



Report

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Multilingualism in Sharples School, Bolton

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1 Research Questions and Aims

We carried out a study into the situation of multilingualism in Sharples School, a secondary school in Bolton, Greater Manchester. We based this study on a number of aims; first, we looked to explore the amount of different languages used for communication that were present in the school. Our second aim was to investigate how the different languages spoken by the students are used for different functions and in different contexts through carrying out an aspect of domain analysis within the study. Finally, our third aim was to look at what provisions Sharples School has in place to support those students who spoke multiple different languages other than English. This includes students who spoke languages present in the minority within the school and also to help the students who speak English as an additional language (EAL students). Since the planning stages of our research project, these aims have remained the same, along with the research questions that we compiled in order to structure our research:

1. What languages (apart from English) are spoken in the school?
2. Are the languages that are evident in the school a reflection of the multilingualism in Bolton?
3. With whom do the students speak their languages? I.e. parents, peers, teachers, advisors.
4. Does the language of the family affect the language they use in school/with friends?
5. What support and provisions are in place to help EAL students?

From these aims, our main focus was to investigate the use of different languages by pupils of the school to different audiences, for example, if they spoke a different language with their parents than with their friends. This is also known as domain analysis. This is a consequence of our previous research into literature regarding domain analysis. We encountered a problem in that there appeared to be little research regarding multilingualism in schools specifically in an English-speaking country. This apparent gap in research led us to place a focus on this area in our project.

1.1 Relevant Research

In previous research by Kheirkhah & Cekaite (2017), heritage and societal language was investigated. It was found that when children first enter education, the use of the societal language increases between family members (Barron-Hauwaert, 2011: 60; Hoffman, 1985; but see King, 2013 cited in Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017). In addition, it was revealed that siblings usually interact in the societal language that is also present at school and with peers (Döpke, 1992 cited in Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2017). From this previous research, we expected that the respondents within our experiment would reflect these patterns, using their heritage language more with their parents and the societal language with friends/siblings. Furthermore, Fereidoni (2010) found that Persian, Kurdish and Armenian in Iran were used varyingly in several social domains. For example, Armenian was seen as the more informal language and therefore used more in the family, friendship and religion domains, whereas Persian was the language of prestige and therefore took precedence in the education and government domains. We used those social domains relevant to our participants in order to structure our own questionnaire: family, friends and education, with the expectation that the language used in each would vary due to

factors such as those uncovered by this research. However, as mentioned we did identify a gap in the research of domain analysis, concerning English-speaking communities and therefore this became the main aim of our research.

To gain a complete understanding of how multilingualism is perceived in schools, research on both the positive and negative view was conducted. It was found that most of these negative views on multilingualism were generated from monolingual people, whereas bilingual speakers saw the use of multiple languages as having no threat or detriment to their education. Grosjean (1982: 268) carried out a survey with bilingual and trilingual speakers, with regards to the apparent 'inconveniences' of multilingualism. It was found that 52% of bilinguals and 67% of trilinguals did not see any inconvenience thus demonstrating that this unfavourable view is being promoted by monolinguals. This negative view is continued by Cummins (1984: 101) who suggests that teachers perceive bilingualism as a 'disease' as it will 'cause confusion in the children's thinking.' Although this view towards multilingualism is very outdated, which is evident from the publication year of the articles, these negative associations with multilingualism did have an effect on schools both in Western and non-Western societies.

Strobbe et al (2015) conducted a study in schools in Belgium where it was found that Turkish, in particular, was seen to be 'undesirable' and those who had a high number of non-Dutch speaking children were often described as 'concentration schools.' Similarly, Owu-Ewie and Edu-Buandoh (2014: 1) found that in African communities, those who studied and spoke indigenous languages were identified as 'academically weak' whereby this view often led to the complete discontinuation of the learning of indigenous languages in schools.

However, most articles with the perception that multilingualism will be a 'hindrance' (Grosjean, 1982: 268) to learning are becoming outdated and are from nearly 40 years ago. Now, schools are more proactive in helping bilingual and trilingual students. This is evident in countries like North America and Canada who have incorporated multilingual education into their multicultural policies (Joshi and Johnson, 2007, cited in Basu, 2011: 1310). This demonstrates that governments are now realising the positive effects multilingualism can have on a child's education. Evidence for this comes from Agirdag (2016: 68) who found that in the Netherlands, 130 schools are offering 'multilingual education' in that students are being taught other languages and teachers are also using these foreign languages to teach. This led to our interest in investigating what provisions Sharples School in particular had in place to encourage the use of multiple languages. This was carried out with the aim of exploring whether a British school is also proactively encouraging a 'multilingual education' or not.

1.2 Research methods

To carry out this research project, a survey was distributed to students within the school, regarding the languages they speak and with whom they speak said languages i.e. parents, teachers and friends. Whilst creating our survey, we decided to change the term *caregiver* to *parent/guardian*. This is because *parent/guardian* would be more typical and familiar terminology to the students and therefore an appropriate term for our demographic. We also had two questions in our questionnaire which were similar: *In what city were you born?* and *What city/town(s) were you raised in?* We removed the question *In what city were you born?* as we felt this was unnecessary for our results as this may have

been different to where the student was raised. The latter question is more relevant for our research and would give us further information as to why the students would speak certain languages.

Furthermore, a change that could have been made to our survey was regarding the question of *How many languages do you speak?* The survey required an answer where we initially thought that if the given answer was one language, then the respondent would be able to complete the questionnaire without answering any further questions, as they would not be relevant to the study. However, this option was not available, therefore the students who only spoke one language still had to answer the rest of the survey. Another problem we faced was that originally we had applied a setting from the software programme to the question, *Do you receive any additional support for your language in school?* This meant that if a participant selected *No*, they would not be required to complete the subsequent question in describing the nature of the support. When we distributed the final surveys, this feature did not apply and therefore participants with whom this question was non-applicable still had to complete a response in order to finish the questionnaire. This, in turn, may affect our results due to the questions not being relevant to these students and therefore they may have entered redundant responses.

To address our final research question, *What support and provisions are in place to help EAL students?*, we contacted the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School. We contacted her via email, as this enabled a fast yet detailed response, with a number of questions which did not change from the outset. These included research into the number of EAL students present in the school, the qualifications on offers to those students who could speak an additional language and the support available to encourage the integration and success of EAL students.

In order to analyse the findings of the survey, we created a spreadsheet that detailed the responses to each questions. The questionnaire software that we used, Survey Monkey (2017), did not produce the results in the way that we found suitable, and the graphs that the programme created were not appropriate for our report. Therefore, an Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix 1) was created to input all responses in a more succinct manner, thus making it easier to understand the results collected. Some of the data had to be sorted out, as some students had not responded in an adequate way, for example listing fictional languages e.g. *Parseltongue*. We chose not to include these responses in the data set as this was something we expected from working with participants who are under 18 and may not take the survey seriously, or be interested in filling it out in full. Some students also stated that they could speak 3 languages, however only listed 1 language therefore we had to change some of the data given so that it all corresponded correctly.

2 Results

Our survey exceeded the target amount of respondents we outlined as 200 pupils, gathering responses from a total of 218 pupils. Our questionnaire found that half of students (49.54%) only spoke one language. As the investigation focused on respondents who spoke more than one language, we were able to completely disregard these from our subsequent findings. Therefore, the remainder of the research focused on 110 participants that spoke two or more languages. Figure 1 illustrates the number of languages spoken by each individual pupil.

Figure 1: A graph to display how many languages each individual pupil speaks

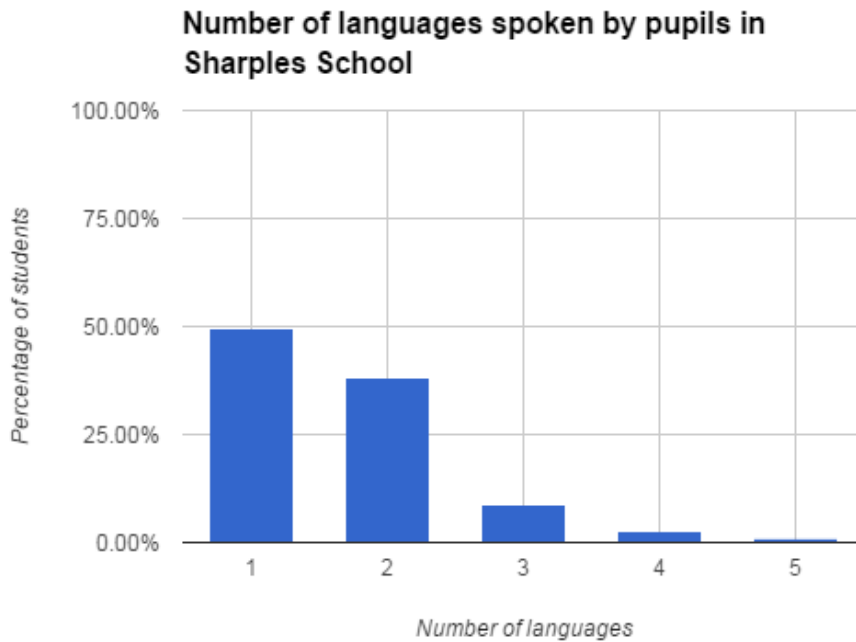


Table 1 below presents the languages that are spoken within the school and the amount of times they are spoken. Every instance of a language has been counted. For example, if one respondent listed 3 languages that they speak, each language was recorded and counted. The table illustrates that at least 27 languages are spoken in Sharples School.

Table 1: number of languages spoken and the number of times they are spoken.

Languages	Number of times spoken
English	218
Gujarati	51
Urdu	29
Arabic	10
Punjabi	6
Italian	3
Portuguese	3
Somali	3
Swahili	3
Danish	2
French	2
German	2
Japanese	2
Welsh	2
Afrikaans	1

Albanian	1
Cantonese	1
Filipino	1
Hindi	1
Hungarian	1
Irish	1
Kosovan	1
Polish	1
Spanish	1
Thai	1
Turkish	1
Twi	1

Concerning the domain analysis, the data was further reduced to the respondents who spoke different languages with parents and friends (see Appendix 2 for table). It was found that from the total of 218 participants, 67 spoke a different language with parents as compared to with friends. Of the 67 students, only 7.46% (5 pupils) spoke a language other than English with their friends, with the vast majority (92.54%) using English as their primary language of communication amongst friends. It was also found that 10.44% (7 pupils) spoke both English as well as their heritage language with their parents. Only one instance was found whereby the pupil spoke English with their parents the most and their heritage language (Gujarati) with their friends the most.

11 respondents spoke more than one language to their parents or friends, e.g. one pupil stated that they spoke Urdu and English with parents and English with friends. We decided to analyse these 11 responses as pupils that spoke different languages with each group. This is due to different languages being spoken and therefore should still be considered in the domain analysis.

In addition, the email received from the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School gave a great insight into what provisions are currently in place within the school. This information became very useful in that, although the students were asked about what support they received, they did not provide sufficient answers to gain a complete understanding of the efforts from Sharples School. Consequently, this additional correspondence to the school resulted in a key part in revealing sufficient detail in this area and fulfilling one of our project aims. The usefulness of these findings was not originally anticipated, however it proved to be crucial in supporting the findings of our questionnaire where they lacked detail or accuracy.

3 Discussion

3.1 Questionnaire

As a result of our prior research into domain analysis, we had certain expectations about the findings we would obtain. This was especially with regards to which contexts the students would use the majority language (English) as compared to the use of their heritage language. As stated by Kheirkhah & Cekaite

(2017), when entering education the use of the societal language increased with peers and especially between siblings. Our findings support this, as 89.55% of those pupils who speak an additional language, including: Urdu, Polish, Turkish, Portuguese and more, do so with their parents/guardians. However, 92.54% of pupils have English as the primary language used with friends and siblings. As this is the dominant language in the speech community of Bolton, this was to be expected. Based on this, we can predict that these are the first (heritage) languages of the parents and are therefore used in the family domain. As the use of English ensures more success within the education system and integration into peer groups in a British society, it is more favoured between friends.

With regards to the one respondent that differed from the general pattern that the societal language was used more with friends, the response deviated in that they showed an opposite pattern. The pupil used English mostly with their parents and Gujarati mostly with their friends. This response could therefore be disregarded as an error in completion of the survey, however we decided to include this respondent as it is an unusual finding and could suggest a number of things. It is possible that this could be due to the parents attempting to encourage use of the societal language in order to ensure their child's best opportunities and success in their society. Alternatively, it is possible that in a friendship group with peers of the same ethnic background, the pupil may use the heritage language to show solidarity and group membership. This may especially be the case if they are facing difficulties with integrating into the school community and instead opt to communicate more with students with whom they share a common language that they are more confident in using.

The findings from our research were also similar to what was found by the local census, regarding the number of languages spoken in Bolton, and which languages these were. Within the census, Bolton Council (2011) identified that the most common non-English languages were: Gujarati with 8000 residents speaking it as their first language, Urdu with 3000 residents and Punjabi with 1600 residents. This correlates with our results in that Gujarati and Urdu were the most commonly spoken languages besides English. Therefore, this demonstrates that these languages are deeply rooted in the local community of Bolton. Furthermore, a total of 27 languages were found in the investigation which is similar to the 28 languages stated by the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School, found in Appendix 3.

The extensive number of languages found in the school and the community demonstrates how multilingualism has become a vital part of Sharples School and how well integrated it has become. This promotion of multilingualism provides support for the European Commission (2015) who states that mobility in and around the EU has triggered an increase in the number of languages that are found in schools and how the classroom has now become a multilingual and diverse place. This is something which Sharples School has clearly adopted, necessary in particular as it is situated in such a diverse area of Greater Manchester.

3.2 MFL Department

The responses that we received from the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School provided more detailed information to support our research findings, corresponding to our three aims of the project. Her responses exemplified that the school does in fact promote and encourage the use and success of pupils in languages additional to English, rather than discriminating against bilingualism,

as was the case around 40 years ago (Cummins, 1984). Not only is this the interpretation that can be taken from all of the support offered to pupils in school, but also the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School explicitly states “I firmly believe multilingualism should be celebrated and not seen as a barrier to integration”. This proactive and positive attitude from staff in the school is crucial in the integration of multilingual pupils in the school and supports the idea that society is moving towards having a more widely accepted, diverse linguistic situation.

This view greatly differs from the previous norm that has been found from over 30 years ago. Sharples School’s stance to multilingualism and its promotion greatly differs from previous research, for example, the results found by Strobbe et al (2015) in Belgium, who found children of a Turkish background to be ‘undesirable.’ Although these findings are relatively recent, this great distance between Sharples School and Strobbe et al’s findings indicates how far schools and education have advanced in promoting multilingualism and recognising its positive effect on the school and community.

The questions indicate that the multilingual situation in Sharples School is thriving and continues to increase, as according to the school’s Head of Modern Foreign Languages there are currently 55 International New Arrivals (INA) with this increasing weekly. In addition, the number of EAL students, which is our focus, is far higher, with around 60% having full command of English. From our research, it seems this is largely due to the support the school offers to these pupils, including ensuring full integration of each pupil. For example, there is a Young Interpreters Scheme in place, which aims to help new pupils settle into the school system and integrate smoothly with peers and teachers. This is through the nomination of a student of each language present, who helps with the induction of new pupils and translates for staff where needed, so that pupils can participate fully in class. They may also support discussions with parents if appropriate meaning both students and parents can be involved in the education system without problems.

Added to this, the school’s pastoral team, (including form tutors, learning mentors and year coordinators) are involved in supporting students. On an individual level, students are buddied up with others who speak the same language wherever possible. This ensures that they will not face isolation due to their potential lack of proficiency in English, the primary language used within the school. The Modern Foreign Languages department also have resources e.g. foreign language dictionaries, and offer linguistic support for those who arrive to the school with no English whatsoever, to provide them with the basic level needed to participate in classes. The staff have received training of strategies to use in the classroom environment, and made aware of the background and needs of the students. It is clear that the school places value on trying to incorporate these pupils and ensure that they receive the best education and experience possible. Outside of the classroom this is also taken into consideration, as there is support available for EAL students during breaks and lunchtimes.

This indicates that Sharples School is actively participating in the promotion of multilingualism. These findings are similar to that from Agirdag (2016: 68) whereby he uses a case study from the Netherlands to demonstrate rise of multilingualism in Europe, originally stated by the European Commission (2015). It was found that approximately 130 schools in the Netherlands offered a ‘multilingual education’ whereby foreign languages are taught as subjects and these languages are also used to teach e.g. Spanish lessons would be taught in Spanish. Although our data focuses on just one school in the UK, it illustrates a great diversity of languages which is likely to also be reflected in other schools across the country.

Moreover, Sharples School offers GCSEs in 6 languages, with the school open to adding more to the syllabus to meet the needs of any additional language a pupil may be proficient in. This shows that the school is trying to encourage multilingualism by introducing as many additional GCSEs as necessary, which coincides with our aim of 'investigating how the different languages spoken by the students are used for different functions'. In this case, one of the main functions is education and learning in order to enhance the future success of these pupils. All of these findings coincide with our final aim, in that much has been done to ensure that staff and pupils are still able to communicate within the school, even though many different languages are present. This is evident through the provisions installed by the school to help create a multilingual environment, reflective of the wider society in Bolton and even Greater Manchester. This shows that efforts of government into the incorporation of a multilingual education in countries such as Canada, found by Joshi and Johnson (2007), are being adopted by schools in the UK due to the perceptions that multilingualism are beneficial to the education and success of students in today's society.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of our fieldwork study into the situation of multilingualism in Sharples School shows degrees of variety in terms of the amount of languages spoken. With regards to languages and their domain, these differed as expected whereby heritage languages were favoured at home with parents and grandparents and societal languages were used more in school situations with friends and siblings. In Sharples School, it is clearly evident that multilingualism is approached from a very positive perspective, and is encouraged in every aspect of a pupil's school life as much as possible, something which is likely to increase with the needs of an increasingly diverse society. This is conveyed in the diverse and large amount of languages spoken in the school thus indicating that pupils are encouraged to also speak in their heritage language.

With regards to the aims of the study, each aim was conducted successfully in that we were able to understand the complete situation of multilingualism that occurs in Sharples School. The number of languages that was identified through this investigation was similar to the number that was also identified by the school itself. This indicates that the sample that was collected was representative of the linguistic situation and also reflective of the situation of multilingualism in Bolton itself. Furthermore, the domain analysis that was conducted demonstrated that pupils in the school do use different languages for different functions and contexts. As was previously outlined, the majority of students used their heritage language with their parents whilst using the societal language with their friends. This indicates that the parents and children are taking an active role in trying to preserve their heritage language, whilst also successfully integrating into their school community through use of the societal language. Lastly, due to the negative views that were previously researched into education and multilingualism (Grosjean, 1982: 268), the efforts that are explicitly made by the school in the promotion of multilingualism were also investigated. As previously mentioned, Sharples School has many supportive provisions in place such as the Young Interpreters Scheme which helps EAL students to successfully join and integrate with the rest of the student body.

5 Appendix

Appendix 1: Raw data collected in questionnaire

The following link shows the Excel spreadsheet created, with the raw data collected from each respondent in the online questionnaire:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/181ETEYtmwLis9JoPepyVSymIBkbz1kW9GHBti2v7xxY/edit?usp=sharing>

Appendix 2: Respondents who speak different languages to their parents and friends

Language spoken most often	With parents	With friends
English, Arabic	Arabic	English
English	German	English
English, Gujarati	Gujarati	English, Arabic, Urdu, Gujarati
English, Gujarati	Gujarati	English, Arabic, Urdu
English	Turkish	English
English	Urdu	English
Filipino	Filipino	English
English	Urdu	English
English	Somali	English
English, Gujarati	Gujarati	English
English	Urdu	English
Japanese	Japanese	English
Swahili	Swahili	English
Swahili	Swahili	English
English	Urdu	English
Urdu	Urdu	English
Urdu	Urdu	English
English	Filipino	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Punjabi	English
English	Portuguese	English
English	Afrikaans	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Twi	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Urdu	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Arabic	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Portuguese	English
Arabic	Arabic	English
Urdu	Urdu	English
English	Panjabi	English

English	Gujarati	English
English	Urdu, English	English
Arabic	Arabic	English, Arabic
English, Hungarian	Hungarian	English
English	Gujarati, English	English
English	Gujarati, English	English
Urdu	Urdu	English
English	English	Welsh, English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Urdu	English
Urdu	Urdu	English
English	Punjabi	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	English	Japanese, English
English	Urdu	English
English	Gujarati, English	English
English	Italian, English	English
Polish	Polish	English
English	Gujarati	English
English	Mandarin & Cantonese	English
English	Gujarati	English
Portuguese	Portuguese	English
Gujarati, English	Gujarati	English
English	Polish	English
English	English	Gujarati, English
English	Gujarati	English
English, Gujarati, Arabic	English	Gujarati
English	Gujarati	English
English	Urdu	English
English, Albanian	Albanian	English
English	Gujarati	English

Appendix 3: Email responses from the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Sharples School

As previously stated, we contacted the Head of Modern Foreign languages with a series of questions. The questions with responses are as follows:

- **How many languages are you aware are present in the school?**

To my knowledge 28 languages currently spoken.

- **How many EAL students are currently in the school?**

Currently 55 INA students on role (International New Arrivals) however the number of EAL students is far higher with the majority fully functioning in English (around 60%) - the number of INA students is increasing weekly.

- **What does the young interpreters scheme within the school involve?**

I have nominated a student for each language who help with the induction of new pupils, translate for staff where needed, support discussions with parents if appropriate.

- **How does this support EAL students or encourage their use of language?**

Helps pupils to settle and integrate into the school. Giving them an opportunity to converse in their first language helps to build confidence and draw links with English. I firmly believe multilingualism should be celebrated and not seen as a barrier to integration.

- **Which languages do you offer additional GCSE's in?**

Polish, Arabic, Italian, Urdu, Portuguese, German so far but we are open to offering any language where there is a GCSE. I work closely with the MFL Bolton network and we help each depending on languages needed.

- **How do you support the induction of new EAL students?**

Our pastoral team support their integration (year co-ordinator/form tutor/learning mentor). Students are buddied up with students speaking the same language wherever possible. STAR (SEN area) offers support at breaks and lunchtime for students who need support in time out of lessons. We have a small amount of time in the MFL department to support new arrivals linguistically (basic English) - the focus here is on the students who arrive with no English. We have bought a number of foreign language dictionaries for the library that students and staff can access to support lessons which have been a great help. I have delivered staff training to raise awareness of the background and needs of the students who arrive as well as strategies to use in the classroom.

- **What other work have you done with EAL students?**

I am in the process of writing a development plan for INA provision with the aim of setting out the future provision I would like to see in the school. However, this is all dependent on funding of course.

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