multilingual MANCHESTER

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Multilingualism among Restaurant Workers in Manchester's Chinatown

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1. Introduction

This paper will look at multilingualism in Manchester: Chinatown. We will specifically examine how different languages are used among people in restaurant industry. The Chinatown in Manchester is the collection of small shops and restaurants. It is located near Piccadilly Garden, including George Street and Charlotte Street, behind the Art Gallery on Mosley Street. In 1948, the first Chinese restaurant had launched on Mosley Street. During 1950s and 1960s, Chinese immigration to the UK rapidly increased and another boom occurred at Greater Manchester in 1970s. These two immigration booms swelled the population of the Chinese in the city and enlarged its ethnic enclave as the second biggest Chinatown in the UK, and the third biggest in Europe. Traditionally, it was the centre of trading and people from all over Manchester visited this market in order to find food, herbs, and gifts. Even now, it is one of the most flourish areas for shopping and sightseeing in Manchester although the popularity of small shops has been declining these days due to introducing few Chinese hypermarkets on the outskirts of the city. (Manchester Chinatown, 2011)

According to the 2010 mid-year estimate, 498,800 people were living in Manchester compared to 422,000 in 2001. This was an increase of 17.9% over the period. (Manchester City Council, 2011) Another statistics in 2009 also shows that 8,500 Chinese people were living in Manchester compared to 5,600 in 2001, which increase by 51.8% of their population and Chinese ethnic group makes up to 1.8% of the whole population. (Manchester City Council, 2011) This suggests that the population of the Chinese community has ballooned in the last decade comparing with the rate of increment of the entire population of the city. As well known, Manchester is a vibrant multicultural city especially the Chinatown is popular among not only Chinese people but also other ethnic groups. In addition, it has a great variety of restaurants such as Chinese Italian, French, Thai, and Japanese. These facts support us to choose Chinatown as the place to investigate multilingualism in Manchester.

Miriam Meyerhoff suggests

In multilingual communities, different languages have more or less vitality in different (institutional, social, or personal) domains. In multilingual setting, the choice between languages carries interactional force or implies something about the situation or the interlocutors. (Meyerhoff, 2011)

Based on this idea, we will try to find out how customers and workers choose their languages in the context of restaurants and how their language choice builds their cultural identity and their community.

2. Methodology

Overall of our idea, our study about to investigate multilingualism in some restaurants at Chinatown in Manchester, where is one of the biggest business areas in Manchester. The Chinatown has been flourishing, so it is one of the most important business areas in Manchester. We try to find how languages (English and Chinese) are used in Chinatown. This is because the Chinatown is popular among not only Chinese people but also other ethnic groups including British. It means that we can find a sort of interactions between Chinese language and English not only communication between customers and staffs but also language switching by workers. Furthermore, we may be able to find different attitudes toward different ethnic customers in those restaurants, and this is somehow connected to the multilingualism.

In addition, the area has concentrated population of the Chinese rather than other area. We suppose that this population density is linked to their identities toward culture and community. Also, if there are many Chinese people living in, we probably find both English and Chinese in diverse ways. We will be able to check and find languages used for menus and other things such as the advertisements and interior decorating of restaurants.

The chief aim of our study is to investigate the multilingual use and code switching in the Manchester's Chinatown business area, so that we aim to figure out these questions as follow:

1. What languages do people speak in Chinatown?
2. How they switch languages?
3. What does make them switch languages?
4. What influences does it bring to the community and to people?

We plan to process this project by visiting three different restaurants in Chinatown during dinnertime, and carry out participant observation to watch how and what language the waiter/waitress speak to us, to other customers and co-workers. We think this approach is direct and objective to show us a part of information we

need before we rise up our questionnaires to the interviews. What is more, these findings will help us understand the cultural identity in the Manchester's Chinatown in a more effective way. After participant observation, we are going to interview the waiters/waitress by asking some questions which we prepared. The questionnaires we prepared focus on the language issues, we try to find something, which are differences and common points among these people to choose languages when they are in different situations or face to different people. The questionnaires are as follows:

1. *Where were you born in?*
2. *How long have you been here?*
3. *What languages do you speak?*
4. *Which language do you usually speak to the customers?*
5. *Which language do you usually speak in your daily life?*
6. *Do you think the customers prefer to speak English?*

In addition to the questionnaire, we will use some other forms of documentation. During the interview, we will use the several documentation to help us process the study—that is, taking notes during the participant observation and interview, photos of appearance of the restaurants, menus, and receipts, and of course, a map. These other forms will make a great contribution to give us clues and information to combine multilingual in the Chinatown with external factors tightly, such as location of the Chinatown, which we can get it from the map.

Considering about the deadline for submission of our essay and the date of feedback for our fieldwork plan, we are going to decide the restaurants to visit until 16th April; revising our draft, finishing the collection of information, and finalizing the questions until 23rd April; we will do fieldwork until 30th April; write the draft of findings, discussion and conclusion until 6th May. Finally, we will finish final revising of the whole work until 17th, May.

It's inevitable there are some problems and something should be noticed during the whole study. The waiters/ waitresses—the interviewees—may be busy at the dinner and they might refuse to answer questions. If this situation happens, we might need to change time or place to continue the fieldwork. The second foreseen notice is that we should pay attention to the number of customer and the workers, and among them, how many Chinese people and foreigners. There are, what is more, the last but the most important, remember not to ask personal details so that the interviewees maybe feel uncomfortable and offensive.

Above all, we aim to investigate the multilingual in Chinatown and how people working there switch their languages when they are in different situations through our fieldwork.

After we got the feedback of fieldwork plan, we decided to do broad questionnaire in some restaurants in Chinatown before we interview in three restaurants. We made the questionnaire in multiple choices to reduce informants' task. The questions are quite similar to those in interview but we choose different restaurants for them to increase the amount of data. Following this process, we changed some questions for interview as below.

1. Where were you born in?
2. How long have you been here?
3. What languages do you speak?
4. When you first greet a customer, which language do you speak?
5. Do you change the language while you are working? How?
6. Which language do you speak with your co-workers?
7. Do you have more Chinese customers than customers in other nationality?
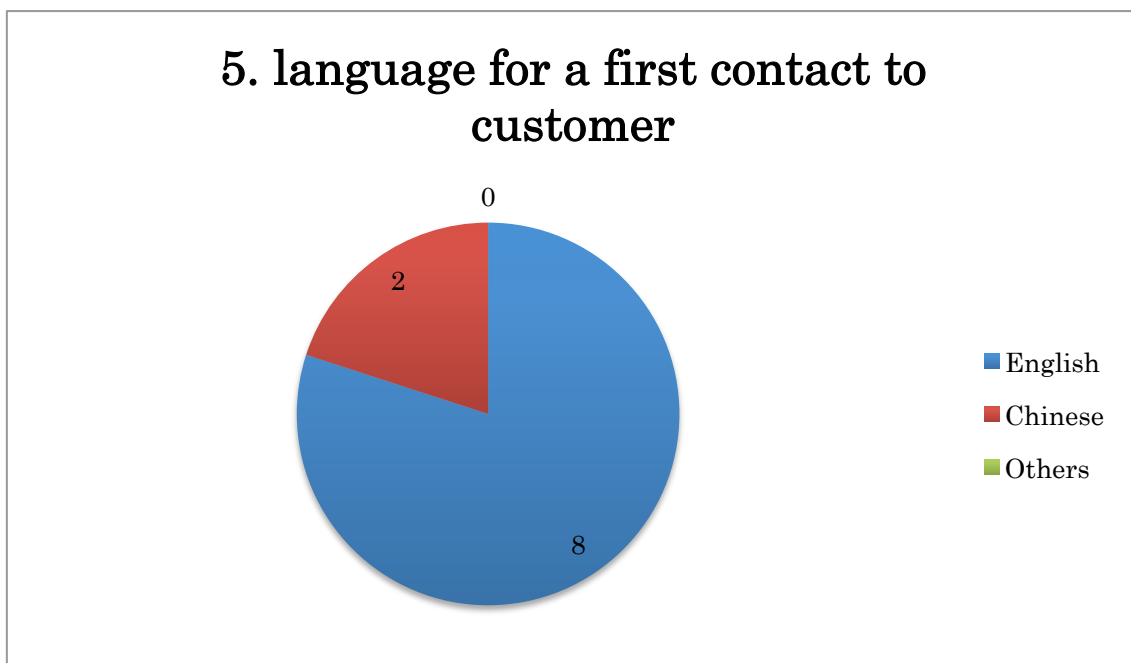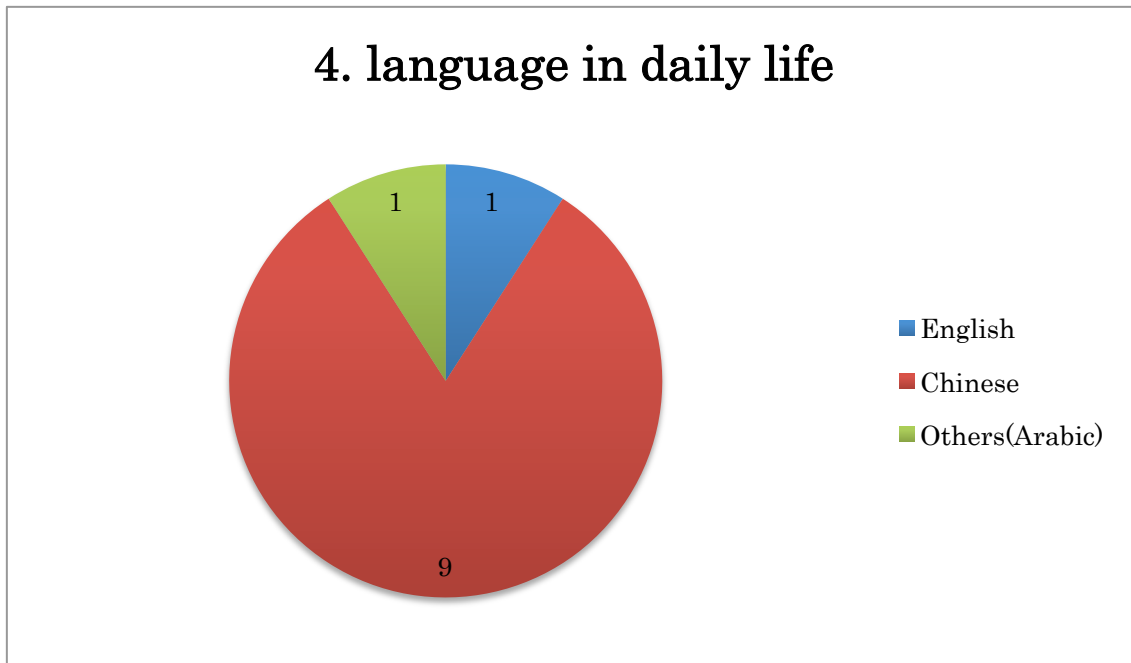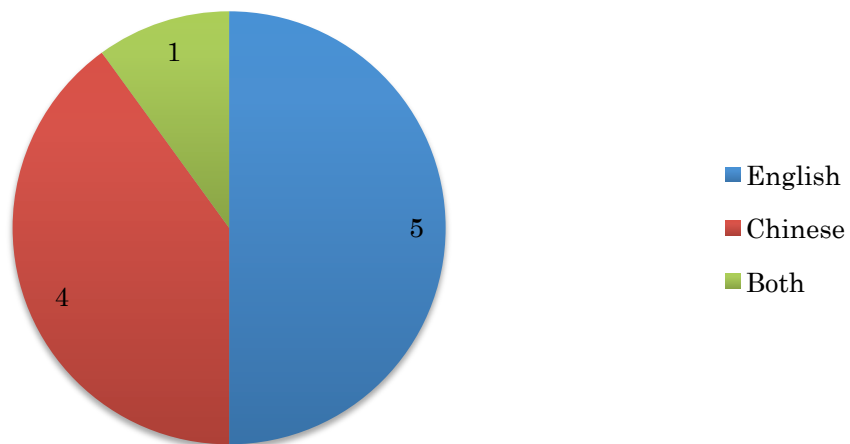
3. Findings

3.1. Questionnaire Data

To get general knowledge about their language use, we handed out the questionnaire to workers in some restaurants. We randomly chose these restaurants in Chinatown and asked waiters to simply fill in it. The questionnaire in based on brief descriptions style and multiple-choices style. As a result, we collected data from 10 informants. Actual questionnaire sheet is available in Appendix.

9 out of people are from China. They have been in Manchester for from a half to 2 years so they are quite new here. Naturally, all of them speak either Chinese or English. Only 1 person speaks Arabic and English. Consequently, most of people answered they use Chinese more often in their daily life and 1 answered both, 1person answered Arabic is his/her predominant language in daily life. In question number 5, 8 people answered they speak English when they first talk to customers. Although 9 people are from China, in next question, less people answered that they communicate

with their co-workers in English. The number of those is 6 include one person answered as both. In addition, 6 informants answered that they have bilingual menu in their restaurants. To make it easy to understand, we put the results into the form of diagrams below.

4. language in daily life

Legend:
- English: 1
- Chinese: 9
- Others(Arabic): 1

5. language for a first contact to customer

Legend:
- English: 8
- Chinese: 2
- Others: 0

6. language to co-workers

Legend: English, Chinese, Both

Values shown: 5 (English), 4 (Chinese), 1 (Both)

7. bilingual / non-English menu

Legend: Yes, No

Values shown: 6 (Yes), 4 (No)
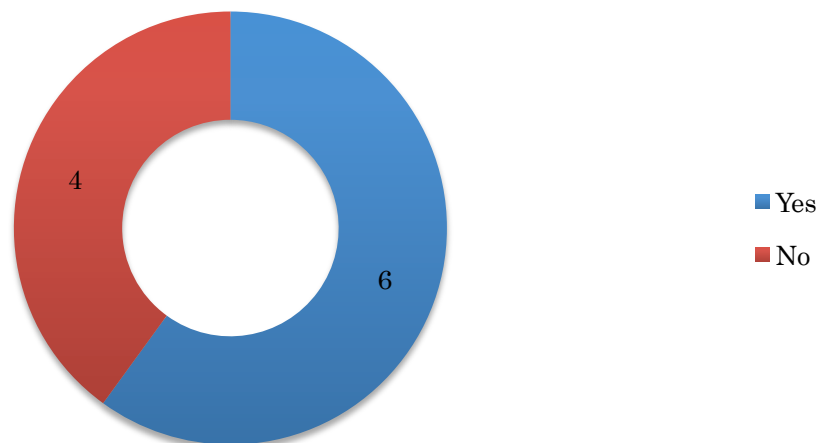
3.2. Results of Participant Observation and Interviews

3.2.1. RED HOT 紅満天

The waiter greeted us in Chinese, and continued to speak in Chinese. One of the causes about which he went on speaking in Chinese is that one of our members can understand Chinese, and speak in Chinese in reply to his greeting. We went there at

the time after lunchtime, and there were seven Chinese customers. The waiter and other customer communicated in Chinese with each other. Therefore, we did not hear other customers interacted with waiters in English.

The menu was written in both English and Chinese. The system of ordering is that we write down the number of dish in ordering paper written in English. After we pass the paper to the waiter, he asked in English us to pass the menus to him. It is suggested that he sometimes switch languages toward a group of customers, which in the case that a group include a member of non-Chinese. Apart from the interview, all waiters and waitress were speaking in Chinese each other. In addition, we could hear workers were talking in Chinese in the kitchen and in the dining room.

In that restaurant, the wall was painted in red and black, and there are marble-look table, which make us enjoy authentic Chinese style. We could see that most of signs were written in Chinese, such as sign for umbrella or the travel advertisement.

The responses of the interview

1. Where are you from? **China**
2. How long have you been in Manchester? **6 years**
3. What language do you speak? **Chinese, English**
4. When you first greet your customer, which language do you speak? **Chinese**
5. Do you switch language during conversation towards customers? **Rarely, ah sometimes depends on the customers**
6. Which language do you speak to co-worker? **Chinese**

The interview had been carried in English. Firstly, we try to tell him about our observation in English, so he replies in broken English.

3.2.2. Pacific Chinese and Thai Buffet 雅苑

The Pacific is faced on the George Street in the middle of the area. Before we entered the restaurant, we have noticed their hoardings in front of the building. It was separated into two sections; Thai menu and Chinese menu. Chinese menu was printed

in both Chinese characters and English but Thai menu was only described in English. It indicated us that they have a lot of Chinese customers and they're trying to make the hoardings easy to understand for their Chinese customers. When we entered the restaurant, a middle-aged waiter greeted us in Chinese. He showed the table and asked us for drinks in Chinese too. There is a quiet, modest atmosphere in the whole dining room. The massive decorations of golden Chinese characters hint the image of Asia.

They were very busy in lunchtime, so we struggled to catch a waiter to ask questions. However, a waitress looked around 25 years old answered our questions briefly. Her responses are listed below.

1. Where were you born in? **China**

2. How long have you been here? **4 years**

3. What languages do you speak? **Chinese, English**

4. When you first greet a customer, which language do you speak?   **Chinese**

5. Do you change your languages while you are working? **Yeah.**
How? **depends on customer's speaking.**

6.   What language do you speak to your co-worker? **Chinese**

7. Do you have more Chinese customers than customers in other nationality?
Yes. More Chinese.

Looking around other tables, there were around 25 customers, but only 5 or 6 of them were not Chinese. The interviewee was taking orders from an English guy sitting behind us. All waiters were Chinese and they were communicating in Chinese. We didn't see any Chinese customer speaking in English at all. Some customers near our table sometimes glanced at us dubiously. It might be because all of us look totally Eastern Asian, but we were talking in English since only one of us is Chinese. It was an awkward moment. The menu was totally written in Both Chinese and English.

3.2.3. Handmade noodle King 串锅香

About the third fieldwork of observation, we choose 'Handmade noodle King' in Chinatown on14th May at lunch time. This restaurant decorates with red lanterns, yellow, white table clothes and an aquarium with golden fish. And pop songs in English, Chinese and Japanese make an international atmosphere. European paintings such as impressionist Monet are hanging on the wall, and also photos of customers were stacked on the wall in heart shape. When we first went into that restaurant, a male

waiter greeted to us in Chinese, and then we interview him. The interviewee seems to be around 25 years old, and he answered our questions as follows:

1. Where were you born in? **China**

2. How long have you been here? **5 years**

3. What languages do you speak?

Chinese (includes 2 different regional accents), English

4. When you first greet a customer, which language do you speak?

Chinese, most of time

5. Do you change your languages while you are working? How?

Chinese only

6. What language do you speak to your co-worker?

Regional accent of Chinese

7. Do you have more Chinese customers than customers in other nationality?

Most of them are Chinese

Same as the previous two restaurants, bilingual menu is also available in this restaurant. All the waiters are Chinese, however actually the interview is not so fluent in English, comparing with the other two interviewees. During the interview, sometimes he looked worrying to talk. Another waitress can interact with English customers in English frequently. About the customers, there are around 19 Chinese customers who mostly are families and groups of students, and also there are two English customers. The languages customers use usually are English and Chinese, more specifically, in this observation, we heard nearly most Chinese customers only interacted in Chinese.

4. Discussion

Considering about both result of questionnaire and observation, we try to find an answer for the questions, which we had stated at methodology part. Similarly to the questionnaire, those three restaurants have bilingual menu written in English and Chinese. It is probably because that Chinatown is one of the biggest business areas in Manchester, so they prepare for foreign customers even they have not so many non-Chinese customers. However, different from the result of questionnaire, those three restaurants prefer to use Chinese during conversation between co-workers. Moreover, they prefer to speak Chinese towards customer even they can speak English.

It is the biggest difference between questionnaire and observation. The people working in Chinatown use both English and Chinese, but those three restaurants prefer to use Chinese.

Most of the workers switch the language between Chinese and English, and it depends on the customer. They talk to their customer in Chinese at first, and they guess whether customer can understand Chinese or not. The nationality of customer or language ability of Chinese could be one of the factors that make workers switch their languages. However, some of them do not switch the language at all such as the restaurant "Handmade noodle King". It may be that there is different proportion of Chinese customer. Those three restaurants are more popular for Chinese people than other restaurants used for the questionnaire.

English is a dominant language in Manchester, and most of the people are motivated to master the dominant language (Aronin, 2008). However, according to our research, we are probably suggested that Chinese is a dominant language in Chinatown. One of the factors is that different density of Chinese customer in Chinatown. Aronin (2008) stated that 'at the level of individual language use, switching languages to meet the needs of the situation'. The workers in the Chinatown switch their languages just to meet the needs of the situation, but there are few opportunities to do so in Chinatown.

5. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the multilingualism in Manchester Chinatown restaurants. In addition, we collected and analyzed data through the methodology of questionnaires and observations. We found that level of code switching is different in each person.
Our results show that main languages used in Chinatown are Chinese and English. When waiters/ waitresses greet to customers, they will choose language depends on how customers look like and then they switch their language if necessary. Through our observations we were able to examine the importance and statue of bilingual menu to restaurants in Chinatown and switching languages for communicating with customers and co-workers. If our study to be done again, considering we have more time and more experience, we would study deeper and more specific. We would find the answers, which we could not figure out in this research, such as, what is the

meaning of switching language in Chinatown restaurants to prosper the economy of this area, or to identify the Chinese culture through this way?

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