



Report 2014



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Societal Multilingualism: Group Project
The effects of multilingualism on recruitment
and its influence on employability

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1 Introduction

The Greater Manchester region is the second most populous urban area in the United Kingdom. Over the last decade the population has grown by 19% (Gopal et al, 2013), nearly tripling the national growth of just 7%. Manchester has an extremely diverse linguistic landscape, with around 150 languages being spoken throughout the region. This includes large communities using languages such as Yiddish and Persian, which are rarely spoken in other parts of the UK. Due to the extent of the linguistic diversity, one would expect that the area's business sector would be equally diverse, illustrating the multilingual theme of Manchester on the whole. The prominence of languages will fluctuate, with some being popular, and others used more exclusively. As a result, companies' recruitment processes have to be tailored to the need for certain languages at specific times, yet it remains important to acknowledge the fact that some languages are more prominent than others. Our case study will observe the role that languages play, and their influence on recruitment within large businesses in the Manchester area, some of which operate nationally and internationally.

1.1.Changes to the Project

Originally, we had intended to look at the role of languages within recruitment agencies alone. However, we soon realised that this would be incredibly difficult for a number of reasons. Firstly, in most cases nothing more than a generic customer service email was obtainable, and as a result, there was a distinct lack of communication available. It was continually difficult to directly contact the department we needed, which led to our second problem; a lack of replies. We did not receive a single response from any of the recruitment agencies we contacted. In light of this, we took the decision to open the study up to recruitment in all business industries. This is reflected in the list of companies we eventually contacted within the hospitality, retail, business and health sectors. This also allows the study to cover a much broader representation of the recruitment process businesses use all across Manchester. We predicted that the business demands of different sectors would offer a contrasting opinion on how they value language skills of prospective employees.

With this in mind, our aims are as follows:

1. The overall importance of language skills and their effects on recruitment.
2. How languages rank in comparison with other qualifications and skills.
3. The most/least prominent languages used in the Greater Manchester area.
 - a. How this reflects the top 20 languages spoken in Manchester (Matras, 2014)
4. Whether localized or community specific languages are supported, or even promoted in businesses/companies. If so, where specifically?
5. The advantages and disadvantages of working in a multicultural and multilingual workplace.
6. Whether any major language based recruitment discrepancies can be found between different sectors in the same region.

Another slight alteration was due to problems arising in the data collection process, as is described in 2.1, so our study moved from just considering the city of Manchester to the Greater Manchester area. A lack of data meant we had to rely much more heavily on previous contacts of which, one was situated in the Greater Manchester area - Preston.

1.2 Hypotheses

The hypothesis has remained very much the same as outlined in Field project 1. That is, we expect to see, based upon previous literature, a speaker's proficiency in many languages being seen as a bonus opposed to an actual requirement. Furthermore, we naturally expect to see a wide range of languages spoken given Manchester's multicultural identity. Additionally, we do not expect to see much active promotion of community languages, as this just isn't the priority in the business sector.

2 Data collection

As explained in field project 1, our main data collection method was to email companies in the Manchester area a cover letter, stating our intentions, and a short questionnaire for them to complete. In total we emailed 49 companies, all of which are listed below, the first group of companies had already been emailed at the time of Field Project 1:

Worldwide Recruitment Services, Berlitz, Kaplan International English, Premier Group Recruitment Ltd, Ruth Halliday Associates, CV Screen Ltd, Bluefire Recruitment Consultants, Time Recruitment, Connection Recruitment, Alexander Hancock Recruitment, Easi-Drive, Manchester City Council, UPS logistics,

X1 Letting Agents, Deloitte, Arndale Centre, Finglands Coachways, DLA Piper, Union Cars, Waitrose, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Aldi, Marks and Spencers, Morrisons, Debenhams, Selfridges, Stagecoach Manchester, Topshop, Outfit, Google, Henri Lloyd, Thomas Cook, Manchester Airport, Kellogg's, Adidas, Heinz, Late Rooms, Astra Zeneca, Manchester Science Parks (MSP), Manchester United Football Club (Events & Hospitality), Manchester City Football Club (Hospitality & Conference), Peel Group (Lowry Outlet Mall), INTU Trafford Centre, Transport for Greater Manchester, JJT Residential Services, English First (EF), Barburrito, MediaCity UK, Bupa, ARK Promotions.

The companies from this list that we had already gained previous links with were:

- English First
- World Wide Recruitment Services
- Briarwood Medical Practice

2.1 Changes to data collection

Obtaining any form of data has been an extremely arduous task. As mentioned in section 1.1 we received no feedback from any of the recruitment agencies and this trend continued when we contacting other companies. From the retail companies, we generally received a generic email stating that they either couldn't disclose the information we needed (see appendix) or that they receive such a high number of similar queries that they could not complete the survey. The retail industry was generally the only sector that even afforded us this much of reply with none of the other companies sending a response.

The collection of data therefore relied much more heavily on our second approach, directly approaching people that we already knew through existing social networks within certain businesses. This was a much more successful approach and in some cases, as we detailed in the previous report, the companies themselves passed our questionnaire along to others. However, the problem with this approach is that naturally, being young university students, the majority of whom are not natives of the Manchester region, our number of contacts was limited. The amount of data we collected was not as expansive as we would ideally have hoped for. Nevertheless we feel we have gained enough information to be able to make both suggestions and conclusions on the state of language in the Greater Manchester area.

3 Background on Businesses

The following sections give a brief overview of the companies that responded to our questionnaire.

3.1. World Wide Recruitment Services

World Wide Recruitment Services is a global recruitment agency with its UK headquarters in Altrincham, Manchester. It focuses on recruitment in the oil, gas and mining industries and hires specialised workers for both work at home, in their offices, and abroad.

3.2 English First (EF)

EF is a global company that offers language training to students. It has schools and offices all over the globe, including one in Manchester.

3.3 Briarwood Medical Practice, Preston

Briarwood is a local NHS practice situated in Preston, Greater Manchester. It has been running since 1990 and now deals with around 5600 patients of different nationalities.

3.4 Easi-Drive, Wythenshawe

Easi-Drive is an Accident Management company based in the Greater Manchester region. The company was established in 2001 and has a customer base which represents a number of cultures and languages.

4 Discussion

4.1 Patterns emerging from the data.

After assessing our results and questionnaire responses, a few patterns have emerged from the quantitative data we collected. The majority of the companies who answered our questions, either by email or during face-to-face interviews, saw language skills as a bonus, rather than a requirement. European languages, especially Spanish, were ranked much higher in terms of their importance to employers than we predicted. Finally, the issues resulting from working in a multilingual team or workplace were mainly cultural rather than linguistic, which we thought would be more troublesome. It seems that having a competent level of English is the most vital linguistic skill necessary for prospective employees in the Greater Manchester region, which is obvious. However, there was a lack of knowledge of and desire for other language skills in most cases, which we found surprising. The medical practice involved in our research did not follow this pattern though, as it has a greater necessity of communication with all patients.

The recruitment company we interviewed, WRS, outsource speakers of certain languages if and when necessary, instead of employing multilingual staff from the local area. We asked the question, would they benefit from knowing more about the multilingual abilities of prospective employees? We believe recruitment firms could benefit from the findings of our research as they could save money through recruiting locals who speak the languages they require, to fulfil their business needs. As a result, companies would not have to outsource temporary services as frequently; it would also create local jobs simultaneously. WRS also confirmed that they would only give preference to a candidate with language skills assuming all other prerequisites, such as qualifications and experience requirements, were met. They believe employing staff with multilingual skills gives them an advantage over their competition, as they are able to form relationships with clients overseas in their native languages.

The language school we interviewed, EF, regarded language skills as 'more than a bonus' and said it was 'desirable' for employees to speak more than just English. Teachers who speak another language have first-hand experience of second language learning, and this helps them relate more with their students, although this is not a requirement. The language school also acknowledged that they believed it to be more important that their administrative staff possess multilingual skills, more so than the teaching personnel. This allows them to provide information and best advertise offered courses and programs to students and parents in their native language. However, they also said that this could lead to issues of miscommunication, when discussing course specific details, leading to the occasional mis-sell, which is far from ideal.

Again, issues arising from working in a multilingual environment were mainly cultural. EF highlighted the common misinterpretation of British sarcasm by foreign administrative staff. They also believe that a greater knowledge of the more prevalent languages in the local area would allow them to source workers more locally, creating more jobs as a result.

Briarwood Medical Centre followed suit in regarding English as the most important language required by their organisation. They commented that within their practice, a reasonable standard of spoken and written English is a required job specification. They advertise as an equal opportunities employer and, in the past, applicants who did not speak English as a first language have had the assistance of an interpreter at interview. There seems to be a wide range of languages spoken within the employee base at Briarwood Medical Centre, in comparison to the other businesses. These include English, Punjabi, Hindi, Swahili and Telugu, equipping them with efficient communication, providing for a broader scope of patients. Our interviewee stated that staff with broader language skills is an asset to the NHS. This practice also stated that they have never encountered linguistic problems within their multilingual team, as they all have the ability to speak English competently.

The majority of their 5600 patients speak English, however, a number of their patients require the use of an interpreter, which may sometimes come in the form of a friend or relative. This business embraces language skills, ranking them with great importance. This surgery covers every avenue in order to effectively communicate with their patients. On their website they offer translation for non-English speakers, where people can access information about GPs in this country, their function as gatekeepers to the health services, how to register to become eligible for appointments as well as how to access emergency services. This information is offered in 21 languages: English, Urdu, Albanian, Hindi, Arabic, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, Polish, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, French, Turkish, Punjabi, Gujarati, Somali, Croatian, Bengali and Farsi. In addition, the patients can use a self-check-in system in the reception area, which is also available in all languages listed above.

Easi-Drive did not fill out the questionnaire as they did not want to divulge too much of their recruitment principles, but gave a general overview of their stance on multilingual skills. On the whole, they continued to suggest that English is the only language required as a prerequisite for beginning employment at the company. Whilst on occasion they have been able to solve queries and even sell policies through communication in foreign languages, as some employees have been multilingual, they use English as their day to day language. This highlights several things, the fact that as often seen in the UK, there is a reliance on English, and maybe an ignorant refusal to use others, as well as an increasing customer base that require multilingual services. They specify that the prospective employer 'need only be fluent in English' and that multilingual staff currently employed there 'have a grasp of English that allows them to be successful in their role at the company'. The languages which have been used as a rarity are Urdu, French and Polish. However, it is important to acknowledge that the company does not offer a broad multilingual service, but can spontaneously do so, yet this is solely dependent on who is in the office at the time in which multilingual skills are required.

Although they consider the ability of being able to speak several languages as impressive, their main aim is to ensure the employee fits the mold and ethos of the firm. They stated that a multilingual applicant attains merit for their skills in other ways, as the ability to converse in more than one language represents commitment, willingness to work hard, and resilience.

In our first assignment we found that Fishman (2000) considered how situational styles affect language choice in terms of formality, intimacy, solidarity, status and equality, yet his analysis lacked depth. He did not consider the particular relationships between domain and style, which our research has allowed us to investigate further. Businesses within the health sector are incredibly interesting to analyse in relation to this because, as our interviewee pointed out, health practices have a responsibility to meet the needs of all service users. Contrastingly, other businesses outside the health sector have no such responsibility. Despite this, there remains a motivation to create comfortable communication with clients, providing a 'unique selling point' over their competitors. A patient/doctor relationship must be confidential, so the presence of a third party can make this more difficult to achieve. Due to the confidentiality and sensitivity involved in healthcare work, this surgery shows a preference for the 'Google translate' tool over an actual translator. The level of trust a doctor conveys may also encourage more disclosure from patients. If there is an additional interlocutor, it will hinder the one-to-one trusting nature of conversation. Furthermore, because the workers in the practice can speak numerous languages it can affect the relationship between doctor and patient, adding an element of solidarity to the exchange if they are able to communicate in their mother tongue. The recruitment company WRS stated that extra language skills are valued because it can give them a slight advantage over other businesses because they can then form relationships with overseas clients. This suggests that within a working domain, there seems to be an assumption that if an exchange is fairly analogous in terms of language and style, it can give the impression that their working relationship will also be cohesive.

Appointments requiring translators often take more time, as staff must ensure the consenting adult fully understands the conditions of treatment. The whole National Health Service reflects these efforts to create a more comfortable and efficient level of communication, by providing information leaflets in a wide range of languages. Our interviewee also confirmed that in many parts of the UK, particularly in larger cities like London, general practices cater for a wider variety of languages and therefore their recruitment processes vary accordingly. They perhaps hold certain language skills in higher regard over other skills in areas where certain languages are found in high density. It is clear that within the health service, language skills are deemed important enough to invest time and money into. This is down to effective communication being one of the most important aspects of the health service, and it is recognised that conversation in English alone is not enough.

Our findings support Aronin's (2008) literature presenting the point that due to the level of global mobility in the present day, multilingualism is a necessary feature in social structure. In relation to Aronin's claims, we questioned whether the spread of the use of English globally is a more prominent sociolinguistic development or is it the multiplication of languages in use?

The Briarwood Medical Centre's practice shows that English is the most important language needed to communicate with patients, relatives, carers and all services within the NHS. However, they also list Hindi, Punjabi, Polish, then Dutch and Flemish (in that order of importance) to be of use for communication with patients, relatives and carers. This suggests that the multiplication of languages in use is a prominent and advantageous trend within the health service, where the understanding of patients is a necessary skill of potential staff. Many city health centres care for university students, who can come from many different countries. Though they are likely to have some English skills, the assistance of some translation services is likely to be necessary. It would have been implausible for us to investigate the level at which the spread of English has affected communication throughout the health service, though we would assume this to have happened to a high degree. However, it is clear that the spread of English has not happened to such an extent that there is no need for additional language skills within the country.

4.2 Wider Implications

A 2013 article in 'Real Business' attempts to answer the question, why UK businesses need more language skills (Chauvot, 2013). Their foremost point is that because of poor economic conditions in the UK, in light of the financial crisis, companies have had to outsource their trade to other countries. This expansion is predominantly to other European companies, as the EU trade regulations make it easier for smaller businesses that are not already trading as global TNCs. Therefore, this increased trade with the EU means more workers with European language skills are required by UK based businesses. This partly explains the level of importance the companies we liaised with placed on European languages. European languages placed higher in terms of requirements by companies, as over the last few decades, more countries have become EU member-states. In the 1980s, Mediterranean countries joined the EU, and more recently, Eastern European countries have become members, with this enlargement predicted to continue into the future. Therefore, since trade links with new member-states is now possible, speakers of those languages are required. This would have been true in the past, in the post-World War II economic boom for example, South Asian migrants came to the UK. Nowadays, the South Asian migrants are part of the social fabric of everyday life in the UK, so their languages are already well established and readily available for business use.

The article continues to comment that the UK is disadvantaged as a direct result of a lack of foreign language skills being consistently used, hindering their progress in global trade, especially in comparison other EU member states. As more organisations globalise to take advantage of a larger, global market, expectations rise (Aronin & Singleton, 2008). These expectations include the ability to trade in a local market's native language, especially in some of the world's large emerging economies, such as Brazil and India. The European Union enables UK businesses to employ European migrant workers with the necessary language skills, but this means they are unable to hire local workers with the other necessary specialist skills due to the lack of multilingual skills they offer. Although English is the lingua franca of global business, in the recent past, other languages have expanded in terms of general use, popularity and importance. For example, the Americans expect to be able to trade in Spanish, and West African countries expect to be able to trade in French. The

article concludes by looking more positively at the future of the UK workforce, as a new generation matures surrounded by a plethora of cultures and languages, children may be more comfortable with learning foreign languages, which will be crucial to the longevity and sustainability of trading globally.

5 Conclusion

Within our case study we expected to find that the recruitment process and language needs of the business sector would reflect the linguistic diversity of Manchester as a whole, illustrating the needs of every part of the community to communicate effectively with a wide range of people. Our actual findings, after receiving feedback from businesses, was that the majority saw language skills as a 'bonus' rather than as a necessity and something that they would advertise for. This did, of course, vary from business to business. Overall, we found that Spanish and other European languages were ranked higher than we would have expected, and that there were very few problems experienced with multilingual staff or with working in a multilingual team, as long as those people were confident in communicating in English. This reflects our finding that English language competence is the biggest requirement in businesses in Manchester. Businesses tended to outsource speakers of specific languages, as and when they were needed, rather than advertise for a speaker to work full time. EF viewed language skills very positively, with them being regarded as 'desirable', though we found that the setting in which languages were most valued was the medical setting where communication with patients was of the utmost importance, and so languages needed were community specific. In conclusion, our study found that although languages were valued when members of the staff or team within the workplace were multilingual, the recruitment of multilingual staff was of less importance, with languages possibly giving potential employees an advantage, but not as a priority.

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Appendices:

1)

customer.service@tesco.co.uk
To: benn13@hotmail.co.uk
TESS111120NI: Re your recent enquiry

28 February 2014 09:29
[Hide Details](#)

Dear Benn

At Tesco we appreciate it when students take an interest in our company.

We're always happy to help, but I'm afraid that we receive so many requests from students to fill in their questionnaire, that we are unable to do this. I'm really sorry that I can't help you further.

We do have quite a lot of general information about Tesco on our website and you can find this on our website at:

<http://www.tescopic.com/>

I wish you all the best with your subject and thank you for contacting us.

Kind regards

Stephen Horn
Tesco Customer Service



(2)

Shabana Iqbal
To: benn13@hotmail.co.uk
Phone [ref_00DD0oDb_500D0Zy2Zb:ref]

27 February 2014 14:04
[Hide Details](#)

Thank you for contacting us for help with your coursework.

Unfortunately for business and commercial reasons we are unable to provide the type of information that you have requested. You will find that this is common policy amongst retailers.

However you may find useful information from research on the internet and your local public library as well as any resources that you have at your school/university. Or alternatively please visit our Website at www.morrisons.co.uk

I am sorry that we have been unable to be of further help, however please accept our best wishes for your every success in your studies. Thank you for your interest in Morrisons.

Kind Regards
Shabana Iqbal

ref_00DD0oDb_500D0Zy2Zb:ref



3) University of Manchester: Multilingual Manchester Project Questionnaire for Businesses 2014

1. How would you rank the importance of language skills in relation to other qualifications in the recruitment process?

- a) Very important.
- b) Important.
- c) Indifferent.
- d) Not very important.
- e) No importance whatsoever.

Why?

Teachers – desirable, beneficial for communication with students/clients – empathy towards other cultures.

Admin staff/interns – able to communicate with foreign clients in their native language, therefore easier to sell courses.

Table: Which languages are required most by your organisation, and for which client/customer audiences?

Most Needed	Language	Client/Customer & Location	Reason(s)
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1.	English (B2 or higher for admin/interns, C2 or native for teachers)	UK	Teachers - natives & use in class Admin - general public & telephone
2.	European languages , esp. Spanish	45% students are Spanish speakers	Only admin
3.	Russian	Lots of Russian speaking students	Admin
4.	Arabic	Need an Arabic speaker to help with Arabic speaking potential clients	Admin

2. What specific issues arise when recruiting multilingual staff?

Idiosyncrasies of English – telephone calls, confidence .

Office skills/email etiquette.

Mancunian English.

3. What specific issues arise when working with a multilingual team?

Cultural understandings, e.g. sarcasm.

4. What specific issues arise when working with multilingual client/customer bases?

Expectations of what British English is (posh), who Brits are.

Miscommunication between sales in native languages and what is actually offered on specific courses.

5. What intelligence on community language skills would be of use to your organisation when taking strategic decisions, especially regarding staff recruitment?

Other main languages spoken in Manchester and how EF can capitalise on that as a language (English) school.

Interns from abroad – looking at hiring more locally – could change recruitment process for interns – local job creation.

*NOTE: Interns do office work, sell courses, answer the phones, customer service, etc.

6. How do prospective employers (your organisation) and employees advertise/promote language skills as part of the staff recruitment process?

Job description.

CVs – proof of certification/qualifications.

7. Does your organisation actively promote/take part in the promotion of language skills and language vitality (the use and preservation of minority languages)? Why/why not?

No. Promote lingua franca (English).

International day – celebration of different cultures, language featured but not main focus.

8. Would a multilingual candidate fare better than a candidate with only one language during the recruitment process with your organisation? Why/why not?

Office – yes (if knew about languages in Manchester not being catered for or which languages' speakers have low English proficiency)

Teacher – yes.

9. What do you think is the biggest advantage and disadvantage to employing and working with multilingual staff? Why?

ADV: communication in clients' first language in emergencies, intelligence of multilingual people.

DISADV: teacher with another language using it in the classroom, detrimental to students' learning.

Extra Question: Which languages are currently spoken by the staff at your workplace?

List:

- Spanish
- Italian
- Russian
- Lithuanian
- German
- Portuguese
- Urdu
- English

8 languages

4) University of Manchester: Multilingual Manchester Project Questionnaire for Businesses 2014

i. How would you rank the importance of language skills in relation to other qualifications in the recruitment process?

1. Very important.
2. **Important.**
3. Indifferent.
4. Not very important.
5. No importance whatsoever.

Why?

Language skills are most prevalent when a consultant is placed in a similar speaking market. i.e Spanish speaking consultants are deployed deliberately in South American markets to enhance the communication between clients and candidates. In recruitment, the devil is in the detail. The more information that can be ascertained in a conversation simply decreases the chance of failures throughout the process – thus if a consultant can speak the native language of the person on the other end of the phone, the more accurate their calls will be and the success will follow. Clients recognize this as well as we do in-house, which in turn gives our company more chance to work with them in the relevant markets.

Which languages are required most by your organisation, and for which client/customer audiences?

Most Needed	Language
1.	English

2.	Spanish
3.	French
4.	Portuguese
5.	Afrikaans
6.	Russian
7.	Italian
8.	Bahasa
Least Needed	Chinese/Inidan

- ii. What specific issues arise when recruiting multilingual staff?

The biggest issue is the lack of foreign language skills within the UK to initially approach for the job. 80% of our foreign language speakers are native to the country of its origins. This brings issues such as relocation, adaptation & financial risk.

English nationals with foreign language skills are less of a risk to the company and are much more versatile with their market options. The popularity of English amongst the more developed regions in which we operate (Aus, Canada, USA etc) enables our consultants to service larger markets overseas whilst having the option of speaking to people who are looking to repatriate back to their native homeland.

- iii. What specific issues arise when working with a multilingual team?

Internal & externally the issues are minimal. Communication is generally fluent as the foreign language speakers operate at a high standard of English. Conversing and information sharing is not hindered during team work.

- iv. What specific issues arise when working with multilingual client/customer bases?

Clients highly respect a consultant who can speak the language of the candidates they are trying to source. Again, trust is based in the consultant to be more accurate in understanding specific details for the job. However, as much as this is respected, it is not essential. Consultant can operate successfully in an overseas market without breaking down the language barrier. Translation services (online & in-house) can be utilised to overcome this barrier and complete an assignment in the same time it would if the consultant was multilingual.

- v. What intelligence on community language skills would be of use to your organisation when taking strategic decisions, especially regarding staff recruitment?

We do not invest in language skills as a priority. It is simply a bonus if a staff member has the ability to speak another language. Ultimately it might determine which market they are placed in but it does not act as a deterrent to their hire or overall skill as a recruitment consultant.

- vi. How do prospective employers (your organisation) and employees advertise/promote language skills as part of the staff recruitment process?

Internally – We don't.

Externally – We promote this as an advantage of working with us – but do not feel this is a strong USP.

- vii. Does your organisation actively promote/take part in the promotion of language skills and language vitality (the use and preservation of minority languages)? Why/why not?

No.

- viii. Would a multilingual candidate fare better than a candidate with only one language during the recruitment process with your organisation? Why/why not?

Language skills are determined by the specification outline by the candidate. Whilst sometimes these skills are 'essential' (to enhance the ability in training local staff) but mostly they are outlined as 'desirable'. If candidate 'A' and candidate 'B' were exactly the same, however 'A' was multi lingual, then 'A' would be of preference.

- ix. What do you think is the biggest advantage and disadvantage to employing and working with multilingual staff? Why?

Advantage – Having language skills in relevant markets (Latin America) is a huge advantage when extracting detail from candidates & clients. Giving us an advantage over other recruitment companies who are absent of these skills.

Disadvantage – Very minimal. Only if the staff member cannot converse fluently with their peers.

Extra Question: Which languages are currently spoken by the staff at your workplace?

List: French, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Afrikaans, Swahili, English, Italian, Iranian, German.