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Societal Multilingualism in the Jewish Community in Prestwich

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The area of Prestwich in North Manchester was chosen due to its large settled Jewish community. It has a population of approximately 35,000 as previously stated in the preliminary report, with a considerable 19% of this figure being Jewish (1). It is generally agreed large-scale immigration to Manchester began in the late 1840's and by 1875 there were over 7000 Jews in Manchester, most living around Cheetham Hill and three miles away in the chosen area of Prestwich. These geographical statistics allowed for a good basis to study bilingualism, and more specifically, when Yiddish or Hebrew is used in favour of English and vice versa.

It was initially intended to focus exclusively on the area of Sedgley Park, due to its high concentration of Jewish residents in the area. However, we extended the potential area to survey a to Whitefield and the surrounding area, as well as the location close to Prestwich of Broughton Park, a well known area for orthodox Jews-this was to give a larger potential for data collection, whilst still focusing on the area of choice.

Methodology

The preliminary questionnaires were distributed between ten individuals around the University campus, the participants being aged between 18-23. This allowed us to see the realistic length of time a survey would take to complete (on average it was around 2 minutes) and also see any misunderstanding or confusion that may arise from participating in the survey. The preliminary questionnaire was found to be a success and helped refined the interviewing technique.

In our preliminary report, our initial sample size was 91, and 300 surveys would be sent out; this was calculated using a priori statistical power analysis. However, this was impractical as we did not have the funding to enclose a stamp and an envelope for 300

surveys, therefore we reduced the amount of surveys to 48 survey and posted 3 per household, these survey were handed out on the 1st of May. The return rate, as expected was low, only 3 surveys were returned and the surveys returned were from the same house hold (found in the appendix on chart 1.1, Participants: 13, 16 and 3)

Due to the anticipated low return rate, Prestwich and the surrounding areas were revisited (May 9th) and gathered the majority of data by approaching people in the street. We still used our questionnaire however to make up for a low return rate we conducted small interviews which were quite open ended and more of an informal conversation as opposed to rigid questioning. This managed to create a turnout of 26 surveys, less than was preferable, which was maybe due to the adverse weather conditions on the day that possibly explained a lack of participants being available for the surveying on the streets of Prestwich.

It was noted that some of the participants were more willing than others to talk after the surveys were completed. The participants that were willing to be interviewed were useful to the study as we developed a greater understanding of attitudes towards the language, community and Judaism as a religion, will be shown in the results. However, the extra qualitative data often proved invaluable.

The study itself was reflective of apparent time, a popular approach in linguistics, and one favoured by linguist Labov in his 1963 influential study on Martha's Vineyard. This approach allows for the study of linguistic change in progress. The basic assumption underlying apparent time is that unless there is evidence to the contrary, differences among generations of adults mirror actual diachronic developments in a language (Bailey et al: 2008), in the case of the study, the second generation potentially using more English.

With the actual sample itself, it was evenly distributed between males and females, to make the data more widely represented in relation to the general population, and enabled us to look at a diverse set of variables that will create an overall image as Prestwich as an area. Most importantly, the sampling ensured the data covered a wide age range, being an essential element in the study.

Another technique used was that of 'snowball sampling', defined as a non-probability sampling technique where existing study subjects recruit future subjects from

among their acquaintances, creating a 'snowball effect'. In relation to the present study, an acquaintance of a group member, who resides in Prestwich, was recruited via e-mail to fill in the survey and to pass it on to relatives. This then resulted in 6 responses being collected, which was highly useful in contribution to the research.

As well as being asked about their basic information i.e. participants in our study were asked to rate their likelihood of using English and Hebrew in a set of given circumstances. Rather than a simple yes or no "would you use this language in situation X" format of question this type of question gives scaled results which are easier to turn draw accurate conclusions from.

Analysis of results

As the study takes an apparent time form, the results can provide some potential clues as to how the usage of Hebrew in the Jewish community of Prestwich has changed over time. We predicted in our hypothesis that Hebrew would be on the decline as it was in Fishman's 1965 study. In Fishman's study he found that English was the increasing language in every category; our results indicated a slightly different trend. We found that English usage versus Hebrew was fairly evenly distributed (see graph 1), with only a slight trend towards English over time. The older sets of participants used slightly more Hebrew than the younger sets but not enough to make this a particularly marked trend. On the other hand we found that we got very different results when it came to the usage of Hebrew in the home. The results of this (graph 2) imply that Hebrew usage in the home is falling, as younger speakers have a much lower frequency of Hebrew usage in the home. Another analysis (graph 3) implies that Hebrew usage in the cultural community is also decreasing based on an apparent time reading of the results. So, it would seem that Hebrew still has a presence in the Prestwich community, but it's presence is most felt when engaging in culturally Jewish activities such as religious meetings and ceremonies.

I would suggest that the reason we see a strong correlation between Hebrew usage and communication with distant relatives could be because these relatives are mostly communicated with on the occasion of culturally Jewish events. At Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, passover celebrations and religious services families traditionally get together; at these culturally Jewish events I would suggest that Hebrew is more likely to be spoken in order

enhance group identity (Spolsky: 1998). It would seem that Hebrew in Prestwich is, over time becoming a more symbolic language.

We also noticed a spike in the amount of Hebrew used by the youngest age bracket; this result surprised us as it does not seem to fit with the overall downwards movement in Hebrew usage. Anecdotal evidence strongly implied that this result could be affected by the large Jewish school in the area that we studied; King David high school has mandatory Hebrew lessons for all its pupils, as such some of the participants in the lowest age bracket would be forced to speak Hebrew in their 'workplace'. This demonstrates that the community clearly regards a Hebrew education as important, but skews our results somewhat as the younger generations seem (with a few exceptions) to eschew Hebrew in favour of English in most other circumstances.

While sex was not a particularly important part of our hypothesis, we did gather that data from our participants as there is a cultural weighting in the Jewish community based on sex. Glinert (1999) found in his study that females were more likely to speak Yiddish than males. Similarly we found a correlation between Hebrew use and sex; females in our study were approximately 5% more likely to use Hebrew across all situations. While not a large correlation, this difference could be related to the fact that Judaism is passed on the side of the mother, possibly making Jewish females more likely to have a closer cultural connection to their faith and therefore the language associated with it.

The statistics show a few other correlations; as predicted in our hypothesis, first generation residents in the UK were slightly more likely to use Hebrew in all situations. Unlike the suggestion of Paulston and Tucker (2004: 402) this correlation appears not be borne from necessity – all of the first generation speakers considered themselves fluent in English, and used it exclusively in many situations. This correlation then, could be due to the first generation speakers emphasising a cultural identity while their national identity is less firmly embedded. Another interesting relationship was the one between Yiddish and the quantity of Hebrew usage; contrary to the uneasy relationship between the two languages that we predicted in our proposal, we found that participants who spoke Yiddish were more likely to use Hebrew overall. This could be because the participants who spoke Yiddish were more deeply involved in Jewish cultural activities. Evidence for this can be found as all of the participants who spoke Yiddish identified themselves as both ethnically and religiously Jewish.

One has to be cautious of drawing too many apparent time conclusions from this kind of data. It could be that the reason for the slightly higher prevalence of Hebrew amongst older speakers is that they are more likely to be (or at least to know) first generation immigrants. As we have already seen, first generation speakers are more likely to use Hebrew in non-ceremonial situations. If that were true then the interpretation that Hebrew is falling in use would be incorrect. Another possible explanation for the higher likelihood of Hebrew use in older generations could be that the older generations are more likely to be members of more orthodox branches of Judaism which use Hebrew more in their services.

The qualitative data in our survey was collected in questions 18-20, and an informal interview/chat after the survey was completed (notes were made by a group member during the chats). Qualitative research is useful in addressing attitudes to a language, and finding out extra information on the area of study. Considering that Prestwich has a large Jewish population, qualitative information is important as we are researching domains of when Hebrew/Yiddish is spoken, where it is spoken, who it is spoken by and who it is spoken to. These factors encapsulate attitudes towards the language community of practice.

Our hypothesis states that Jewish languages will be used for their iconic and symbolic properties, not out of necessity. This can be illustrated with participant 2, whose age is between 16 and 21. He describes his religion as Jewish and his ethnicity as White British. This participant in the quantitative data answered that he occasionally speaks Hebrew in places of worship therefore he adheres to our hypothesis as this speaker uses his language solely for religious and ceremonial purposes. Participant 2 however, humorously remarked; "I have seen Pigs more Jewish than me" this participant went on to say that his religious beliefs are atheist, but he chooses to say he is Jewish because "his mates and family are Jewish and it is kind of like a label". Therefore this could convey that Judaism is more of a label than a belief system in young people, therefore possibly showing their preference of English over Hebrew. The knowledge of Hebrew appears to be passive as this participant states "my mum, is pretty Jewish and my brother learnt it (Hebrew) at the Jewish grammar school, so I know a bit and my Gran speaks it because she is from Tel Aviv, I had to learn it for my Bar mitzvah and I can read a bit, but it's not like me and my mates would speak it at the pub". The speaker does not specify whether he speaks it with those family members or not, however it does show that older generations do speak

Hebrew.

This differs in Participant 5, who was of the same age range as participant 2, this participant is female and moved from Israel to Prestwich when she was 14, she describes herself as fluent in Hebrew and speaks it with close family members, therefore agreeing with the assumption in our hypothesis that first generation speakers will speak Hebrew in the community with other Hebrew speakers. However, this speaker was from an area called Broughton Park which, we were told by a shop keeper “is very orthodox”, therefore it could fit in with our hypothesis that Hebrew would be used, not for necessity but possibly for religious and iconic reasons. The fact that there is a orthodox Jewish community could explain why Hebrew would be favoured, as this could be seen as an “in group” using a minority language, to keep preserve their orthodox community and identify community members and exclude the dominant group.

Comparison with Literature

With our results complete and analysed, it is important to compare what we have learned with previous studies; most notably the studies which we observed before carrying out our project. Through the differing nature of all the studies, we cannot make full comparisons between them and our study, but there are certainly elements of similarity and contrast worth mentioning.

The first study we examined in our pre-fieldwork plan was Green’s 1962 study on Yiddish in Detroit. The study was based around recent (7 year) and long term (30 year) immigrants and also 2nd generation non-migrants. The results of this showed that the English usage within all three categories was surprisingly competent. This is something we see today in our study, though today it is not so much of a surprise. All the participants in our study spoke English as a first language which is very much a sign that the language of Jews in Manchester is predominantly English, which only serves to confirm the trends shown in Green’s study.

What does differ from Green’s study however, is the usage of Yiddish among the Jewish community. In 1962, Green found that Detroit’s Jewish community, depending on when, or even if, they had immigrated spoke different variants of Yiddish with varying levels of competence. This is something that we cannot really cross reference with our study.

Yiddish today is, at the most, a third language. Even then, the amount of people who speak any Yiddish at all is, given the results of our study, just lower than a third of the population. This is a very steep decrease in Yiddish usage and only serves to confirm even more some of the other studies we observed.

As mentioned in our pre-fieldwork report, Hebrew and Yiddish are minority languages, in most of the world at least. In the past, as stated in our previous report, those who spoke the minority languages of Hebrew and Yiddish were able to exclude those who spoke the major, recognised language of an area, thus transforming from the out group to the in group. This however, is a practice which appears to have died within the Prestwich area. It is now the case that, due to the social situations in which the Jewish community live, the minority languages now stay just that (Bratt Paulston, Tucker, 2004:402). With most of the area speaking English, younger generations are more susceptible to also speak English in order to fit in, gain employment and benefit from various other socio-economic factors. Hebrew and Yiddish are now, for many of the younger generations, merely ceremonial languages, used in religious celebrations and to speak to older relatives, who in themselves appear to be dropping the languages in favour of English also.

Another study we analysed in our pre-report was Glinert's 1999 study, which gave the results that young Jewish girls were more likely to speak Yiddish to Jewish men and English to their peers. This is a result which appears to be replicated to some degree within our study as females were more likely to speak Yiddish than males. This could be due to a lot of Jewish traditions being passed on down the maternal line.

Conclusion

Essentially, our hypothesis was partially correct, we found that the older generations had a higher likelihood of using Hebrew; this would imply that on an apparent time basis the influence of Hebrew on the people of Prestwich is diminishing. We found, contrary to our expectations, that even older people used English as a first language. The Jewish community in Prestwich certainly does favour English over the traditional Judaic languages which could be a sign of integration to the majority public domain in order to hold economic capital. However there are still pockets of the community that actively speak Hebrew for ideological reason, but Hebrew is seldom referred to as a first language. Hebrew survives because of education in the community but mostly for symbolic reasons. In the young it

seems that the use of Hebrew is declining as is their ethnic identification as Jewish which would imply that the two are inter-related

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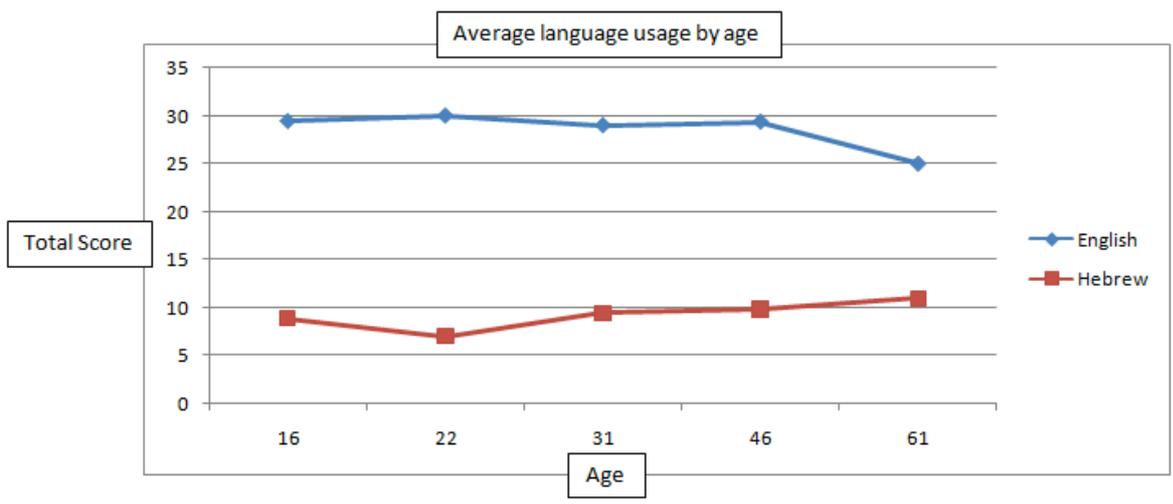
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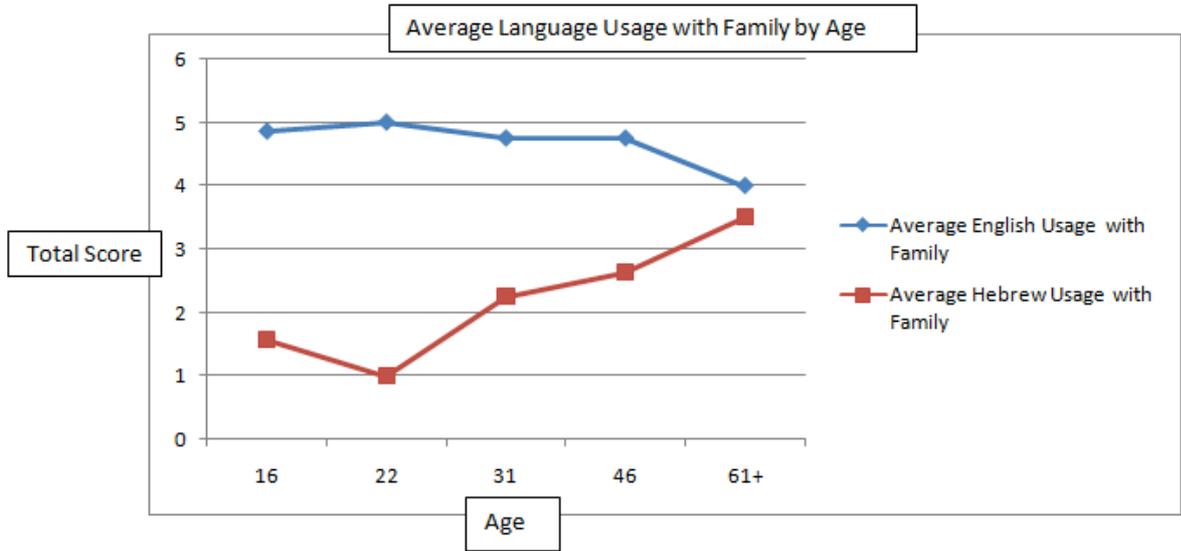
Appendix

(1.1) Table of survey results

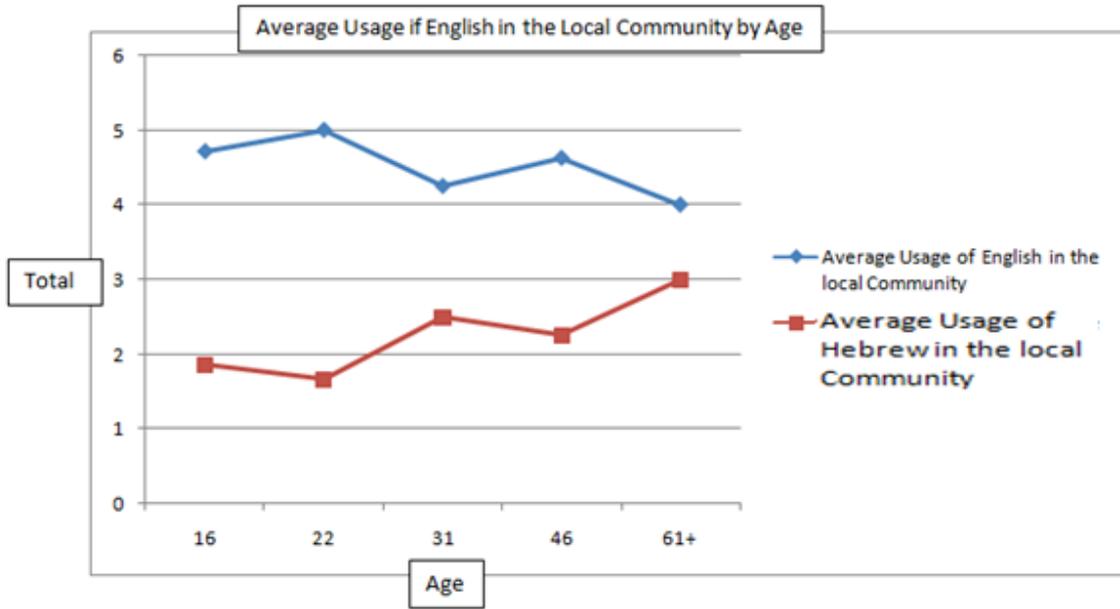
Participant	Age	Ethnicity	Religion	Born in England	Gender	Language 1	Language 2	Language 3	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	
1	16	White-British	Athiest	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	16	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	2	1
3	16	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		4	4	5	5	4	5	3	3	1	3	2	1
4	16	White-British	Agnostic	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	2	4	1
5	16	Jewish	Jewish	No	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	4	5	1	2	1	2	3	1
6	16	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	2	1	1
7	16	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	2	1	3	1	1
8	22	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	2	1	1	1	2	1
9	22	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
10	22	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	2	1
11	31	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	5	5	5	5	5	1	2	1	1	2	1
12	31	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	4	5	5	4	5	2	2	1	1	3	1
13	31	Jewish	Jewish	No	Female	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	5	5	5	4	5	2	3	2	1	3	1
14	31	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	4	5	1	2	1	1	2	1
15	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	2	1	1	2	1
16	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	4	5	5	3	5	2	2	2	1	3	1
17	46	White-British	Agnostic	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	1	1
18	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	4	5	5	4	5	2	3	2	1	2	1
19	46	White-British	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	4	2	1	2	1
20	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	4	3	1	3	1
21	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	3	1	1	3	1
22	46	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	5	5	1	2	2	1	2	1
23	61+	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Male	English	Hebrew			5	5	5	5	4	5	1	3	2	1	3	1
24	61+	Jewish	Jewish	No	Male	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	4	5	0	4	5	1	3	1	0	3	1
25	61+	Jewish	Jewish	Yes	Female	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		4	3	5	5	4	5	2	4	2	1	3	1
26	61+	Jewish	Jewish	No	Female	English	Hebrew	Yiddish		5	4	4	0	4	5	1	4	2	0	3	1



1



2



3