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The linguistic profile of Cheetham Hill

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The linguistic profile of Cheetham Hill

As proposed in the first section of the investigation, a linguistic profile on the town of Cheetham Hill located north of Manchester City Centre, close to the border of Salford was carried out. The area was chosen as it is acknowledged as a multi-ethnic society and a place in which multilingualism is not only apparent, but also championed by the local community. The decision was made that the best way to test this would be to take the most important and influential sectors of the community as examples and work from those findings to give an overall evaluation of the area.

It was decided what the most important parts of Cheetham Hill were by selecting the areas and services that received the most foot traffic during a single day. By doing this a survey could be conducted that would reach the largest amount of people and would give the opportunity to speak to staff that would have a general idea of what languages are spoken to them on a day to day basis. After this analysis and using data supplied by various internet websites, the conclusion was made that the shops based on Cheetham Hill road would have the most amount of foot traffic in one day and therefore would be an ideal place to carry out our questionnaires.

Also, the community centre will often be a refuge for people who need assistance. It was thought that the wide range of languages spoken, in order to benefit most members of the community, made it an ideal location for interviews with employees.

During this investigation one problem that we encountered was that direct interviews with children attending the schools without lengthy background checks were not allowable.

Another change made to the investigation was that rather than monitor individual languages using a standing survey, shop owners and community members were asked which languages they heard on a regular basis. The reason for this was that it would give a more accurate overlook of the linguistic community, rather than judging what languages were used in Cheetham Hill based solely on one day's research.

After carrying out early research on Cheetham Hill and the ethnicity and social

backgrounds of its population, it was believed that a large amount of both Urdu and Punjabi would be found spoken in the area. Also, the issue of residents relocating to Cheetham Hill was also a question that was taken into consideration, as it was interesting to note whether native tongues were used or there was a shift to English.

It was also anticipated that the council and companies within Cheetham Hill would accommodate non-English speakers or people who spoke English as a second language. To find more information with regards to this issue, it was decided to document as much signage as possible, in order to see which languages the council and business owners believed they would have to accommodate for. It was expected that most official signage would include English, Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi as a standard, but we were also interested to see which other languages the council deemed major enough to be included.

Findings

An array of shops were visited in order to obtain a general idea of the breakdown of languages in the Cheetham Hill area. From the ones visited, the following provided the most relevant information:

Table 1. Shop Interviews.

Shop	Language spoken in shop (Work Domain).	Languages generally heard in the area.	Languages particular person can speak.	Language spoken at home (Home/family Domain).
1. Noor* Pound Line *Arabic term for light.	Urdu and English. Signs in shop are claimed to be in an African language – upon further investigation it could have been Arabic as it widely spoken in parts of	English and Urdu	English and Urdu	

	Africa			
2. Buy Save Superstore	English and occasionally Urdu, if necessary	English, Urdu and Punjabi	English and Urdu	Although has knowledge of Urdu, speaks English to children
3. Newsagents	English	English, Urdu and Punjabi	English but had limited knowledge of Urdu and Punjabi	English
4. Fabulous Fashions	Urdu and Punjabi. The woman approached said she could only speak limited English. Interestingly the leaflets in/for the shop were written in English.		Urdu and Punjabi	
5a. 'Wise' Pharmacy person 1	English and Polish to the people she knew	English, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, Urdu, Punjabi	English, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarusian	Polish
5b. 'Wise' Pharmacy Person 2	English, Urdu and Punjabi	English, Urdu and Punjabi	English, Urdu and Punjabi	Urdu
6. Cheetham Wines	English – believes that it is the most professional approach	English, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Polish, Ukrainian,	English and very limited knowledge of Hindi, Urdu and	English is first language, speaks English to children

		French	Gujarati	
7. M&Ms Off Licence	English and sometimes Gujarati	English, Gujarati, Urdu, Polish	English and Gujarati	Tries to speak Gujarati but often slips into the habit of speaking English. Attempts to speak Gujarati to children but they answer back in English.
8. Phone Cards Stall	English, Urdu	English, Urdu, Punjabi	English, Urdu and Kurdish	Urdu

From Table 1, it would appear that in the domain of work, the language most commonly used with customers is English. However, apart from English, the most prevalent languages are Urdu and Punjabi. Urdu and Punjabi are apparent in other domains, as seen by the fact that they also appear under the headings ' Languages generally heard in the area' and ' Languages a particular person can speak'. Other languages displayed in the table, include Polish, Russian and Gujarati. These findings are supported by the email from the community centre (Appendix A), in which the frequent languages spoken by clients and staff include Russian, Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati.

An anomaly found from the shop interviews was the fact that the woman working in shop 4 did not speak any English. It was clear on entering the shop that the assistant was uncomfortable, unmistakably due to her intuition that she would be unable to overcome the language barrier. Once it was apparent she did not speak any English, she emphasised that she only spoke Hindi and Punjabi. Despite this, the shop had an English name; fabulous fashions and the leaflets were written in English also.

It was also made clear by one of the shop keepers that inability to communicate through language, due to language barriers, was overcome through the use of gestures such as pointing to products.

Phone cards played a role in revealing languages spoken in this area. Different phone

cards can be bought for different countries. A speaker's nationality and, in turn, first language, could be identified through what phone card they would buy. On questioning, it seemed that the most popular cards were the ones bought to phone Pakistan. This information alone suggests that languages such as Farsi, Gujarati, Pushto and Urdu must be prevalent.

In the email received from the Cheetham advice centre (Appendix A), the most prominent languages found are Urdu and Punjabi, with around the same volume of use. In the email, the volunteer development worker suggested that the next most frequent language was Arabic. This was surprising because when completing the shop questionnaires, the only evidence for Arabic came from shop number 1, where the shop name was an Arabic word written in Roman script.

During the visits to Cheetham Hill, the area was documented through pictures also. In instances where a script in another language was found, the example was photographed. This method shows effectively the extent of the multiculturalism and multilingualism in Cheetham Hill, as in most countries' signs and posters are sometimes written in English. Some examples of signs and advertisements are given below (full display of photographs are in the Appendix, labelled C).

Picture 1 . Urdu   *Picture 2. Arabic and Urdu*   *Picture 3.Polish*

1

2

3

After studying the pictures, it seems like the most prominent language found in signs and advertisements is Urdu, written in the Perso-Arabic script as found in Picture 1. Other languages found include Arabic, Hebrew and Polish.

In addition to the shop interviews and questionnaires, a more detailed questionnaire and discussion was conducted for one particular family, living in Cheetham Hill. The family have lived in Cheetham Hill for 18 years and the oldest son (aged 22), who was interviewed to provide results for a second generation speaker, now lives in London and studies at a university. The parents were born in Delhi, and moved to England 25 years ago, so their children were born and raised in England. The language spoken other than English is Hindi. The results can be found in the table below:

Table 2. Family Interview

Question	Parents (1st generation)	Son (2nd generation)
What language do you speak at home?	• English still more than Hindi, speak English to son mostly. • Speak English to one another, but sometimes Hindi. • Will speak Hindi in public and code switch.	• English/ Hindi. • Hindi to parents and other family members. • More English than Hindi.
What language(s) do you speak with friends?	• Usually English, if friends are work colleagues. • Hindi, if with Indian	• English because friends are predominately English.

	friends.	
What language do you speak at work?	• English at work for dad, English and Hindi for mum (works as support assistant in schools, for children who have moved to England, some speak Hindi).	• English.
What do the different languages mean to you?	• Connection to homeland, religion, pray in Hindi. • Easier for them to speak in Hindi because it's their first language.	• English is more important. • Hindi is useful for talking to family from India. • Feels proud. • Would have felt 'annoyed' if parents hadn't taught him English.
Do you feel that the community centre/school/ local shops encourage you to use your first language?	• Indian shops, will speak Hindi. So the shops do encourage their first language. • First language is used	• Hindi was spoken at temple, but hasn't been since age of 9. • Not religious now. • Often finds people

	at Temple. • Buy English newspapers and read everything in English but watch the news in Hindi and have Hindi TV programmes.	speak to him in other languages, such as Urdu, presuming he is a speaker.
Do you feel that it is important for your son to speak your 1st language, and how have you encouraged this?	• Noticed that Hindi was stronger than English and was struggling to read and write in English. • Stopped making him read and write in Hindi in the hope that English would improve. • Now can only speak Hindi, cannot read or write it. • Encourage the use of Hindi at home but recognise that for his education, English had to be perfect.	

Discussion

In terms of the languages found during our fieldwork, the initial hypothesis, namely that a large proportion of Indian languages will be present, is supported. This belief stemmed from the statistics of the ethnic composition of Cheetham Hill, which found that 32.47% of the population belonged to the British Asian group.

One of the first things noticed, was the general apprehensiveness of people when admitting that languages other than English were used in their shops. Every person asked stated that English was used even if signs were also written in other languages. Only after questioning people further, other languages were mentioned. This could suggest a somewhat negative attitude towards native languages which is also hinted at by the lack of transmission to younger generations. However, the findings may have been skewed by observer's bias by both parties.

The results in the table suggest that, even though Cheetham Hill is a multilingual area, English is still the most prominent language, especially in the professional domain. In essence, it acts as somewhat of a lingua franca because, unless a shop assistant knows the person they are addressing, the language used to greet will be English.

It is also interesting to note that people in this area do find some difficulty in transmitting their first language to younger generations. In particular, the participant in shop 7 believed that speaking English was the result of owning a shop. This could be due to English being perceived as the "international language of business" and evidently preferred by customers. The owner began to consider speaking English as a habit, highlighting possible negativity towards it. Even though the shop owner was fluent in Gujarati, maintaining the language at home with her children and partner proved difficult, given that they speak English with friends and at school. She also added that, despite the fact that her children understand Gujarati, they always reply in English. This example of language shift is interesting, because it suggests that some of the time, a shift towards English occurs for reasons other than it being the dominant language spoken by the population. In areas like Cheetham Hill where a wide variety of languages are spoken, English is often chosen as a 'compromise'.

Despite what language the shop assistants considered to be their first language,

hardly any chose this same language when asked the question; *In what language would you initially address the customer?* The majority of people chose English, which could be significant in emphasising just how multicultural and multilingual Cheetham Hill is. However, due to the fact that the people questioned owned or worked within a business, selecting English as the answer to this question could merely be a means of positive discrimination or flattery.

An insight from the shop interviews was the factor of age in language maintenance. Shop 6 revealed that it is the older generations that have a broader knowledge of languages other than English, whereas the younger generations clearly deem it less important. This was reinforced by the younger person in the shop stating; "it's got to be English". The participant interviewed also highlighted that he only spoke English, as it was necessary for professionalism in his business, however, he was able to recognise Hindi and Punjabi but saw no reason to use them as English is his first language. In contrast, his older assistant could speak three languages; Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, yet did not feel overly confident with English.

The results from the family interview (table 2) present an example of language shift in the speaker of the second generation. The speakers first language was Hindi, in which he could read, write and speak before he could read and write English. Fishman (1964:36) suggests that ''Where literacy has been attained prior to interaction with an 'other tongue', reading or writing in the mother tongue may resist shift longer than speaking.....''. In the case of the interviewee, literacy in Hindi had been attained, however due to the fact that the parents believed this command of Hindi was affecting their child's ability to learn English properly, the encouragement of reading and writing in Hindi stopped. This literacy in Hindi did not resist change, and as English was introduced, the ability to read and write in Hindi disappeared. To this day the interviewee is only able to speak Hindi.

In such an example, the family domain and the influence of the parents are very relevant. Despite the fact that the language spoken most in the domain of home is English, a sufficient amount of Hindi must be spoken in order for the second generation speaker to continue being able to speak it. If this is not the case, then the language maintenance related to Hindi, may have been encouraged by the institutions where the second generation speaker could use Hindi. An example is at Temple, in which the second generation speaker attended until the age of nine. The finding that the parents most

frequently used language in the home domain is English can possibly be explained in that this is due to the fact that the son's main language is English. The parents even speak English together in the home when the son is not around and Hindi is restricted to when out in public and when at their place of worship. This is interesting, because it suggests that after choosing English as the more important language for their son, it has had an effect on the shift in language use for the first generation speakers.

A very interesting feature of use of Hindi in the first generation is the fact that when in public, the parents will address each other in Hindi even though English is predominantly used at home. This may be explained in relation to Clyne's model of language maintenance (Clyne 2003:47). A contributing factor to maintenance is the attitudes of the dominant group towards the minority group. Clyne suggests that negativity and suppression can lead to a greater effort in maintenance, and the need to show cultural identity and express pride and solidarity when faced with the dominant group.

After analysing all of the findings and from spending time in Cheetham Hill it would appear that although a number of languages are spoken by a number of different ethnic groups, English still pays a vital role in the community. English is the main language of choice when in the professional domain. As discussed, this may be due to the fact that it acts as a 'lingua franca' and is the common language shared by most people. The fact that the languages Cheetham Hill boasts is so many and so diverse, may mean that maintenance in the second generation and sometimes in the first generation speakers is affected.

Communication between two people of different ethnicities and from two different language speaking countries would be limited, and near enough impossible, if English was not a language in common. This may lead to an increased use of English in public which, in turn, means that language maintenance decreases in domains other than the home.

The most frequent languages found were Urdu and Punjabi, this may suggest that, if any language is to overcome language shift in the second generation, it may be these. The sheer amount of people found to speak these languages is, in itself, a reason why there is a second generation of language speakers - the languages have been transferred and continued. In these languages, the opportunity to speak them with peers is greater than, say, Polish. Also, in the findings from the community centre, Urdu and Punjabi are the languages with the most speakers and, therefore, benefit from the support given. It could

be, that the centre itself recognised that volunteers with these language backgrounds are more in demand than others and so that is why the proportion or Urdu and Punjabi speaking staff is of a higher number.

Appendix 1

(A) *Email from volunteer at Cheetham Hill Advice Centre.*

Hi

WE have both bilingual advisers-so they give advice in the client's own language-2are staff and 18 are volunteers We also have 4 volunteers who just come and interpret when needed Between staff and volunteers we have around 15 languages used mostly and a couple of other languages See table attached for spread Urdu/Punjabi is by far the most used language, then probably Arabic, Russian, Pushto, Farsi/dari, Somali, French If we don't have any in house interpreter we occasionally use paid interpreters but do not have a big budget for that Not sure what their attitudes are towards their languages but:
*Clients are very glad we have advice in their language so not need rely on family/friends
*Volunteers happy to use their language skills
*Some are also qualified interpreters

 2 of our ex volunteers are now paid bilingual advisers for Manchester Council's advice service –one is Arabic speaking and one Urdu/Punjabi/Gujarati speaking

Hope this is helpful.

Any other questions please email me and will see if can help

Margaret Manning

Volunteer Development Worker
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This message has been sent from Cheetham Hill Advice Centre,
1 Morrowfield Avenue, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, M8 9AR.
Phone: 0161 740 8999, Fax: 0161 720 9231
website www.cheethamadvice.org.uk

(B) Attached Table from Cheetham Hill Advice Centre.

Volunteers names and languages spoken

Advice vols

First name	Surname	Languages
		Arabic
		Russian, Nepalese
		Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi
		Urdu, Gujerati
		Urdu, Punjabi, Dari, Farsi,
		Some French
		Polish
		Tigrini, Amharic, Kunama, Arabic
		A little Arabic, Czech, Russian
		Pushto, Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi
		Urdu, Kutchi
		Urdu, Punjabi, Mirpuri
		Urdu
		Urdu, Punjabi
		Urdu, Punjabi

		Urdu, Punjabi
		Malayam, Hindi, Tamil
		Chinese –Mandarin

Interpreting vols

		Arabic
		Arabic
		Somali, Finnish
		Arabic –Mon or Wed
		Urdu, Punjabi, Swahili, Kutchi, bit Gujerati
		Urdu, Punjabi, Dari, Farsi, a little Hindi
		Arabic

Staff

One- Urdu, Punjabi, Pushto, Farsi

One –Urdu, Punjabi

(C) Photographs taken from around Cheetham Hill.