

PATTERNS OF LANGUAGE USE AMONG PASHTU SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS IN KASHMIR: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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Abstract

In today's modern society, multilingualism and multiculturalism presents the constant interaction of majority and minority linguistic groups, which is reflected in their language. In this context, trends of language usage have attracted more attention in order to better understand the sociolinguistic outcomes of such communication situations. The aim of this research is to recognise patterns of language use among a minority immigrant community living in Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district in Kashmir. Since they speak a different language, have a different cultural history, and live a different traditional lifestyle, the group poses a unique opportunity for investigation. As a result, the current paper is an attempt to examine trends of language use among Pashtu speaking immigrants, as well as how these people have preserved their identity by adhering to their native tongue for nearly thirty years of their migration.

Keywords: Patterns of Language Use, Language Contact, Multilingualism and Pashtu immigrants.

1. Introduction

The multilingual and multicultural nature of modern society presents a constant interrelation between dominant and minority communities all over the world. This constant relation makes scholars investigate communities and study sociolinguistic phenomena of language contact, language shift and Maintenance and patterns of language use among such communities. But these minority and ethnic communities face a lot of challenges both in terms of their identity and language preservation. They either maintain their language or go through the process of shifting. The Speakers of these minority linguistic groups use the dominant language in many domains of social life, if not in households. The main reason behind such processes of language shift is bilingualism or multilingualism. Fasold (1989) views both the processes of language maintenance and shift as a collective long term result of language choice wherein certain groups of people use a new language instead of their native language while others manage to maintain the use of their native language. Actually in a language contact situation certain speakers of a linguistic group manage to use their language in every domain of the society while others shift to some dominant or new language. Those speakers who use the new or dominant language can ultimately lead to the shift and the others who try to manage the use of their language can eventually lead to the maintenance of their language. Working further on the

already existing body of literature researched by Coulmas (1997), Bloomfield (1933), Weinrich (1953), Fishman (1972), the study points out that the basic prerequisite of language maintenance and language shift is a contact situation. The contact situation may give rise to either bilingualism or language shift. Sometimes a shift may also occur after a long course of bilingualism. Language maintenance on the other hand is a situation wherein there is continued use of a language or it is often seen that one language, one language holds its own place despite the influence of other languages. Bloomfield (1933) studied some immigrants in the United States who gave up their native language and preferred a foreign language, hence making a complete shift. But Bloomfield has not talked about the language contact phenomenon. Fishman while studying language maintenance and shift (1972) has given a comprehensive model of language maintenance and shift with following subdivisions. (a) Habitual language use at more than one point in time or space under conditions of inter-group contact (b) Antecedent, concurrent or consequent psychological, social or cultural process and their relationship to stability or change in habitual language use and (c) Behaviour towards language in the contact setting, including directed maintenance and shift effort.

However in studies on language maintenance and shift, domain of language use has proved to be an essential construct, and domain analysis has contributed a lot to understanding language behavior among minority communities. Greenfield (1970) who pioneered in implementing domain analysis organized the innumerable social situations which he encountered during his fieldwork among Puerto Rican community living in New York whose members used Spanish and English into five domains of 'family', 'friendship', 'religion', 'education' and 'employment'. Building further on the domain analysis of Greenfield (1970), Fishman (1972) maintained that domains aren't mere a cataloguing of situations of language use but rather an essential tool for evaluating language shift (28). Different scholars have used different domains based on the nature of their studies, with family/home the most significant among all. Some scholars have emphasized the role of interlocutor and the topic of discussion in determining the language choice of people (Sankoff and Poplack, 1979). While home/family domain has been considered vital for maintenance of language and has been shown to slow down language shift, members of minority languages don't have considerable power over other domains in determining their language use and as such the role of interlocutor becomes significant (Wei, 1994). Clyne (1982) has emphasized the role of extended family structure in the maintenance of 10 languages rather than the nuclear family. The extended family structure, according to Clyne, includes not only the grandparents, but other close and distant relations and friends. Since these immigrants who are living in the dominant host society of Kashmir are surrounded by dominant languages like Kashmiri and Urdu, Kashmiri being the dominant language and Urdu being the lingua franca has definitely taken up the place of many social domains of the immigrant community. So The present paper is an attempt to study the patterns of language use in different domains of social life of these Pashto speaking Pashtuns.

The Present study

The focus of the present study is to observe the patterns of language use among the Pashtu speaking Pashtuns living in the dominant host society of Kashmir. These Pashtuns reside in the Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district, Wantrag area of Anantnag district mainly however certain speakers are also found in Bandipora as well. Gutlibagh is a large village of around 18 Square Kilometers area located at the distance of 30 Kilometers from Srinagar city center towards its east. Gutlibagh comprises six small villages of Banjar Basti, Wayil Wider, Chanhaar, Baba Wayil, Nazar Baghand and Gutlibagh proper. According to unofficial estimates, there are around 1000 households and the total population of the area may be around 15000 to 17000 individuals. According to local elders, the word Gutlibagh has been derived from the Pashto word guth meaning corner. The word bagh meaning garden/place/area etc. is found in Pashto, Urdu, Kashmiri and many Indo-Aryan languages. Except for the two villages of Baba Wayil and Gutlibagh Proper, where, besides Pashtuns, Kashmiris also live, the rest of the four villages are exclusively inhabited by the Pashto speaking Pashtuns. Gutlibagh is part of the Ganderbal district of Kashmir province and is connected to an all-weather road with the district headquarters with good transport facilities. The Pashtuns of Gutlibagh would visit the Ganderbal markets for their needs, lately a number of shops selling food and other items have cropped up near the bus stand of the village. The Pashtuns of Gutlibagh believe that they originally belong to Batagram district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province in Pakistan and speak the Peshawari dialect of Pashto. Up to a century before, Gutlibagh used to be the summer home of Pashtuns from Batagram Alai who would migrate to Kashmir along with the cattle. Most of the present settlers in Gutlibagh believe that their elders were nomads, engaged in transhumanism, between Batagram in KPK and Kashmir. Some of them were also traders who would deal in copper and silk threads. Gutlibagh and the adjoining areas are lush green with ample fresh grass and water for the cattle and given that it used to be an outlying and comparatively isolated piece of land, the area would also offer the migrators an ideal place to build their temporary shelters and live as per their own rules without much interference from Kashmiris. Pashto is the one of the principal languages of Afghanistan and Pakistan with a speaker strength of around 53 Million people globally (Ethnologue 2020). The language is spoken by some migrant labourers in Iran and the UAE and Saudi Arabia. However, a small number of Pashto speakers can be found in India also. The Census of India 2011 mentions some 21677 persons as speakers of Pashto also referred to by the name of Kabuli/Afghani, out of which 17942 are shown as belonging to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the Pashto speakers are mainly concentrated in the Gutlibagh area of Ganderbal district. Pashto has been categorized into three major varieties of Central Pashto, Northern Pashto and Southern Pashto (Ethnologue 2020). The data for the present paper has been collected in the same area of Gutlibagh where Pashtu speakers are mainly concentrated. The customised questionnaire has been used to collect the data on different aspects like different domains of the society like home, family neighbourhood, school/office/college etc. Information was also sought in extended family domains as well. So the present paper is an attempt to study how dominant languages like Kashmiri

and Urdu have taken their place in many domains of social life of these Pashtu speaking Pashtuns.

2. Results

As indicated in figure 1, 99% of the participants have reported the use of Pashto in their home domain, and a meager 1% of participants have reported the use of Urdu in the domain. With native Kashmiri people, most participants use Urdu, however 26% have also reported the use of Kashmiri in this domain. Some Pashtuns of Gutlibagh can also communicate in Kashmiri. Since Gutlibagh is dominated by Pashtuns, the language used in the domain villages/ Mohalla and Mosque is primarily Pashto. In the domains of School/College/Office and Travel, the primary language of use for majority of the participants is Urdu whereas the use of Kashmiri in these domains has been reported by 11 and 10 of the participants respectively.

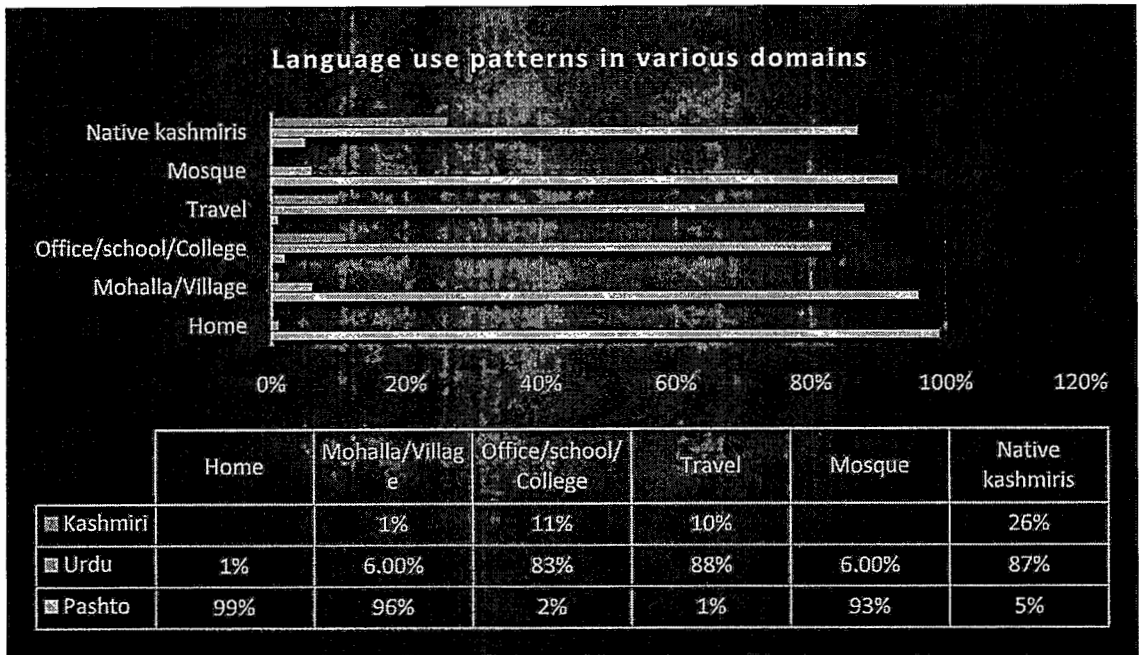


Figure 2: Domain-wise language use patterns among Pashto-Speaking Pashtuns

Within the home domain (Figure 2), all the participants have reported the use of Pashto with father, grandfather and siblings. With relatives other than the primary kin, 97% of the participants have reported the use of Pashto and a meager 2% each have reported the use of Urdu and Kashmiri. Interestingly 8% of the participants have reported the use of Urdu with spouses and 2% have reported the use of Kashmiri in this domain, even though hardly any marriages have taken place between Kashmiri and Pashtuns. Only 4% and 5% have reported the use of Urdu with children and grandchildren respectively and rest of the participants have reported the use of Pashto with these kin. The lesser percentage

reflected for the use of Pashto with spouses is commensurate with the marriage status of the participants. Again, lesser percentages for siblings and grandparents reflect the absence of such kin for such participants.

The insignificant use of Kashmiri with relatives other than the primary kin are indicative of the fact that there are very few Pashtuns who have married within the native Kashmiri people. All the Pashtuns of Gutlibagh can freely converse in Urdu. However the use of Kashmiri in the College/School/Office domain by 11% of the participants indicates that there is some degree of fluency in the language amongst the community members.

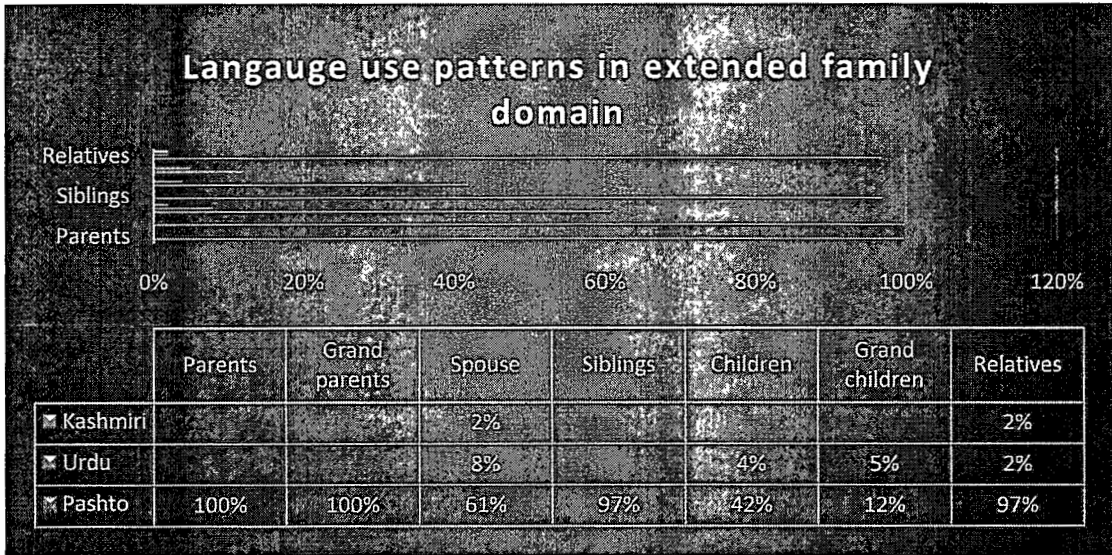


Figure 3: Language use patterns in extended family domain among Pashto-Speaking Pashtuns

Mosque is a significant community domain where Pashto and Kashmiri speakers interact especially in those villages of Gutlibagh where both Kashmiri and Pashtuns speakers reside. No use of Pashto has been reported by 23% of the participants in this domain while 15% have reported that the language is used ‘extremely well’ and 7% have reported the use of the language to be ‘well’ in this domain. Around half of the participants have reported that Pashto is used ‘to some extent’ in Mosques. The results indicate that not all Mosques in Gutlibagh are under the control of Pathans and the administration of these centers may be jointly done with Kashmiris.

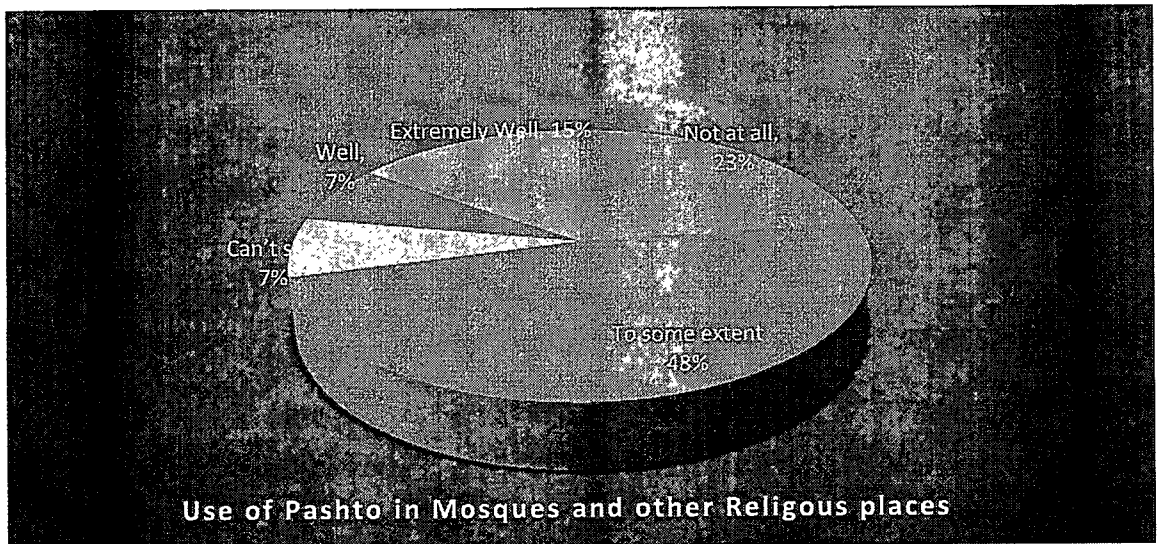


Figure 4: Use of Pashto in Mosques and Religious Places.

The frequency of Pashto use among various domains indicate that use of the language is quite intact in home and immediate neighbourhood domains, while as the public domains outside of Gutlibagh sees little use of the language. Within home 99% and in neighbourhood 88% have reported that they 'always' use the language. Whereas, another 9% who have said that they use it 'often' in the latter. In the domain school/college/office, a majority 38% have said that they 'never' use the language; 30% participants use it 'rarely' and 25% use it only 'sometimes'. A minority of 6% have reported that use it 'often' in school/college/office. During travel and in market, a majority 47% have reported that they use Pashto 'sometimes' and a significant 20% have reported they use it 'often'. However, there are 18% who have said that they 'rarely' use it and another 10% who 'never' use the language in the latter domain. A minority 5% have said that they use the language 'always' in the domain travel/market.

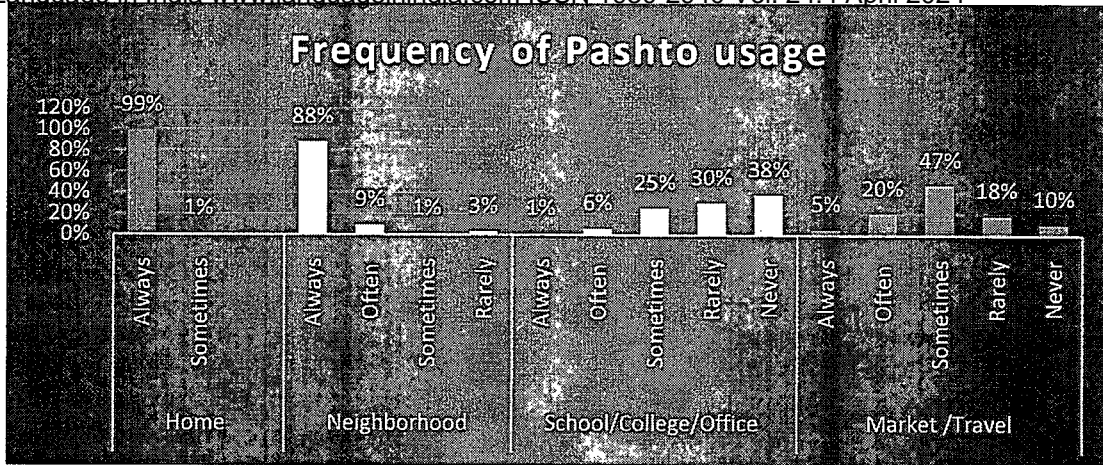


Figure 5: Frequency of Pashto usage in various domains

The use of Urdu among Pashtuns in various domains is significant while the use of Kashmiri is little. In homes use of Urdu is almost nil as only 4% have reported the use of language as ‘always’. In neighborhood, 7% use it ‘always’ and 12% use the language ‘often’. However, in school/college/office, 65% have said that they use the language ‘always’ and another 21% use it ‘often’. In market/travel, a majority of 42% use it ‘often’ and another 29% use it ‘always’. In market/travel and school/college/office, 45% and 40% respectively have said that they use it ‘sometimes’.

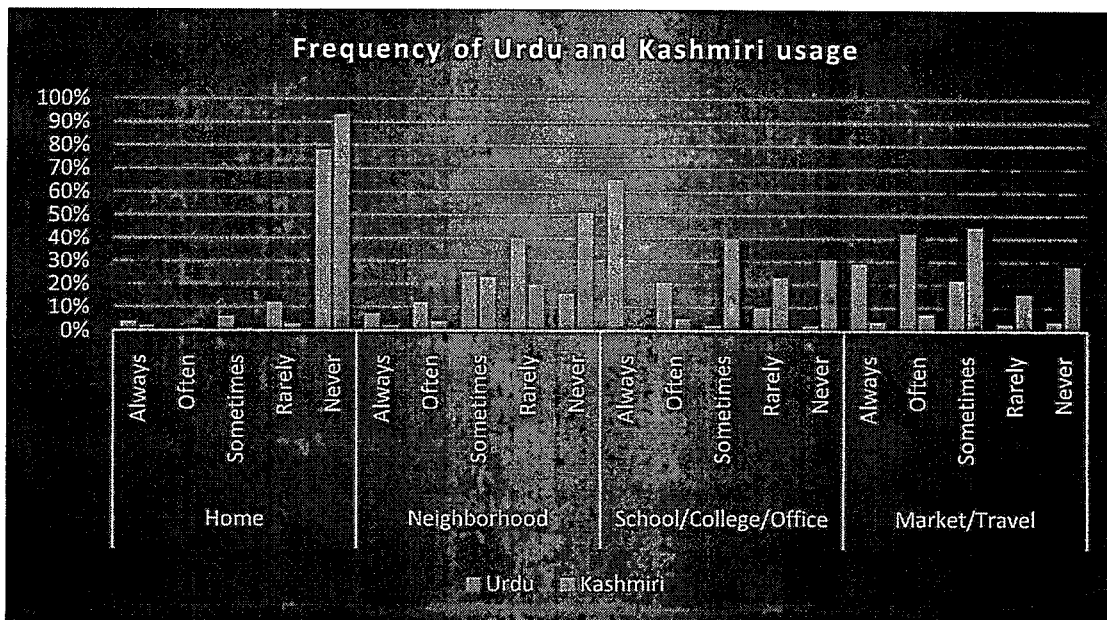


Figure 6: Frequency of Urdu and Kashmiri usage in various domains

The Pashtu speaking Pashtuns have preserved their language to some extent and are using it in many domains of social life .The language is being completely used in home domain however in schools and offices it has been replaced by Urdu and Kashmiri as the language is not a medium of instruction in schools in Kashmir. Living on dominant host society of Kashmir has made them to adopt more or less Kashmiri way of life in terms of both cultural and dress patterns, but they have somehow managed to maintain their language .The other reason for the constant use of Pashtu language in home domain is that the community is living in a separate place with least influence of Kashmiris.

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