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How and why are minority languages maintained within Greater Manchester via supplementary schools?

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Manchester is home to a wide variety of minority languages, with as much as 18% of it's population not having English as their main language, and 3% having difficulties speaking or reading English (Matras 2014, Lecture 1). The city is culturally diverse and home to immigrants from all over the world, making it a fascinating place to study multilingualism. We are interested in how minority languages are maintained and multilingualism is encouraged, specifically through supplementary schools. We conducted field work in two supplementary schools, one in Moss Side and one in Oldham, and aimed to shed light on the importance of language teaching in supplementary schools.

1. Research questions and Methods

Some generations face a major language barrier when it comes to communicating with each other, due to the fact that they speak different native languages. Some children may attempt to communicate with their parents and grandparents but may struggle to express themselves efficiently. We are aware that this is an issue that language teaching in supplementary schools can combat, and this was one of main reasons to study them. We aim to find out how/if supplementary schools break down these barriers. Additionally, we feel it is important to investigate the methods used to keep the native languages intact within the communities and to understand why this is of great importance. Lastly, we intend to identify how and why our chosen supplementary schools are supported by the community and the council.

We initially intended to collect our data through questionnaire elicitation, which we could run through with children, parents and teachers at each supplementary school. Upon creating the questionnaire, we concluded that it was too rigid and wouldn't be appropriate for our purposes of eliciting natural, honest answers from our subjects. In light of this, we opted for narrative interviews, so we could elicit as much information from each subject by conversing with them one to one, and asking specific questions, whilst also asking questions based upon their responses. We kept our original questionnaire as a general guide (See Appendix), but we did not follow it rigidly. We also opted not to record our interviews (as we wanted our subjects to feel relaxed), and instead took brief notes throughout.

We also altered our methodology in terms of the number of subjects we would aim to interview. We initially planned on interviewing 10 subjects (5 boys and 5 girls), however we were forced to adapt, and simply interview as many as possible on the day – this was due to limited time, and we could not guarantee who would be willing to participate.

This method of data collection provided us with rich, in-depth data, allowing us to answer our central questions with detail. We kept individuals anonymous throughout by replacing names, unless they had granted us with consent to use their real name.

A further restriction we faced that led us to change our methodology, was the initial date we had designated to collect our data from the MaCo youth club – we were unaware that MaCO is closed during school holidays, and were forced to reschedule from Saturday 12th April to Saturday 26th April.

2. Findings and Discussion

2.1 Greengate Trust Supplementary School – Oldham

2.1.1 The Organiser (Qari Bilal)

We contacted the organiser first as he would provide us with relevant knowledge of Greengate Trust and what it has to offer. The main language that Greengate Trust teaches is Urdu. Qari Bilal stated this was due to the fact that within his community there is an unfortunate language barrier between the younger generation and the older generation of today's society. Also, having experienced this language barrier himself he was aware of the consequences of not being able to communicate successfully with parents and elders. He started Urdu classes to prevent such difficulties occurring for today's children. He believed that the role of teaching Urdu was to ensure that the children's mother tongue was maintained within domains outside of Greengate trust, such as the home. We were told the classes took place every weekend from 12pm-1.30pm and this occurred all year round. Qari Bilal also informed us that after the class he would take the children out to certain activities such as bowling, horse riding, archery, etc to maintain their interest in attending the Urdu class.

In terms of the structure of teaching the language, we were told that they started with the basic alphabet, and then moved onto other topics such as the grammar and phonology, when the children were familiar with all the letters of the language. Furthermore, the curriculum and materials used are used universally; Qari Bilal himself was taught from them when studying abroad in Pakistan. However, he feels that books alone are not adequate enough, and therefore uses audio files to further help the students in pronouncing and producing Urdu words correctly. The class focuses on both oral and written teaching as Qari Bilal feels that being able to speak Urdu fluently is just as important as being able to write it properly. As this is the first year of teaching Urdu at Greengate Trust, there are no previous statistics on how well students do, however the organiser believes there is great potential in his students to perform really well. Regular assessments take place to measure the children's success and recent results have shown great improvements since the beginning of the year. At the end of the year, an official certificate is provided to indicate the child's success in learning Urdu.

We then interviewed the organiser about funding and who provides it. We were told that initial funding came solely from the community and generous donors. On some occasions, Qari Bilal had to host fundraisers to publicize Greengate Trust and gain some additional financial aid to help run the supplementary school. However, over time Greengate Trust became increasingly familiar to the community, resulting in a higher intake of students which finally lead to recognition from the council. As the council got involved they saw that the supplementary school had great potential, and came to the conclusion that it provided the youths of the local community with a positive learning environment; and so were open to providing financial help.

Qari Bilal informed us that there are currently seven teachers at Greengate Trust, all of whom are volunteers. This is significant to the study carried out by Walter (2011), as though the volunteers at Greengate Trust have other commitments, it does not affect their time at the supplementary school;

unlike the volunteers in Walter's study. This may be due to the fact that at Greengate Trust everything is routinized, so before taking on the teaching role, the volunteers were clear of the hours they were expected to work. In Walter's study, the volunteers prioritised other commitments over their teaching role which had an effect on the school and the education it provided. Comparing this study conducted in 2011 to our study in 2014, we can see the positive improvement that's taken place in the organization of a supplementary school. Greengate Trust has a strong support system including the council, community and teachers which enables it to teach Urdu successfully whereas the supplementary school in Walters study struggled to have such support which made it difficult for them to teach the Bengali language. Additionally, Qari Bilal employed volunteers who were capable of teaching the Urdu language; however he did not require any formal qualification for this role.

In regards to the students, we discovered that a total of 53 students attended Greengate Trust and were between the ages 6-17. All the students were of Pakistani heritage and attended the supplementary school to learn more about their religion and culture. As a result of learning the Urdu language, the organiser hoped the students would maintain it by communicating and interacting more efficiently with their parents at home and also with other native Urdu speakers. The organiser was aware that many students would prioritise the English Language as they would use it in a variety of domains outside the class when compared to Urdu; hence why he started the Urdu classes.

2.1.2 The students

We focused on issues such as why the students attended the supplementary school, what they achieved from attending, and their views on the language being taught and whether they maintained it or not in certain domains. We began by concentrating the questions on the youth club itself and found that the main reason children attended Greengate Trust was for learning purpose as they enjoyed learning more about their culture and religion. Other reasons for attending the supplementary school consisted of being able to socialize with friends and acquiring their native language. However, some children claimed that although they did enjoy coming to the supplementary school, their parents had initially encouraged them to join it.

The children stated that they attended Greengate Trust all week due to a variety of classes being held. As Greengate Trust provides sessions on religious studies, e.g. learning the Quran, it in turn results in the students having fewer commitments, which would have initially prevented them from attending the supplementary school i.e. going to the mosque. However, some students claimed that they did have other commitments that prohibited them from attending the supplementary school. For example, two girls aged 15 stated that they were members of the 'Fatima's women's association' club who hosted events which sometimes clashed with their regular Urdu classes.

Likewise, we then asked questions regarding their use of English and their native language. All students agreed that Urdu was their mother tongue; however, due to using it in fewer domains than English they do not deem it to be of such high importance as their parents do. Additionally, the children claimed that their preferred language was English as it was the language they spoke the

most often, and felt the most confident in. They informed us that Urdu was a language that they only used in limited contexts i.e. when conversing with their parents/grandparents whereas English was used in all other contexts.

We presented the children with different contexts (see Table A) where we asked them: 'What languages do you speak in these contexts?' As you can see from the results below, the responses showed that all of the children agreed that in the majority of contexts they spoke English, except with their parents and Grandparents where they spoke Urdu. However, the children struggled to communicate in Urdu fluently. The children claimed that in certain contexts they were able to communicate in English with their parents, due to the fact that although their parents couldn't speak English, they could understand it to an extent. However, the children were limited to speaking in Urdu with their grandparents, as they know no English knew little or no English due to living in Pakistan for the majority of their lives and having no contact with the English language. This restriction motivated the children to attend the Urdu classes held at Greengate trust as it would allow them to overcome the language barrier and speak Urdu fluently when interacting with their Grandparents.

Context in which the children spoke the languages

Table A

Context	English	Urdu
At home	Majority of the time	Not very often
At your main school in the playground	Always	Never
At youth clubs	Always	Never
With friends	Always	Never
With parents	Sometimes	Sometimes
With grandparents	Never	Always

Graph A





2.1.3 Parental Views

Interviewing the parents would provide us with further knowledge as to why the children are learning this language and the parents influence over this decision. Our first question within the interview was 'What is your native language?' Out of the 10 parents we interviewed, they all claimed that Urdu was their native language. This was not surprising as the parents were of Pakistani heritage, so it would increase the chance of their native language being Urdu. We learnt that this was also the main language spoken at home amongst the family. However, all parents raised the concern that their younger children struggled to communicate efficiently and clearly when speaking in Urdu. The parents felt there was a language barrier between themselves and their kids, especially the youngest children who were below the age of 12. Parents felt that a common reason for this was due to the fact that at such an early age the children were in constant contact with English, so the small amount of Urdu that they did know was very rarely used. The parents believed that when their child entered school they were only shown the importance of English language and their native language was not embraced as much.

This lead to the parents informing us that because of this issue and language barrier they were facing, they believed that sending their children to Greengate Trust would be a great way to solve the problem.

They felt that it was necessary for their children to rediscover their native language and put it into practice more often, especially within the home, due to the fact that within the Pakistani culture there is great emphasis placed on embracing ones native language. Moreover, it was of great prominence for the parents that their children were able to successfully communicate with family members who could only speak Urdu, i.e. grandparents. Given that Urdu is the most standard and respected form, parents wanted their children to maintain it as they also believed it was a crucial part of their identity and culture.

2.1.4 Council

Lastly, we managed to question the council on their views about Greengate Trust supplementary school. We began by asking whether they felt that the existence of supplementary schools was important for society. They stated that supplementary schools were needed especially in such a diverse society. This links to Banks and Lynch's (1986) findings, who stated that over the past couple of decades there was an increase in understanding and recognising different diverse cultures. However, mainstream schools are still lacking in teaching minority languages (which has been demonstrated by the parents' comments), this is why the council believed that there was a greater need for supplementary schools to keep native languages, such as Urdu, alive.

Moreover, the council suggested that schools only focused on languages such as Spanish and French, and that schools failed to place equal emphasis on other languages such as Urdu and Bengali. Therefore, they were keen on maintaining minority languages by providing supplementary schools like Greengate Trust with the financial aid that was required.

Additionally, the Oldham council stated that it was important to fund Greengate Trust as they could see the great potential it had. From seeing how much the community was involved and the unity amongst everyone, the council believed that it was necessary to keep the centre up and running. It was clear to them that the children enjoyed being a part of the supplementary school and learning innovative subjects and languages such as Urdu. They claimed that the language being taught didn't influence their decision to fund to a great extent, as they would fund the centre regardless of the language being taught. The council informed us that in their community (Oldham) Urdu would be the most wanted language to be taught due to majority of the population being of the south Asian background.

2.2 MaCo Youth Club – Moss Side

We arranged with the organiser for us to attend one of MaCo's "homework" clubs on a Saturday. There were around 15 children there, and a few parents some of whom were also volunteers and some were also teachers. They were all eager to help, so we conducted interviews with the older children, the parents and the teachers. The organiser had previously attainted consent from the student's parents.

2.2.1 Students

Some of the students preferred speaking French as they had been brought up speaking it within their early years, so they felt they had a stronger connection to French as opposed to English, which they had acquired through school. Although, some of the students felt confident in both languages and explained to us the different contexts in which they chose to speak either French or English. We found that for these students, French was mainly spoken at home with parents, grandparents and siblings; whereas English was spoken with friends either at school or any other social gatherings they had with them (See Table A below). From this, we felt it was important to specify what the French language actually meant to the students, so here we provide an in-depth account of two of the students we interviewed:

Joe, male 15

Joe explained why French had such a high importance for him and the different contexts in which he felt most confident speaking French. He felt more inclined to speak French at home, and generally spoke English with his friends at school. Due to English being the language of his school, he knew the importance of it in his later life when working or studying further. In terms of French, Joe interestingly informed us that when conversing with his father at home, he is thoroughly encouraged to use the correct grammatical forms of French and this is when he feels the most confident in the language. He then explained that his father regularly teaches him the value of French and the significance of it to his culture. An additional point was the fact that Joe felt his father encouraged him to speak French more than his mother, who is happy speaking to him in both English and French. Taking this into account, Joe gave us insight into the fact that English and French are preferred in different contexts.

Jess, female, 16

Jess, who attends the Youth Club most weekends, informed us that whilst the teachers find it important to teach their native language (French), they also cover many other subjects such as History (specifically their own history such as slavery and colonisation), English, Maths and recently ICT. Jess enjoys the fact that she gets help on Saturdays with her school homework if she hasn't had time to do it during the week. It seems that despite feeling most confident in English, she considered French to be her native language and associates it strongly with her family. She informed us that she didn't consider French to be that important in the grand scheme of communicating with others, because like Joe, she uses it to communicate with her parents and grandparents who don't speak much English. She classed English as more of a universal language than French (which is true, as it is considered to be the main 'lingua franca'), so uses it at school amongst her peers and in the supplementary school itself, as it is the first language of many of the children who attend.

Here we provide a table which displays the data collected from the students and the different contexts in which English and French are spoken.

Context in which the children spoke the languages

Context	English	French
At home	Not very often	Majority of the time
At your main school in the playground	Always	Never
At youth clubs	Always	Never
With friends	Always	Never
With parents	Never	Always
With grandparents	Never	Always

Table B

It seems that both Jess and Joe feel a strong sense of cultural identity from learning and knowing French - Walters' (2011) research into why the Bengali supplementary school was set up can support the idea that teaching the native language allows the child to "learn their 'mother tongue' and learn about their culture". However, both individuals seem to have the understanding that English, being a major 'lingua franca', is important for later on in life in relation to business opportunities, and therefore supersedes French in terms of importance.

In conclusion, having interviewed five students, we noticed that they mostly shared the same reasons behind attending this school. One of the main reasons was the fact that they were able to access extra help for the homework they had in subjects they had at school like: English, Maths and ICT, therefore they felt more confident with the work they were required to do. They also felt that being encouraged to learn French, gave them a stronger connection to their cultural identity. Furthermore, they thoroughly enjoyed being taught their native language as it helped them to overcome the language barriers they sometimes felt with their parents and other family members. Here we can see that whilst MaCo aim to maintain the children's proficiency in French, they also aim to teach the core subjects on the national curriculum in order to give the children extra help in their school studies. In this way, it can be said that whilst French is valued highly as a subject at MaCo, it isn't necessarily prioritised over other core subjects. From this information, we can deduce that the "Maintenance model" (Francis et.al, 2008, page 49, as cited by Blackledge & Creese) is the preferred mode of teaching followed by the staff at MaCo as they encourage bilingualism in the students.

2.2.2 Organisers and Teachers

The organiser informed us that some of the pupils that attended this supplementary school were asylum seekers from the Congo who were interested in maintaining their native language, while others originate from the Congo and still visit relatives (grandparents) there. The youth club strive to keep the Congolese culture alive amongst the students, therefore by teaching the students French; it allowed them to feel connected to their culture.

Although the youth club focuses on the Congolese culture, it also places emphasis on the British culture; it wants to create a "cultural symbiosis" (MaCO Website) whereby the two cultures are merged together. Therefore, proficiency in both English and French is key.

Their overall goal is to educate the children across all areas through "homework club" on a Saturday, however, she explained that there were two further goals specifically concerning the native language: to help with fluency in French, as well as assisting students taking French GCSEs. Students who are not undertaking French GCSE are taught fluency through drama, debates etc, whereas the students who are, are taught more formally how to improve writing skills in French through regular written assessments. She explained that the teachers generally used traditional methods (e.g. how they themselves were taught), however for the GCSE students, the national curriculum is used as a framework and adapted to suit the child's needs. It seems that whilst they do teach French as a way of preserving their cultural identity, the school is also there to provide an external support system for the children's work at their mainstream school.

Our next questions were in relation to the funding of the youth club. From our previous meeting with the organiser, we know that they are funded by local Congolese charities; however we wanted to know: A) the motivations behind the charity funding and B) the council's reason for not providing any funding for this particular supplementary school. Considering the fact that Congolese charities are set up to benefit people from the Congo, it is clear to see why they are motivated to fund MaCo youth club. A quote to demonstrate this can be found on the MaCo website:

"The project aim is to promote the best of the Congolese culture in the UK and help Congolese people living in Manchester."

In terms of the council providing limited funds to MaCo, we attempted to contact Manchester City Council who referred us to a company called One Education, however we have been unsuccessful in receiving a reply.

Moreover, in speaking to one of the teachers at the school, Matthew, he confirmed some of Jess's comments about what is taught at the school and why. He further informed us that teaching French is 'one of the aspects of the school' and that they do – as Jess said – teach a diverse range of topics such as the Sciences and ICT. Despite teaching a wide range of subjects at the school, it would seem that the school don't have as many resources as would be provided to a mainstream school by the council. They gain their resources online and from shops, and have GCSE workbooks for the children to work from. Matthew further informed us that they do receive funding from charities and organisations, and sometimes the council, but he feels that Manchester City council should be 'more involved, and provide more support for the children'. In this way, we can see that we have moved forward from the 'assimilation position', which placed emphasis on minimising cultural differences (Banks and Lynch 1989), because the council do provide some support, despite the fact that it may be insufficient.

2.2.3 Parents

One of our primary goals when interviewing the parents was to find out their motivations for sending their children to MaCo. It was vital for us to speak to the parents because they are instrumental in the process of supplementary school education, since it is generally the parents that encourage their children to attend initially. We were also particularly keen to interview the parents since many of them donate towards the funding of MaCo.

We were able to speak to two parents both of whom said similar things (one also volunteered at MaCo). French was their native language and both said that they speak only French within the home. We had expected that their main motivation for bringing their children into MaCo would be to keep them fluent in French, however, while this is a factor, they said the main reason is for their child to get help with their homework and eventually improve their grades. This links back to one of MaCo's main goals to keep the students immersed in both British and Congolese culture.

Both the parents said that it is extremely important for French to be maintained; one father explained that everything within his household is in French such as their television. He found that encouraging French communication and French TV in the household was extremely useful in keeping the children fluent, and keeping the French relevant. When we asked this father whether maintaining the French language helped him maintain his cultural identity, he unexpectedly informed us that this wasn't the case. As we questioned further, he explained that 'at home' (Congo), French is the official language and is mainly used within school and work and is deemed more formal. He would ideally like his children to learn other African languages from the Congo, as he feels this would improve his children's communication skills with elderly members of the community such as their grandparents. The main language used away from school and work is Lingala, however he is also fluent in Tshiluba, and is able to understand Swahili and Kikongo. He expressed that it would be difficult for the children to learn these languages as there aren't as many resources available to help, as there are with French. Another parent we interviewed listed these same languages, and said that they were the local languages spoken in his community in the Congo. He said that knowing these four languages would massively help break down communication barriers with family and friends, but that the French is most important as it is the most standard.

So, despite the fact that French isn't as culturally relevant as first thought, it is clear that the preservation of French is essential, and goes some way to breaking down languages barriers between relatives and keeping the children active in the Congolese community.

3. Conclusion

Referring back to our question 'How and why are minority languages maintained within Greater Manchester via supplementary schools' we can conclude from our investigation that supplementary schools in Greater Manchester have two main purposes – to enable different generations to communicate fluently, and to preserve culture and identity.

At Greengate Trust, this is done with the help of the community and the council as they understand the importance of keeping native languages alive and recognise that there is a language barrier that needs to be eliminated. At MaCo, the language is maintained through the efforts of volunteers who teach and parents who donate money; this is due to their significant need to preserve their cultural identity and to keep their children as active members of the Congolese community.

In a further investigation in this area, it would be useful to contact the organisation 'One Education' to fully understand their aims and if/how they contribute to the maintenance of minority languages. This would give us a clearer indication of the languages/subjects they prioritise and their views in maintaining minority languages in particular communities.

If native languages are not maintained, it could lead to a 'shift in language' e.g towards English, which could then lead to the 'language becoming endangered'. This would eventually result in 'language death' (Matras 2014, Lecture 7). Our findings have shown that supplementary schools play a fundamental role in preventing language death, and are immensely important to some individuals and communities with Manchester.

4. Appendices

4.1 Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Organiser of the supplementary school

- 1) Does the school teach language? Why?
- 2) What is the role of language teaching at the school? Is it the most important aim of the school or is it just one aspect of what the school does?
- 3) What structure does the language teaching take?
- 4) What days do you teach the language on? And what hours?
- 5) Does the school operate all year or only during term time?

- 6) Where does the curriculum come from?
- 7) Where do the language teaching materials come from? Are they adequate?
- 8) Does the language teaching focus more on written or oral language teaching?
- 9) What are you trying to achieve by teaching the language?
- 10) How do you measure their success? Is there an official qualification that the youth club offers? If so, are there any statistics from previous years?
- 11) Who you get your funding from? If council/charities: why do you think they fund you?
- 12) Why do you think the charities don't fund you/ find it so important to fund you?

Teachers

- 13) How many teachers work at the school?
- 14) Are the teachers volunteers?
- 15) What training or qualifications do the teachers have?

Students

- 16) How many students attend?
- 17) What age groups are represented at the school?
- 18) What is the background of the students? Why do they need the language? Social, academic, religious?
- 19) What do you think they use this language for?
- 20) Do you think the students speak the taught languages at home?
- 21) What languages do you think the children speak other than the one being taught?
- 22) What languages do you think the students speak to each other outside the class?

Interview Questions for students of the supplementary school

- 1) Why do you come to this youth club/centre?
- 2) Do you enjoy coming to this youth club/centre? If no, why do you come?
- 3) What benefits do you get from coming here?
- 4) How often do attend the youth club/centre?
- 5) Do you have any other commitments? E.g. Other youth clubs/religious commitments
- 6) What is you're native language? (Explain to children if they don't understand)
- 7) How important is this language to you?
- 8) What language do you speak the most often?
- 9) Which language do you prefer?
- 10) Which language do you feel most confident in?
- 11) What language do you speak in these domains:
 - At home
 - At your main school in the playground
 - At youth club
 - With friends
 - With parents
 - With grandparents
- 12) What do your parents/guardians think about this youth club/centre?

Interview Questions for parents of the student who attend the supplementary school

- 1) What is your native language?
- 2) Why do you send your child to this youth club?

- 3) What language do you speak at home?
- 4) How important is it to you that your child maintains the language being taught?
- 5) Does maintaining the language being taught help you preserve your cultural identity?

Interview Questions for the local council of the supplementary school

- 1) Do you feel the existence of supplementary schools is important for society?
- 2) Why do you not provide MaCo with any funding / why do you view it as important to fund Greengate trust?
- 3) Does the language being taught influence your ability to fund?

4.2 Map showing location of Greengate Trust



4.3 Greengate Trust Promotional Material



4.4 Map showing location of MaCO



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