



Report

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Multilingual Manchester's Linguistic Landscapes: A Study on the Use of Multilingual Signs for Businesses in Manchester

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Recap of Research Questions

In this report we aim to examine the linguistic landscapes of businesses in four different locations within Manchester: Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Longsight and Hulme. Our original plan was to include a fifth area, Chorlton, however on visiting Chorlton and obtaining no differing or innovative findings to that of previous research, we decided it was more appropriate to discard Chorlton from our study.

The purpose of our investigation is to gain an insight into the usage of multilingual signs across different areas of Manchester, by conducting a comparative analysis of the four linguistic landscapes.

Our objective is to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What languages, and how many, are found on the multilingual signage in each area?
2. Are the languages used representative of those living in the area according to the most recent national census data?
3. Is there a dominant language used in each area and does this compare to the most recent national census data?
4. Does the usage of multilingual signage contrast in these areas?
5. Do our findings on multilingual signage in each area compare to previous research?

These research questions have been revised from our initial plan, to be more coherent with and relate better to our aims.

Recap of Methodology

Our method of data collection was to upload photographs of multilingual signs for small businesses to the LinguaSnapp mobile application, created by the University of Manchester. This involved taking photographs of multilingual signs from each area of interest, uploading them to the app, and filling in a description of each sign, including translations if appropriate. Where possible, we would speak with the owners and workers of the businesses of which we are collecting data from, in order to ask for assistance regarding translations, and to ask various queries relating to our research questions. If the owners/workers were not available to speak with, we would then use the Google Translate mobile application to aid in our translations.

We realised that each of our areas of interest are quite large, and to investigate the entirety of each area would be unachievable. We therefore decided upon collecting our data from specific locations within each area. In Ashton-under-Lyne, our primary focus was upon businesses on Stamford Street/Oldham Street. In Oldham, we focused on two main shopping streets: George Street and Union Street. In Longsight, Stockport Road was our area of focus and in Hulme our locations of interest were the surrounding area of Hulme High Street and Hulme Market.

Findings: Ashton-under-Lyne

Warsaw Delicatessen Supermarket

Warsaw Delicatessen is located on Stamford Street in Ashton-under-Lyne, and is a large supermarket selling a wide range of Polish and European food and drink. The front of the store encompasses two large signs, written in both Polish and English. The arrangement of the writing on these signs are duplicating, as the content is the same in both languages (Images for each signage can be found on the interactive online map via <http://www.linguasnapp.manchester.ac.uk/>). An emblematic sign is displayed at the front of the store, stating “Welcome” in ten different languages. The shop owner stated that the reasoning for the inclusion of such a variety of languages is to draw potential customers in from a range of ethnic backgrounds.

Warsaw is a new store in Ashton-under-Lyne, opening recently in December 2015. The store targets mainly Polish speakers, however local people from Ashton-under-Lyne and Greater Manchester who are interested in purchasing European foods are also welcomed; this is made clear by the repetition of Polish signs in English. By speaking to the shop owner, the use of Polish is clearly reflective of the owner’s own language background, and the products sold inside the supermarket. The fact that a large, innovative Polish supermarket has been opened in the centre of Ashton-under-Lyne may be indicative of the growing population of Polish residents around this area.

Kraków Continental Food Store

Kraków is a food store which is again located on Stamford Street, selling a variety of Polish food and drink. Although there are not any signs on the front of the store in relation to the store itself, the store does exhibit window signs for promotion of various other businesses. One of these signs was to promote “Manchester Polish Furniture”. Whilst the heading of this sign was in English, the rest of the sign was written in Polish, of which we managed to translate using Google Translate. This sign is evidently exclusive, as the target audience only seems to be Polish speakers.

Another sign in the shop window was one advertising a Polish café. The entire content of this sign was written in Polish, of which we managed to translate again, via Google Translate. Although the owners of this store were not available to speak with, it can be inferred from these signs that the target audience for this store is predominantly Polish speakers. Furthermore, this store is relatively new, opening in April 2014. Again, this is suggestive of the increasing population of Polish speakers in Ashton-under-Lyne over the past few years.

Rysy European Food Store

Rysy is a food store selling a range of European food and drink, situated on Stamford Street. The overhead store sign, including the name of the store and information such as “Open till late” and “Off Licence” is all written in English. We found one window sign displayed at Rysy which advertised their own “home-made cakes and ready-made food”. This sign was inclusive and duplicating, as what was written in Polish was also directly translated into English underneath. Rysy also displayed window signs for various other businesses and services. One of these we managed to photograph was a sign giving information on sending packages to Poland. This sign was duplicating in that it offered a translation of the services in Polish to English. The inclusivity of these signs suggests that the store does not only have a Polish target audience, but aims to attract English speaking customers, as well.

Ashton Travel

Ashton Travel is a travel agent located on Oldham Street, which has a particular focus on selling Hajj and Umra religious packages. Unfortunately, the business was closed on the day we collected these pictures, therefore we were unable to speak with the owners to ask them any questions about the

business and the language on the sign. However, by researching Hajj and Umra and learning that these are Muslim pilgrimages, we believe that the language other than English is Arabic. We attempted to translate the language on the sign into English, however we could not find a reliable translation. It is visible from the sign however, that the target audience for this travel agent in particular, is those who are looking to buy a Hajj or Umra package, or something of a similar nature. Nonetheless, the business also seems to be targeting English speakers, evident from the use of English on the sign.

Discussion: Ashton-under-Lyne

The majority of multilingual signs we observed in Ashton-under-Lyne were Polish. This correlates with the fact that Polish is the second most spoken language in Ashton, with the first being English (Qpzm, Local Stats UK, 2012).

Every sign we observed were bottom-up signs. Our findings in Ashton-under-Lyne support claims made by Ben-Rafael (2006) in that private, bottom-up signage portrays a wider variety of languages, than those signs displayed by the government (top-down signs). For example, the emblematic “Welcome” sign which included 10 different languages at the Warsaw store. Nonetheless, we did expect to see more multilingual signs from other minority languages present in Ashton, such as Gujarati (2.30%) and Urdu (1.70%) (Qpzm, Local Stats UK, 2012). The lack of these signs lends support to the claim in that the most predominant language groups which inhabit the area is reflective in the linguistic landscape (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In this case, English is the majority language in Ashton (89.10%) with Polish second, which may explain why these languages are the most dominant in multilingual signs and small businesses in Ashton.

Findings: Oldham

Tech Experts

Tech Experts is a mobile phone repair shop situated on George Street in Oldham. The front of the shop encompasses various signs that are all predominately printed in English, except for one sign in the middle of the shop window printed in Arabic script. This bottom-up sign is emblematic and targets one specific population within the area.

R & M Fashions

R & M Fashions is a ladies clothes shop found on George Street. The store specialises in designer replica that attracts regular customers from Oldham as well as other multicultural areas such as Bolton and Bradford. Other than the overhead store sign (printed in English), the only other writing on the shop window is a smaller sign above the door. We think that the smaller sign is written in Urdu and when we asked the shop owner, they stated it meant ‘Welcome’. The two shop signs are complementary as the small business identifies itself with an English name, furthermore using a more emblematic sign to attract a specific audience. The language used in the shop windows is representative of the ever-growing Islamic population in Oldham. The two signs in the window feature two of the most dominant languages spoken in Oldham, with 89.5% of inhabitants speaking English and 2% of the area speaking Urdu (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012).

Al Noor

Al Noor is an Islamic gift shop on George Street. As a business, they offer gifts for all occasions. When researched, ‘al-noor’ means ‘the light’ in Arabic and is a surah in the Quran as well as a popular Arabic baby name. Using such an emotive name for the business is emblematic for the target audience as the words used are symbolic to those customers. However, the shop window does have predominantly English signage. There is an A4 printed sign promoting 10% off for students written solely in English. Unfortunately we could not find a reliable translation for the Arabic writing

situated above the 'Al Noor' sign, however, we presume it is written in an Arabic script due to the nature of the shop.

Eastern Europe Food

Eastern Europe Food is a convenience store located on Union Street in Oldham. The shop front is predominantly printed in English, with the main business identification sign also being printed in English: 'Eastern Europe Food'. Underneath this sign is an additional sign stating the types of produce that the store sells, this includes: English, Turkish, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Russian, Romanian and Slovakian. Contradictory to the 2011 Census data, the countries listed are not representative of the Oldham population, as only English is part of the top ten languages spoken in Oldham (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012). One language that is dominant in Oldham is Polish as 0.4% of speakers living in Oldham speak Polish as their native language (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012). This domineering language is found on the shop front as there are two symmetrical signs on either side of shop that read 'Polski Sklep'. Translated into English this means 'Polish Shop'. Strangely, the shop does not state that it offers Polish goods in the list of countries on the front of the shop, however the small business is targeting the Polish population with the use of the multilingual bottom-up sign.

Al Aqsa

Located on Union Street, Al Aqsa is an Islamic shop selling Islamic books, clothing, jewellery and health products. The store is named after the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, which is often referred to as 'The Farthest Mosque'. This is supported by the images used on either side of the overhead shop sign as they are both pictures of the Al-Aqsa Mosque. The shop window also has a different sign that we did not find elsewhere in Oldham. It has 'Islamic store' printed in an Arabic style alphabet – however it is still readable in English. Although this shop is predominantly targeting the Islamic community, it is still welcoming to other audiences by not using an exclusive script that only certain individuals will be able to read.

Discussion: Oldham

Oldham is in the North East of Greater Manchester and as it is such a big geographic area, we decided to focus on two main shopping streets (George Street and Union Street) situated adjacent to the main Spindles Shopping Centre. All of the private sector shops are individually owned and use bottom-up signs to target specific audiences. English is the dominant language for all of the multilingual signs found in Oldham, which coincides with the 2011 Census data as 89.5% of those living in Oldham speak English as their first language (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012). The English script on the shop signs are inclusive as the whole population can interpret the signs, however there are a few exclusive signs that target a particular audience (for example, 'Al-Noor' and 'Eastern Europe Food'). Overall, the shop signs are representative of those living in the area as they are all predominately English, however the multicultural signs that we did research shows representation for the Islamic and Polish community in Oldham.

Findings: Chorlton-cum-Hardy

Upon approaching multilingual signage in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, it was evident in previous studies that there was not a plethora of signs of this nature. After approaching Chorlton village and finding no multilingual signs at all (and no indications of language use other than English), the attention of our group was turned to areas which were less heavily populated by businesses such as Mauldeth Road West, near to Chorlton High School, and Albany road, near to independent businesses such as Unicorn Groceries. Unfortunately, as we had anticipated, there were no further findings regarding multilingualism in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. According to the 2011 census, Chorlton has a huge 92.8% English-speaking majority (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012).

Findings: Hulme

Motherland Coffee Corner

Motherland Coffee Corner is a family-run café located on Hulme High Street. The establishment sells food products including a variety of sandwiches, milkshakes and smoothies, and is available to takeaway, as well as eating in. The establishment displayed an advertisement in the window of the store which used two languages in two different scripts; English (Roman script) and Urdu (Urdu alphabet). The proprietor believes, as a family from Pakistan running a local business, that whilst adhering to British culture and its language, attracting customers from a similar background and culture offers support for their business, and the signage used in their window display demonstrates this.

Luqman Tailoring

Luqman Tailoring is located in Hulme Market, just off Hulme High Street, in a small container unit amongst other small businesses. Mr. Luqman offers hand-tailoring on many textile items. The use of multilingual signage by this small business used Arabic (in Arabic script) and English (in Roman script). The business owner said that the English text was a direct translation from Arabic, which is his native language. The sign displayed his name in both languages, his contact telephone number, and a list of example items that can be altered at this establishment. The proprietor believes that it is important to display his native language as well as English to allow passers-by to acknowledge his bilingualism, and to ensure for an easy business transaction with anyone who speaks these languages and requires his skills.

Hulme Manchester Superstore

Hulme Manchester Superstore is a supermarket which stocks locally sourced fresh fruit and vegetable produce, as well as *Tahira* products. *Tahira Foods Ltd.* provides Halal products across Europe, specifically aimed at the Muslim consumer (Tahira Foods, 2009). An advertisement of the superstore's supply of *Tahira* branded items is displayed above the window of the store. The store worker held that this influences shoppers of the same beliefs and culture as those who run the store to shop at that business, which is important to the store owners. They believe that it creates a sense of community and provides a service for the Muslim public in the area that is not easy to find elsewhere. The sign displays the word *Tahira* in both Arabic and Roman scripts, as it is the brand's icon. It is likely that both scripts are used due to the key demographic of the product being followers of Islam, who mostly use Arabic within their worship, and the 3 main areas of Europe that the company ships to include the UK, Germany, and France – all of which use Roman script in their official languages.

Discussion: Hulme

As we chose to focus our study on multilingual signage used across Manchester businesses, it seemed appropriate to concentrate our efforts in Hulme to the high street, where there is concentrated area of independent business. From our findings, there was evidence of the use of 2 languages in the Hulme area: Arabic and Urdu. According to the 2011 census, following English's 74.6% dominance in spoken language in this area, the following most common language is what is defined as "All other Chinese" at 4.8% (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012). This percentage is double that of the percentage of the population of Hulme that speaks Arabic (2.4%). Regarding this, it is curious that we did not find any Chinese script used in signage in the Hulme area. However, we may be able to attribute this to the dominance of Muslim beliefs within the Arabic-speaking community. Believers of Islam have dietary requirements such as only consuming Halal meat. The advertisement of these products contributed to the data we collected, and so could be an indication that the demand for religious dietary products contributes to the multilingual signs used within an area, such

as Hulme, where 13.1% of the community are Muslim, with the majority being Christian, or non-believers (Qpzm Local Stats UK, 2012).

Findings: Longsight

Sanam

Above the shop there is a large sign which states “Sanam”, and a duplicative, much smaller sign above with a translation of “Sanam” in Urdu, meaning that it is exclusive towards two speech communities. Furthermore, there is a pavement sign written solely in Urdu which means “fresh sweets instore”. This communicative and exclusive sign is used according to the owner “To keep the importance of Pakistani heritage, identity and tradition at the forefront of the store which attracts speakers of Urdu into the store where they can get a taste of home and attracts other customers to taste something new and exciting from a different culture”.

Lahori Chowk

The person at the counter was unable to translate the signs, however informed us that they were in Urdu. Through google translator we were then able to translate a few of the signs which read “Lahori Chowk” and “Halal” in Urdu. There is more signage written in Urdu than in English with three signs in Urdu that face towards the busy Stockport Road and one in English stating the name of the shop and the food that is sold there, written at the bottom. The fact that Urdu takes president on the sign suggests that although the shop aims to be inclusive, it appears to be exclusive towards speakers of Urdu as those signs are more communicative. Furthermore, many in the restaurant were speaking in Urdu. The server agreed with this as he said that “our customers love it here because they feel comfortable speaking their first language and building great friendships with other Urdu speakers”.

Mushtaq halal meat

The front of the store showcases one large sign with the information “Mustaq Halal meat” written in English on the left hand side and Urdu on the right. As both signs read the same information they are duplicating and of equal size so neither hold dominance over the other, meaning that the image is inclusive as it aims to reiterate the same information to more than one community.

The shop owner stated that by using Urdu on the sign it encourages customers to speak in their first language which they may be more comfortable with, and although Halal meat is a product that mainly Muslims purchase, the inclusivity of the English language on the shop encourages different communities to come into the shop.

Al-Aqsa

The sign for this takeaway includes three languages; English in which the sign “Al-Aqsa”, the word “Take away” and details on what is sold there for example “Kobeda” and “Pizza”, Arabic, in which a translation of the takeaway’s name “Al-Aqsa” is written and lastly “halal” written in Urdu. English appears to take president on the sign as it bright green and has a much larger font whereas those written in Arabic and Urdu are much smaller and written in white. However, although the sign is more communicative in English, the sign is still inclusive of both Urdu and Arabic, so reaches out to different speech communities.

Discussion: Longsight

The majority of multilingual signs in Longsight were Urdu with the exception of one which was Arabic. When compared to the census for the area, with English the first, Urdu is the second most spoken language in the area with 13.60% (Qpzm, Local Stats UK, 2012) of residents speaking the language which correlates well with the signs we found and also in other studies such as Linguistic

Landscapes, (2015). This can be seen not only in signage but through the multilingual language in use when visiting the businesses where English is used as more of a lingua franca. In relation to the exception sign which was in Arabic, this is the 5th most popular language in the area with only 1.60% of residents speaking the language (Qpzm, Local Stats UK, 2012). Although there was only one sign in Arabic, which could be seen to be proportionate to the amount of speakers in the area, it is very surprising that the 3rd, and 4th most popular languages, Bengali and Panjabi, were not evident in the multilingual signs that we found in Longsight. This could point towards a potential change of area where Bengali and Panjabi speakers reside or possibly because Indian culture is much more integrated into British culture now with many supermarkets and takeaways in all areas selling Indian cuisine, there isn't much demand anymore for a particular Indian food store in an area like Longsight as there may have once been.

Discussion

The aim of our research was to investigate the usage of multilingual signs within different areas of Manchester to provide us with an insight into the linguistic landscapes of each location, of which we could then comparatively analyse.

O'connel et al. (2014) previously conducted a comparative analysis on linguistic landscapes in Manchester. Although they looked at different areas than us, they used the 2011 Census data to compare the languages used on multilingual signs with Government statistics. We found our research to coincide with the Government's data on languages used in each area we studied. In particular, we found that the representation of Polish speakers was limited solely to one area. Our investigation found Polish to be the most dominant language on multilingual signage in the particular locations we studied within Ashton-under-Lyne. This compares to the 2011 census for main languages in Ashton-under-Lyne, of which highlights that Polish has a count of 306, making it the second most popular language in this area, with English taking a count of 9,991 (Office for National Statistics, 2011). Furthermore, it seems that the use of Polish is also representative of those living in the area, as the 2011 national census for country of birth depicts a count of 319 for Poland (Office for National Statistics, 2011). However, this does not take into account those who may speak Polish but were not born in Poland. Nonetheless, Polish was not found to be a majority language in any of our other locations within Manchester. Only one business in Oldham of which we came across used Polish, whilst in our other areas we found no evidence of Polish on multilingual signage. This supports our predictions of which we believed our areas would contrast in the types of languages used on multilingual signage. Our research also supports census data, as only 0.4% of Oldham are speakers of Polish, and Polish is not in the top ten of spoken languages in both Hulme and Longsight.

Asadova et al. (2015) investigated multilingual signs in five comparable areas in Manchester. Their findings highlighted cultural references on some of the multilingual signs, which is something we also found in our research. We found shops in all four areas to have references to Islamic cultural beliefs. 'Luqman Tailoring' in Hulme uses multilingual signs to identify himself and his private business to customers, the travel agents in Ashton uses cultural references to demonstrate the Muslim pilgrimages that they sell and the Arabic 'Al-Aqsa' is found in Oldham and Longsight.

We also found similar findings to Asadova et al. (2015) in that we found the majority of signs in all of the linguistic landscapes to have English as the dominant language. Similarly to Asadova et al. (2015) we did expect to find more multilingual signs in the areas we investigated as they are diverse areas of Manchester with a high population of non-White residents. However, finding English to be the dominant language does correlate with the 2011 Census Data. With 89.5% of speakers in Oldham using English as their main language, 89.1% of speakers in Ashton, 74.6% in Hulme and 62.3% in Longsight, it is not surprising that the domineering language on multilingual signage is English (Qpzm, Local Stats UK, 2012).

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Appendix



Image 1: Warsaw Delicatessen Supermarket



Image 2: Warsaw "Welcome" sign



Image 3: Kraków Continental Food Store



Image 4: Kraków window sign 1



Image 5: Kraków window sign 2



Image 6: Rysy European Food Store

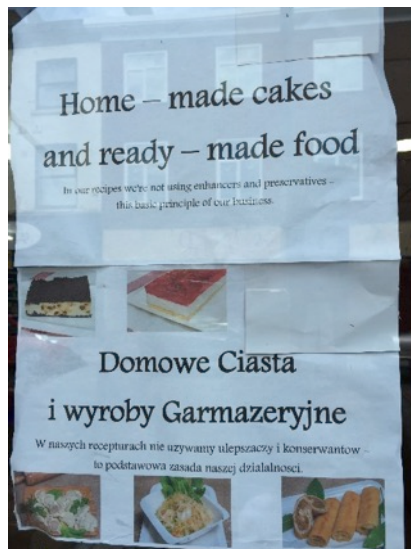


Image 7: Rysy window sign 1



Image 8: Rysy window sign 2



Image 9: Ashton Travel



Image 10: Tech Experts



Image 11: R&M Fashions



Image 12: Al-Noor



Image 13: Eastern Europe Food



Image 14: Al Aqsa



Image 14: Luqman Tailoring



Image 15: Manchester Hulme Superstore



Image 16: Motherland Coffee Corner



Image 17: Sanam

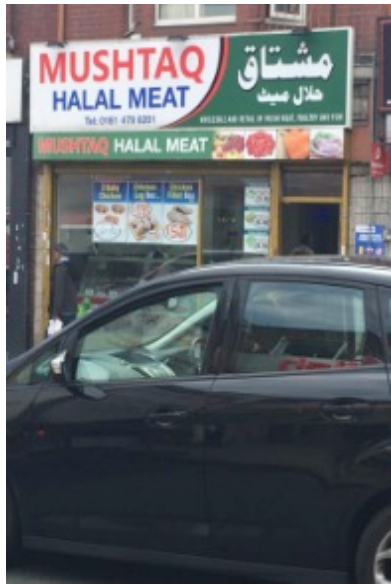


Image 18: Mushtaq



Image 19: Sanam



Image 20: Al Aqsa



Image 21: Lahori Chowk