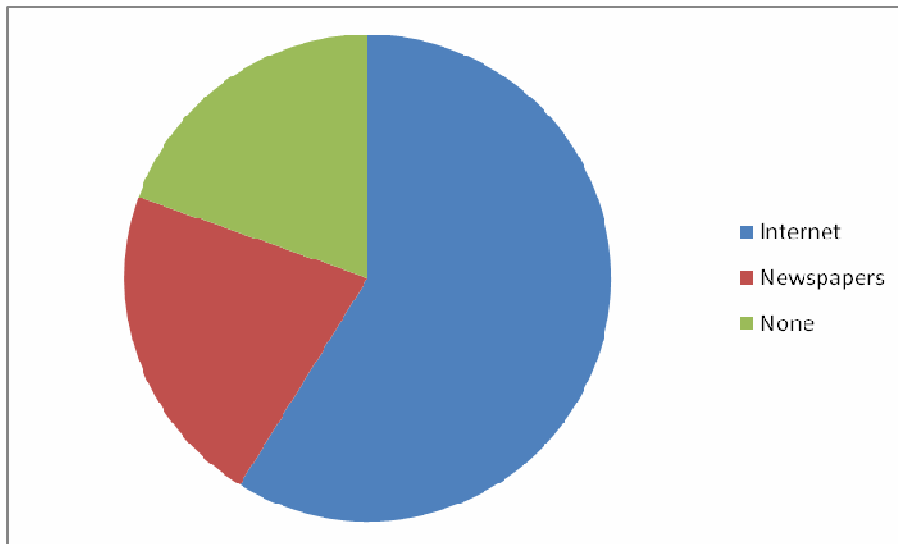
This is strong evidence that this language group in particular are maintaining their national language and identity whilst also mixing well with the rest of the community in Cheetham Hill. They offer supplementary Ukrainian lessons on Saturdays.

Although the Vietnamese community is not one of the biggest in the Cheetham Hill area, the Lam Son Vietnamese Supplementary School supports the Vietnamese community offering Vietnamese courses on Saturday mornings. The man who answered our questions also emphasised the great commitment the school has to multiculturalism in Manchester; he told us that the school takes part in every festival related to multiculturalism in the Manchester area such as the Cheetham Hill festival or the Supplementary Schools festival that will be held in June.

This centre is orientated to adults from Indian origin. They offer a wide range of courses directed to further professional education and they also prepare the students for ESOL English examinations. They can give information in English, Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi, Kutchi and Urdu.

Media

Figure 3: Medium used to access information in heritage language



Of the residents asked, 60% used the internet to get news in their language, 22% used newspapers and the remaining 18% preferred to access the news in English.

A possible reason for newspaper-users being so low could be the difficulty in finding them. The Post Office said that they occasionally hold leaflets in foreign languages but do not stock newspapers because they are not popular enough. This, along with the views of the residents that we asked, suggests that many people in Cheetham Hill are more interested in accessing the news in English rather than making extra effort to find news and information in their native language. Of those who answered our questionnaire, there were no shopkeepers who stocked newspapers in a language other than English.

Events and festivals

Of the people questioned, 68% knew of the existence of festivals and only 42% spoke of festivals in particular. Only 16% knew of the Cheetham Hill festival, we were surprised by this because that particular festival was very well represented on the internet. when we were researching the first part of our investigation.

Multilingualism in Schools in Cheetham Hill

A school in Cheetham Hill is currently running a radio program in which children are able to talk in their heritage language and other pupils can listen to new languages. There are also programs about countries where pupils' families are from (<http://www.radioanywhere.co.uk/displayStation.php?station=90>). This is very beneficial to the pupils because so much time at the school is spent talking English so they can become more aware of the languages in their local community.

The Manchester Evening News reported that schools in Manchester will soon be allowed to close for non-Christian festivals. This is due to the increasing number of absences of non-

Christian students during their religious festival periods. This shows the level of integration of other cultures into the city. (http://menmedia.co.uk/manchestereveningnews/news/education/s/1109270_schools_out_for_eid_and_yom_kippur 20/4/2009)

The Effects of Modern Technology

Today the internet and the social networks are a useful tool to communicate. Facebook includes groups like 'Cheetham Hill' and 'All about Cheetham Hill!' in which people from the neighbourhood give their opinion about the area or share information. From the names of the people forming the groups and pages the diversity of origins shows clearly; one can find names of Indian origin, of Muslim background, from East European countries like Poland or Ukraine, British and Irish surnames, etc. From the profile photos one can also guess that there are people in Cheetham Hill of Afro-Caribbean origin. The profile photos also show that the people joining these kinds of groups are in general young people, but there are also some mature people, who use the pages to write about past times in Cheetham Hill.

In the two main groups, each consisting of around 500 people, messages are written in English, even if the writers are leaving comments directed just to one community or a specific person. In the smaller groups (of about 50 people) the main or the only language is English. However, in the group of the Libyan School of Cheetham Hill comments are written in Arabic and English.

Evaluation of findings

Cheetham Hill's Community centres and language groups operate in a way which focuses strongly on the identity and maintenance of heritage languages and promoting their continued usage. However, although we acknowledge that our sample of residents was not large enough to be statistically significant, the majority of people that we talked to about their language usage were unaware of many of the efforts being undertaken to preserve heritage languages in the area. Due to the pride that most people had in their heritage language, we believe that many of them would be keen to know what happens in Cheetham Hill.

It is possible that the organisers of events such as Cheetham Hill festival do not focus their advertising as widely as is necessary, the schools in Cheetham Hill seem to know a lot about events but residents with no links to schools or churches are not able to participate because they are not aware of what is happening in their town.

Despite this, most people were able to practice language skills in their home environment; however, without effort on the part of the speakers this situation will change, as Portes and Schauffler (1994) say:

'Children growing up in social-cultural contexts where the native English-speaking majority is dominant or where immigrants from other linguistic backgrounds are more numerous will experience a faster process of home language loss and a rapid conversion to English monolingualism.'

It seems more effort needs to be made in order to prevent the assimilation of the cultures.

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