

Manchester boasts 153 languages

December 12 2012

(Phys.org)—Linguists at The University of Manchester have discovered their city boasts of at least 153 languages, making it one of the world's most diverse places.

And according to the University's Professor Yaron Matras, the list, compiled by the University's Multilingual Manchester project, could get even higher.

However, according to Professor Matras' research, [Census data](#) released yesterday by the Office for [National Statistics](#) has strongly underestimated the number of multilingual households across the UK.

The project co-organiser said: "Manchester's [language](#) diversity is higher than many countries in the world.

"It is very likely to be top of the list in Europe, certainly when compared to other cities of its size, perhaps only outflanked by London and Paris.

"We do know that around two thirds of Mancunian [schoolchildren](#) are bilingual - a huge figure which indicates just how precious its linguistic culture is.

"As immigration and the arrival of overseas students to the city continues, it's fair to say that this already large list is set to grow.

"The question contained within the Census which asks for your 'main language' can be interpreted in different ways.

"Most multilinguals speak a language other than English at home, but use English at work or in their place of study, so they will answer that English is their 'main' language, even though this is not strictly accurate."

The web based Multilingual Manchester, an archive at mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/ set up in 2010 to document, protect and support the languages spoken in Manchester, it is now the world's largest.

Authored by linguistics students and available for free, it contains over 100 reports on [multilingualism](#) and language minorities in Manchester.

The public are also invited to send in material to the website which contains information on languages including Chitrali from North Pakistan, Konkani from Western India, Dagaare from Ghana and [Burkina Faso](#) and Uyghur from NW China.

Professor Matras, who is based at the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures, said: "Because of EU enlargement and the access granted to new EU citizens, [language diversity](#) in Manchester is more dynamic than most cities.

"Melbourne, for example, is famous for its many languages but as it tends to have very established communities it will be less diverse than Manchester.

"New York, on the other hand, is significantly larger in size and has been attracting immigrants for as long as Manchester so its diversity is probably greater.

"But Manchester as a community is much more active in responding to language needs at the level of public services."

Professor Matras' team has been working closely with local authorities and schools to advise on the language needs of the city.

They have worked with the NHS on prioritising languages for information and advice on access to health care, for city council agencies and schools.

They are also supporting the Manchester Association of Speech and Language Therapists on bilingualism and acquisition of literacy.

Another project supports the police and Council regeneration team on issues that concern access to services, education and representation for vulnerable groups.

More information: mlm.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/

Provided by University of Manchester

Citation: Manchester boasts 153 languages (2012, December 12) retrieved 7 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-manchester-languages.html>

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