



## Report 2016

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**A linguistic landscape of  
Cheetham Hill's high street**

Aimee Smith  
Eleri Dorsett-Smith

## **Introduction**

This investigation aims to explore the non-English speaking community in one of Manchester's most multilingual and multicultural areas, Cheetham Hill. We collected data of multilingual signage from the high street of Cheetham Hill in order to gain an insight into the uses and spatial derivation of ethnic-minority languages. Linguistic landscapes are seen as especially important in monolingual environments (Gorter 2013: 191), and in a monolingual country, Cheetham Hill shows a lot of deviance from other, less multicultural areas and from capturing the linguistic landscape we will be able to capture how multilingualism is upheld in this society over and ever-dominating English.

From the literature, school surveys showed that Abraham Moss High School, situated in Crumpsall, but also accounts for Cheetham Hill, had a large amount of pupils where English was an additional language (Robertson et al 2013). Some mother tongue languages remained in small numbers, yet were reportedly heard spoken quite often in the community (Dean et al 2010), such as Gujarati, hence implying that certain ethnic-minority languages showed clustered formations within the Cheetham Hill area. Therefore we decided to investigate their spatial distribution by exploring the high street.

We were aware that the high street is more likely to have the more largely used minority languages in order to attract the mass public. However every member of the community has exposure to the high street and therefore we also asked owners and workers who they interact with on a daily basis and how important languages are in their business, in the hope that this will give us an understanding beyond what is displayed in or outside of the building. This then in turn allowed us to conduct a qualitative analysis of the multilingual signs and see how that fits with what is said and felt by these members of the community. Our analysis of the data will focus predominantly on the semiotics of the sign and what they tell us about the Cheetham Hill community.

## **Aims**

Since our initial plan we eliminated the aim to understand the general attitude towards the language policy as well as language policy itself, as this point was far too vague and would have been especially hard to analyse as there is no multilingual government language policy. Consequently we decided to focus on the spatial distribution of community languages and their relation to English. Therefore the aims of this investigation are as follows:

- To determine the geographical territories of the languages used on the Cheetham Hill high street.
- To determine whether the multilingual signs reflect languages used in the community and how the population of Cheetham Hill identify with them.

## Research questions

Our research questions and focus for this investigation are as follows:

- Does the distribution of multilingual signage show a spatial demographic of ethnic minority languages?
- Does the multilingual signage have a common theme that could indicate any kind of language dominance across the Cheetham Hill high street?

## Methodology

We visited Cheetham Hill on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2016 at approximately 9am. On arrival we made our way to the high street and used the smart phone application *Linguasnapp* to capture all the signs that featured or were in any other language than English. Whilst on the high street, we approached the owners and workers of the businesses that were opened and asked them a) what language was on the sign and b) what languages they used daily in the businesses to interact with customers. We made a note of which languages were spoken, the corresponding sign and added them to the information of the *Linguasnapp* application.

After collecting the data, we consulted multiple native and second language speakers of the languages found to translate the signs, in order to understand how much or little information they told us in comparison to their English counterpart, if any, as well as gain further understanding of how this is reflected in their business in correlation with what is spoken on a daily basis. After translating we were then able to understand the other qualities of the sign that related to our investigation i.e. the audience (inclusive/exclusive), the purpose (emblematic/ informational) and whether one language was visually dominant, which would therefore allow us to recognise any language trends. The information was then inputted and downloaded from the *Linguasnapp* admin site and the relevant features to this investigation were analysed.

However unfortunately some of the business outlets were closed on this date so we have no information on what is spoken in the facility and therefore we chose to only include the relevant signs in this research report. However, the translation, audience, purpose and dominance may be discussed in regards to the sign.

Throughout this research report we will be referring to our data from the table below, and the numbers that correspond to it. The images are organised in position along the high street from the start to the borders of Crumpsall as it is shown on the map. The full images can be found on [www.linguasnapp.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.linguasnapp.manchester.ac.uk).

## Results

All the images for the signs can be found on [www.linguasnapp.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.linguasnapp.manchester.ac.uk) in the Cheetham Hill/ Crumpsall area with the corresponding names seen in the table.

Sign	Languages seen	Translations	Outlet	Audience	Purpose	One language dominant?
1) Cheetham Hill mosque	Urdu	Mosque	Religious institution	Exclusive	Emblematic	Yes- Urdu (only language present)
2) Breakfast food buffet banner	Urdu & English	Very hot delicious breakfast from Lahore	Restaurant	Exclusive	Emblematic	Yes- English, colour, quantity
3) Uzma's ladies clothing	Urdu & English	Uzma's ladies tailoring	Clothing outlet	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes- English, colour, size
4) Al-Faisa takeaway	Urdu & English	Halal	Fast food/ takeaway	Exclusive	Emblematic	Yes- English, colour, size, quantity
5) Pak Butchers	Urdu & English	Fresh halal poultry meat	Baker/butchers	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes- English, size, colour, quantity
6) Adam's butchers	Urdu & English	Halal	Bakery/butchers	Exclusive	Emblematic	Yes- English, size, quantity.
7) Inner Cities Properties	Urdu & English	We guarantee to send your money to Pakistan in 24hours	Estate agents	Exclusive	Communicative	Yes- English, colour, size quantity
8) Euro Market	Czech and Polish	Czech & Polish products	Grocery/corner shop	Exclusive	Communicative	No
9) Choupan Resturant	Urdu & English	Choupan Resturant	Fast food/ takeaway	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes, English, size, colour, quantity
10) Cheetham Hill Money transfer	Urdu & English	Shaheen's airline's reasonable priced ticket are available here Manchester---> Islamabad, Islamabad---> Manchester, direct flights three days a week	Money transfer agent	Exclusive	Communicative	Yes, Urdu, quantity

11) Amelius Solicitors	Urdu & English	Exact translation (as seen on picture)	Lawyer/notary	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes, English, quantity, size, colour
12) Lahori Chaska	Urdu & English	Lahori Chaska	Fast food/takeaway	Exclusive	Communicative	Yes, English, quantity, size
13) Cheetham Hill Worldwide foods	Tamil	Idli and Dosa available here	Grocery/corner shop	Inclusive	Communicative	No
14) Cheetham Hill bakery	Persian (Dari) & English	Homeland bakery	Bakery/butchers	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes, English, size
15) Eastern food shop	Czech & Romanian	We sell Czech and Slovak food here, Free calls	Grocery/corner shop	Exclusive	Communicative	N/a
16) Cheetham Hill Polish shop/salon	Polish & English	Honey	Grocery/corner shop	Inclusive	Communicative	Yes, Polish, quantity
17) Cheetham Hill charity shop	Arabic & English	Voluntary charity	Charity shop	Inclusive	Communicative	No
18) Cheetham Hill Polish shop	Polish	New products	Grocery/corner shop	Exclusive	Communicative	Yes, Polish, quantity
19) Cheetham Hill Corner shop cleaner sign	Polish	Seeking a cleaning and gardening employee for job located in Prestwich. Those interested please phone	Grocery/corner shop	Exclusive	Communicative	Yes (Only Polish present)

## Discussion

Image 1 shows the outside of a mosque, with the word mosque written in only Urdu.



Image 1. Cheetham Hill mosque

This sign was one of the only signs we found in Urdu that did not have an English counter-part in the data collection. However as a religious institution, the Mosque may not necessarily offer a service to people outside of the Urdu speaking community, and therefore there is no need to display this. Despite this, the surrounding the area has a “no parking” sign in English, which could either indicate that English-speakers may visit the Mosque as well, or instead be evidence of a contrast between macro-level language policy, where English is used in all official signage and the language of the mosque, which is decided on by the institution. However, we cannot be sure that this is the deliberate choice of the Mosque and not something implemented from top-down, in which as an English speaking country, a safety precaution is more likely to be accessible to the language of the country, and therefore English would win out.



Image 2. Breakfast food buffet banner



Image 3. Uzma's ladies clothing

Images 2 and 3 are both in Urdu and English, however both signs have an English dominance. Although they are both informative of the service provided, English is very much displayed to be more prominent in both signs through the use of colour, the size and the quantity. We can assume that the dominance of English is showing that Urdu is a very much a service that is offered in this business, and in order to attract a larger clientele, they have to provide the majority language. This approach is very contrastive of what we see in image 1, where no English is featured at all on the actual sign, as the Mosque doesn't offer a service to the mass of the community but only to the select in the minority culture of the language.

This is replicated in images 4,6 and 9, all food outlets, which feature the same sign in Urdu and English for "halal".



Image 4. Al-Faisa takeaway



Image 6. Adam's butchers



Image 9. Choupan Resturant

Although there is some additional Urdu in image 9, English remains the dominant language in these services. In regards to commercial outlets; butchers, bakeries, corner shops and clothing outlets, which have the most control over their use of languages on signage, English is more often the dominant language. Rosenbaum et al (1977 cited in Gorter 2013: 192) found that English is also the commercialised language in Jerusalem. Although this example refers to English as a globalised language, we can adapt it here to make reference to the prestige of English in the commercial sector (Gorter 2013:192). Therefore we can see that this is mirrored in our analysis, and that having English on their signage could be seen in the commercial sector for foreign business owners as quite prestigious.



Image 5. Pak Butchers

In terms of spatial distribution, images 5 and 6 are both butchers that are situated next to one another. This is an interesting choice considering the length of the high street and all the space available, yet either one of them has made a conscious decision to establish their business next to the other. Both facilities offer their service in Urdu and English. However, the signage in image 5 contains a lot more information in Urdu than the butchers seen in image 6, making their sign communicative instead of emblematic. The spatial clustering of these outlets could indicate that there is some kind of spatial trend of this ethnic minority language amongst the other high street outlets.

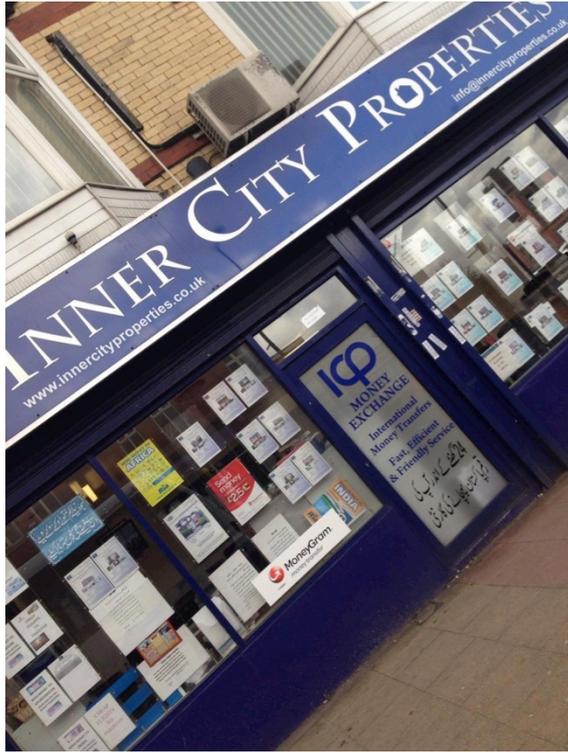


Image 7. Inner Cities Properties



Image 10. Cheetham Hill Money Transfer

In images 7 and 10, it is worth noting that these translations are not in fact direct, i.e. the English text is not semantically equivalent to that of the supporting Urdu texts. Considering micro level language policy, in which the institution

themselves self-regulate language use, it is interesting to note that the supplementary information in both signs gives further information rather than the same linguistic content as the sign, which suggests that in both cases, the target audience are assumed to speak both languages. If someone who only spoke English came to either of these institutions they would not be aware that further services are on offer and so this can be seen to be exclusive, and preferring the minority language over English. Furthermore, this emphasises that both signs are designed to appeal exclusively to specific communities, and that the services provided, such as air travel are perhaps with companies who do not offer the same services in English, and thus the supplementary information in the sign does not need to be written in English. Therefore the exclusion of English demonstrates a more culturally specific message.



Image 14. Cheetham Hill bakery

Image 14 did not present either of the main languages we noted, but instead was focused mainly on Persian goods. In particular, the shop owner mentioned that she spoke Dari, a dialect of Persian widely spoken in Afghanistan, rather than Farsi. The sign shows a similar patterning to that of Urdu, where English is usually the predominant language in commercial outlets, which reinforces evidence that English is a globally commercialised language for foreign business owners.

In the second half of the high street, we noticed a key change in the language which was predominant other than English, as it changed distinctly from Urdu to Polish. Where Polish seemed to be the predominant language after English, we noted that, unlike some of the signs written in South Asian languages, such as Urdu and Punjabi, all of the signs we found were communicative rather than emblematic. When we conducted short, brief interviews on shop-owners who were willing to talk to us about their customer base and the work force they employed, every shop which displayed signage in Polish had at least one member of staff who spoke Polish, and so no shop was using Polish signage purely for emblematic purposes. In the business pictured in image 18, the owner expressed to us that, even though he himself was Kurdish, around 80% of the staff whom he employed spoke Polish because the majority of his customers were Polish, Russian or Lithuanian and therefore he felt this a necessity when hiring new members of staff.



Image 18. Cheetham Hill polish shop

Contrastively, whilst all outlets which Polish and English signage had proprietors or workers who spoke Polish, we did visit one shop in which the owner's wife was the only member of staff and unfortunately she was unable to communicate with us as she did not speak English. This in turn could suggest that instead, English was now the minority language as far as this speaker was concerned in her community and as such did not deem it necessary to have someone around who spoke English at all times. This is then micro level language policy which varies from the macro level language policy in which English is always predominant in England at government level. It is also worth noting that she was incredibly apologetic, and a common theme throughout our interviews was that the majority of shop keepers we asked were reluctant to tell us which languages they spoke other than English, which suggests English does remain dominant, even when the owners of the shop and the majority of the community it serves does not speak English.

Image 15 shows the only example of Romanian signage. When we conducted a brief interview with the shop assistant, he explained that no one was able to speak Romanian, as Polish and Urdu were the only languages he considered to be 'languages of the community' in Cheetham Hill. The sign, shown in image 15 was an advertisement for a phone company.



Image 15. Eastern food shop

These companies, such as Lebara are often a good indicator of minority languages as the posters reflect the nationality and the language spoken in the social domain of friends and family. However, in this case we believe it signified that Eastern European products were available rather than Romanian specifically and

was used emblematically as a way to draw in Eastern European customers. This links to the notion that a language does not always index a community that speaks that language “but can be used to symbolize foreign taste and manners” (Gorter 2013:195).

When considering Cheetham Hill high street as a whole, it is apparent that two distinct sub-communities seem to emerge. Clusters of commercial outlets along the high street appear to be organised by the minority language in use. As a general trend, we noticed that outlets seemed to be separated into two district areas; an area where Urdu was the most predominant, followed by an area where Polish then seemed to be most common. The fact that we found Urdu to be the most common language after English concurs with the data found in the 2011 Manchester Census, in which Urdu was found to be the second most predominant language, spoken by 8.9% of the population in Cheetham Hill. The distinction from the two sub areas was very apparent by the signage and the services offered, even though these both fall into the same council ward. Shops in the sub area where Urdu was predominant were mostly butchers, fast-food restaurants and money exchange/legal services. However when the area seemed to change into the Polish end of the high-street, we noticed that shops would then tend to be grocers, bakers or corner shops. It was interesting that shops which sold similar or almost identical produce would chose to be situated immediately next to one another as opposed to being spaced further apart in order to increase the possibility of attracting more potential customers. However the fact that businesses in similar commercial areas would chose to open next to one another, could be confirmation of previous research in the field of language contact and policy such as Shohamy’s beliefs that linguistic landscapes items such as shop signage are “mechanisms of language policy that can perpetuate ideologies and the status of certain languages and not others” (2006:110).

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