

<b>Institution:</b> The University of Manchester		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Supporting social inclusion and justice through enhanced understanding and recognition of language diversity		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Yaron Matras	Professor of Linguistics	1995-August 2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013-November 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Research led by Matras which explored multilingual practices, language needs and linguistic identities has had impact in three key ways: (1) Through a sustained programme of public and policy engagement, it has raised awareness and reshaped policy at regional and national levels, including census measurement; (2) Through a new support platform, app and research-based engagement activity, the research has informed training and provided curriculum enrichment for supplementary schools and primary and secondary schools in Manchester and the north-west of England more widely; (3) The research has empowered legal practitioners to challenge language analysis in asylum procedures, creating direct benefits for appellants. Impacts include [text removed for publication] the overturning of Home Office decisions. The research also led to the establishment of the MLM-Analysis forensic linguistic consultancy.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>The research was carried out in the Multilingual Manchester (MLM) unit, which brings together research, public engagement and teaching around the core themes of dynamic multilingual practices in cities and the connections between language needs, linguistic identities and issues of inclusion, equality and social justice. The impact documented in this case study is underpinned by two programmes of research led by Matras: (1) a series of connected research projects on language diversity in Manchester, including the 'Multilingual Communities' strand of the AHRC Open World Research Initiative 'Cross-Language Dynamics: Re-Shaping Communities' project [see G1, section 3], through which key research and impact activity took place from 2016 onwards; and (2) an AHRC-funded project on the documentation of the dialects of Kurdish and Arabic (which constitute important language communities in Manchester) via large-scale surveys [G2].</p>		
<b>1. Language diversity in Manchester (2012-2020)</b>		
<p>The research analysed the interplay of language practice, needs, provisions and policy among community and statutory institutions through a combination of longitudinal survey, participant observation, and examination of quantitative datasets. The research followed the emergence of a public narrative on language diversity in Manchester [1]. It analysed the relevance of this narrative to community cohesion, identity, and the city's strategic vision, and the emergence of a city language strategy that builds on the contributions of a variety of actors, including local government, public service providers, private and community initiatives [2].</p>		
<p>The research identified different datasets on language, drawing on the example of Manchester, and identified gaps in statutory data collection methods including the national census [2]. It proposed new ways of data triangulation [1, 2] and developed and implemented new tools to examine heritage language vitality in the multilingual city, through surveys of self-reported domain-specific language use, and tested language proficiency among school pupils. The findings point to correlations between active proficiency in the heritage language and high proficiency in English, dispelling assumptions that heritage language maintenance may disrupt acquisition of English. The results also show different ways in which communities maintain heritage languages and reveal that better surveying techniques can fill gaps on first language in the official School Census [3].</p>		

The research developed the *LinguaSnapp* mobile app to capture the city's language landscapes and a web resource, the *MLM Data Mapping Tool*, to triangulate quantitative datasets on languages from a variety of institutional sources such as use of language materials in libraries, interpreter requests, census data and more [1]. The application of these tools, combined with participatory ethnographic observation, was piloted in order to critique notions of 'language community' as well as 'community language' [1]. Based on the findings, the research put forward a new analytical model to theorise users' multilingual repertoire choices in relation to communicative tasks and illocutionary purpose [4].

## 2. Dialects of Kurdish and Arabic (2012-2019)

A large-scale survey of the dialects of Kurdish, carried out in over 150 locations in the Middle East, produced a unique data resource made accessible online. It enabled the drafting of a new model of dialect classification in Kurdish, coupled with hitherto missing descriptive data on the dialects of Kurdish in Syria [5]. A comprehensive structural survey of Arabic dialects covering varieties from 15 countries (especially Syria) accompanied the Kurdish resource. The use of both resources in Language Analysis for the Determination of Origin (LADO) in asylum procedures was piloted drawing on a corpus of casework. The findings show the limitations of procedures that rely on the impressions of native speaker consultants employed by government contractors, and the advantage of using control samples offered by the survey-based resources [6].

## 3. References to the research

1. Gaiser, Leonie and **Matras, Yaron**. 2020. Re-visiting 'community language': Arabic in a Western global city. In: Mar-Molinero, Clare, ed. *Researching language in superdiverse urban contexts: Exploring methodological and theoretical concepts*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. 52-78. Available from HEI on request.
2. **Matras, Yaron** and Robertson, Alex. 2015. Multilingualism in a post-industrial city: policy and practice in Manchester. *Current Issues in Language Planning* 16, 296-314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2015.1048925>
3. **Matras, Yaron**, Robertson, Alex and Jones, Charlotte. 2016. Using the school setting to map community languages: a pilot study in Manchester, England. *International Journal of Multilingualism* 13, 353-366. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2016.1154062>
4. **Matras, Yaron**, Reershemius, Gertrud and Gaiser, Leonie. 2018. Multilingual repertoire management and illocutionary functions in Yiddish signage in Manchester. *Journal of Pragmatics* 135, 53-70. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.07.005>
5. **Matras, Yaron**. 2019. Revisiting Kurdish dialect geography: Findings from the Manchester Database. In: Haig, Geoffrey, Öpengin, Ergin and Gundoglu, Songül, eds. *Current Issues in Kurdish Linguistics*. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press. 225-241. Available from HEI on request.
6. **Matras, Yaron**. 2018. Duly verified? Language analysis in UK asylum applications of Syrian refugees. *International Journal of Speech, Language and the Law* 25:1, 53-78. <https://doi.org/10.1558/ijsl.35710>

## Quality indicators

The research was supported by AHRC through the following grants: **G1** AH/N004647/1 'Cross-Language Dynamics: Re-Shaping Communities', Open World Research Initiative, The University of Manchester awarded GBP956,275 (total project value GBP3,231,786), 2016-2021, Co-I **Matras**; **G2** AH/K007084/1 'Structural and typological variation in the dialects of Kurdish', GBP203,820, 2014-2017, PI **Matras**. Outputs 2, 3, 4 and 6 appeared in leading peer-reviewed journals.

## 4. Details of the impact

Growing language diversity among the population brings challenges, especially in urban environments. These challenges include ensuring equal access to services, supporting confidence in cultural heritage and ensuring justice where language is used as indicator for entitlement to

legal protection. During the assessment period, the MLM unit worked in partnership with a range of stakeholders, including local government, public service providers and legal practitioners. The research has achieved impact in three key ways: (1) It has raised awareness and recognition of language diversity in Greater Manchester and at a UK level, leading to policy outcomes; (2) It has informed and facilitated training and curriculum enrichment for supplementary, primary and secondary schools; (3) It has achieved legal justice for asylum seekers [text removed for publication].

### **1. Local and national policy stakeholders: enhanced awareness and recognition of linguistic diversity**

#### Manchester: increased awareness and municipal policy outcomes

Drawing on the research and collaborative work within the MLM unit [1-3], Matras engaged with Manchester City Council (MCC) to promote improved recognition of Manchester's linguistic diversity. The process involved dialogue, reciprocal learning and the involvement of MCC officials in MLM's public events and activities addressing issues relating to language diversity in the city region. Since August 2013, MCC and MLM have collaborated on more than a dozen public events. MLM has contributed to open consultations with MCC officials and provided input into MCC reports and scrutiny committee meetings. Public events included Levenshulme Language Day (2015, 2017), UNESCO International Mother Language Day (2017-2020) and the launch of the *LinguaSnapp* mobile app in 2016, all of which included statements from key MCC officials. Responding to a proposal from Matras, Manchester adopted Language Day as an annual city-wide celebration, to which MLM contributes as part of a joint planning committee. In August 2019, MCC successfully applied for a Carnegie and Wolfson Foundation 'Engaging Libraries' grant to launch a programme of public events on language diversity in collaboration with MLM, based on a programme that Matras drafted.

In September 2019, MCC released a policy report on language diversity, the first of its kind in any major city. The report acknowledged the contribution of MLM and its research on Manchester's public narrative on language diversity (e.g. the now ubiquitous motto 'City of 200 languages'), as well as the benefits the MLM unit had brought to public services and MCC. The report noted that MLM had hosted events which "*positively and proactively promote Manchester's reputation as a hub of good practice around language diversity*" [A, paragraph 2.5] and stated that "*[t]he extensive body of evidence and analysis afforded to Manchester's public services by the [MLM] project team continues to add value and insight to their undertakings.*" [A, paragraph 2.7] The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team, M:4 Communication and Language Support Service and Libraries are among the MCC services noted as benefiting from ongoing work with MLM [A, paragraph 2.7]. The report set in motion a consultation process for a City Language Strategy that is ongoing but has been delayed by COVID-19.

#### UK: improved policy recognition and measurement of linguistic diversity

The research led to a direct change in the language categorisation for the 2021 Census. Policy engagement in relation to the Census drew on the research [2], which critiqued the accuracy of the 2011 Census data on language by showing that the question on 'main language' other than English was subject to diverse interpretations and that only one main language could be chosen, which meant that multilingual households were not captured. In 2018, Matras and three colleagues from other UK HEIs established a campaign for revision of the question on language for the 2021 Census [B.i]. Drawing on [2], they advocated removing the term 'main language', which had been found to be ambiguous, and allowing respondents to report more than one language [B.i]. The call was supported by Shadow Immigration Minister Afzal Khan MP and the British Academy [B.ii], among others. In May 2020, Baroness Coussins of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Languages cited Matras's research when raising the census language question in the House of Lords [B.iii]. In response to the campaign, in April 2019 UK Statistics Authority officials invited Matras to re-draft the user guidance notes on the Census language question. The re-drafted guidance notes [B.iv] now advise users that when thinking about 'main language' they should think of the one other than English that is 'most natural', which could be 'the language used at home'. In April 2020 the Office for National Statistics invited Matras to comment on a draft for a language categorisation index in preparation for Census 2021. The language categorisation index was

revised in response to Matras's comments [B.v]. Over 60 corrections proposed by Matras have been adopted into the new index.

In May 2019 Matras further contributed to national policy debate by organising an event at the Houses of Parliament at which he called for a comprehensive policy to recognise the UK as a multilingual society and ensure that provisions are in place to protect the languages of all citizens [B.vi]. The event was hosted by Afzal Khan MP and RH Lord Blunkett of Brightside and included further members of both Houses of Parliament, representatives of the British Academy, the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education, and advisors to the Department for Education and the APPG on Languages.

## **2. Education: new curriculum enrichment provision and training for teachers**

The research examined the contribution of community-run supplementary school education to heritage language maintenance and the cultivation of language skills among young people in the Manchester city region [1-3]. Several thousand pupils attend supplementary schools in Manchester. Supplementary schools are community-run, independent organisations that teach elements of language and culture to children, alongside their regular education. In 2017, Matras set up the Supplementary School Support Platform [C.i] as part of MLM to provide curriculum enrichment sessions and teacher training. Between 2017 and 2019, approximately 460 supplementary school pupils (primary and secondary age) took part in curriculum enrichment sessions delivered by UoM researchers in the language taught at the school [C.ii]. Approximately 120 supplementary school teachers from across Manchester took part in MLM training sessions between 2018 and 2019 [C.ii]. Feedback has been positive, with participants in a teacher training session in March 2018, for example, commenting that they had learned new strategies that they would implement and that they valued the unique opportunity to exchange experience with other supplementary school teachers [C.iii]. In March 2019, participating pupils commented that the enrichment sessions were their first opportunity to engage in topics such as science in their parental (heritage) language, and that this would encourage them both to continue to develop their language skills and to think about careers in science [C.iv].

Since August 2013, MLM has carried out research-based engagement activities with primary and secondary schools in Greater Manchester and other parts of the North West. This programme of engagement has raised awareness of language diversity among pupils and teachers. Activities have included the use of online digital tools generated through the research (*LinguaSnapp*) and documentation of the presence of different languages in the city's public spaces through photography, short interviews and artwork. In summer 2019, for example, MLM ran a series of activities on campus and in Rusholme, Manchester, with approximately 200 pupils from Burnage Academy. Participants used drawing, photography and collage to create new work exploring their experiences of multilingualism. In 2017, a project carried out by MLM in partnership with Community Rail Lancashire, Arriva and St Peter's Primary School in Burnley encouraged pupils to express their feelings about the railway through art in languages significant to them. The artwork, which was permanently displayed in Burnley Central station at the end of the project, reflects the diversity and heritage of the area through the languages represented. The project activities were documented in the form of pupils' worksheets, artwork, and video [D].

## **3. Legal sector: achieving justice for asylum seekers**

The research [5, 6] has benefited legal teams and a charity working with asylum seekers whose claims involve language assessment (LADO) carried out by government contractors. The research showed that the method used by government contractors, coupled with the absence of reliable linguistic comparison data for key relevant locations (especially in Syria and Iraq), had led to serious flaws in the LADO procedure. Expert advice on this matter was given to over 20 law firms and charities in the North West of England as part of the outreach and engagement work carried out through the AHRC Dialects of Kurdish project [G2] between 2014 and 2018. Through continued networking and training events (e.g. Garden Court North Chambers, April 2017; Kenworthy's Chambers, September 2019) [E], the research provided approximately 150 legal practitioners with knowledge of how to challenge Home Office asylum decisions that rely on language analyses.

As a direct result of this activity, at least 16 rejections of asylum applications were overturned by the courts on appeal after lawyers relied on expert reports provided by Matras, including 12 cases between 2015 and 2019 [F]. Matras provided expert opinion and analysis for the cases of seven clients supported by Manuel Bravo Project, a charity that provides legal advice and representation to asylum seekers [G]. A Senior Immigration Caseworker at the charity reports that “*Professor Matras’ reports had a significant impact on some of these cases, which, on the basis of his assessment, have been strengthened enough to warrant a grant of legal aid, were then taken up on appeal to the courts, and where in some cases the court overturned the original Home Office decision*”, noting that this contribution “*has not only impacted upon our clients’ lives, but also assisted Manuel Bravo Project enormously in allowing us to obtain expert advice which we may not have usually been able to access*” [G].

Drawing on the research [5, 6], in January 2019 Matras launched the forensic linguistic consultancy *MLM-Analysis* within The University of Manchester [H]. MLM-Analysis has since received contracts from over two dozen clients (legal firms and charities). Matras’s contributions were also cited in a 2019 *Guardian* investigation into the use of LADO in the UK’s asylum processes [I]. Following this media coverage, the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) invited Matras to provide evidence on the use of language analysis in asylum cases. The evidence submitted in 2019 included [F]. The ICIBI report [J], published in November 2020, cites Matras’s evidence.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. Manchester City Council, Report to the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee on the subject of Manchester’s Language Diversity (5 September 2019).
- B. *UK policymaking and debate*: (i) [Campaign on the 2021 Census language question](#), including open letter from Afzal Khan MP; (ii) [British Academy statement](#) supporting change to the Census language question; (iii) [Research cited in the House of Lords](#) (12 May 2020); (iv) [Report documenting the development of the Census 2021 main language definition and corresponding guidance notes](#) (see section 4, ‘Main language and English proficiency’); (v) Email from the Office for National Statistics (24 April 2020), corroborating Matras’s contribution to the language categorisation index; (vi) [Language policy event at the Houses of Parliament](#) (22 May 2019).
- C. *Supplementary schools*: (i) [MLM Supplementary School Platform](#); (ii) MLM report on engagement with supplementary schools (2020); (iii) Feedback from teachers (March 2018); (iv) Feedback from pupils (March 2019).
- D. The Community Rail Lancashire (CRL) project is documented in the short YouTube film, ‘[Revitalising Burnley Central](#)’ (2017) and on the [CRL website](#).
- E. Training events with the legal sector: [Kenworthy’s Chambers](#) (2019) and [Garden Court North Chambers](#) (2017).
- F. Extracts from tribunal decisions referring to expert evidence provided by Matras (2015-2019).
- G. Testimonial from Senior Immigration Caseworker, Manuel Bravo Project (7 February 2018), corroborating impacts for clients and the organisation.
- H. MLM-Analysis Forensic Linguistic Consultancy: <http://mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/mlm-analysis/>.
- I. Aamna Mohdin and Niamh McIntyre, “[“Discredited” test used on two in five Syrian asylum seekers in UK](#)”, *The Guardian* (17 June 2019).
- J. Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, [An inspection of the Home Office’s use of language services in the asylum process](#) (11 November 2020) [*ICIBI practice is not to name sources in the report*].