Kashmiri Greeting Rituals: A Quantitative Analysis

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Abstract

One of the most important social customs in any human society is greeting. Different greeting expressions are within the vernacular of any community and have a significant social function due to their role in enhancing and promoting the relations between the society members. Variety of greeting expressions, both verbal and non-verbal are found in the speech of Kashmiri speakers. A strong 'verbal lubricant' in its own right provides a bridge between individuals, and greeting expressions is one among those strategies which fills that gap and establishes the bond between different interlocutors.

The present paper is an endeavour to study the detailed usage of greeting expressions along with the statistical measurements, found among the Kashmiri speakers.

Key Words: Greeting expressions, Rituals, Politeness, Community, Context, Interaction.

Introduction

Greetings are imperative as well as recurrent in daily social interactions all over the globe. Greetings act as the central component to establish and maintain the interpersonal relationships. As a central aspect of politeness phenomenon, greetings have been studied in subjects like sociology, anthropology, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics.

Greetings are the universal rituals of commencing and concluding an interactional encounter (conversation process). They have a crucial social efficacy in informal visits which goes beyond Malinowski's 'phatic communion'. Some languages can be assessed according to their greeting patterns. In parts of Africa entire language can be evaluated in terms of the greeting patterns (Schegloff, 1972:211). Semantically, greetings attain their meaning from the culture they are derived from and their content is culture-specific (Holmes, 1992:308). There are some socio-cultural regulations for initiating greetings in broad sense, such as, the younger should greet the older; the smaller assemblage should greet the larger

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one; the walking person should greet the sitting one, the horseman should greet pedestrians, etc. Besides the socio-cultural system, there are different spoken expressions of greetings within the vernacular of any community and they have a high social position due to their significance in enhancing and promoting the relationships among the society members.

There is a bulk of researches which explored the significance of speech act of greeting and its rituals in diverse cultures. Ferguson (1967; pp.137-151), considers greeting expressions as an illustration of 'a politeness formula'. He further said that these expressions are used in a range of contexts.

Goffman (1971; pp.79), characterized greeting exchanges as admittance rituals consisting of two types, passing greetings and engaging greetings which work as a key that opens and closes relations. Goffman further said that greeting expressions serve to re-establish communal relations, acknowledge position, and assurance for safe passage when performed between strangers.

Firth (1973) acknowledged that greetings are practices which comprises of verbal and non-verbal forms. Verbal forms may be one of the three linguistic entities: question (How are you?), interjection (Hello) or affirmation (Good morning).

Laver (1981) anticipated that greeting patterns have three components: formulaic phrases, address forms, and phatic communion. Laver views greeting expressions as the customized rituals which serve to safeguard face.

Ibrahim (1983; pp.7-15), uses the term 'minor sentences' to refer to the expressions of various types such as salutations, invocations and felicitations. He also pointed out that salutations are used to portray politeness and reverence in order to have a comfortable level of social discourse.

Lungstrum (1987; pp.286-296), studied two different paradigms for greeting in Kekchi in Pueblo Viejo, Belize. He discussed the nature and applicability of greeting expressions in that particular culture. He found that the variety of greeting that was used by community would signify exceptional social reference to the status of the addresser and addressee, the period of meeting and the extent of friendliness.

Chen Song-Cen (1991; pp.55-60) pointed out that greeting expressions shape an incredibly important element of the polite language. He said that by using greeting expressions, the speaker would show his attitudes towards the addressee or would initiate a talk with him.

Greeting each other on meeting or taking leave is a mark of sociable intent. Greetings expressions are considered as an essential means to smash silence between the participants of conversation. Greeting each other implies that one desires to set up a relationship in a non-threatening atmosphere with the aid of suitable words, tone of voice and body language, this is referred to as 'Phatic Communication'. As David Crystal (1987; pp. 427) says, "Phatic communication

refs to a type of communication which signals one's inclination for interpersonal communication and/or one's readiness to interact within a particular community".

Greetings as Linguistic Ritual of Politeness

Firth (1972; 29-30) suggests that greetings should be treated as unprompted poignant reaction to the coming together of people. For the most part they are exceedingly conventionalized and pursue patterned practices.

Espousing Firth's view point, Laver makes a supplementary investigation of greetings in the linguistic patterns of conversation. He asserts that greetings as conversational routines are part and parcel of the linguistic repertoire of politeness. Greetings are tools of polite behavior and their applicability is guided by a polite norm. Based upon his postulation, he employs Brown and Levinson's politeness theory to explicate the purpose and use of greetings. As Laver comments, the fundamental notion Brown and Levinson employ in their model is that of 'face'. Face refers to the emotional and social sense of self that every person has and expects every other person to be familiar with. They distinguish negative face (the desire that one's action be unhindered by others) and positive face (the desire that one's wants be pleasing to at least some others). If the premeditated ends of speakers in conversational act are to be achieved, various politeness strategies must be used to uphold the participants' negative face or to augment their positive face. In the process of greetings, such preservation of augmentation of face has to be taken into consideration.

For illustration, in English language, greetings such as 'Hello!', 'How do you do?', or 'I am pleased to see you', has to be used to preserve or even enhance the hearer's positive face, depending upon the status of the participants and the social setting. Both the participants usually take the account of each other's positive as well as negative face into consideration

In nut shell, greeting expressions are vital conversational rituals in the cooperation of social relationships and they are controlled by universal social factors.

Different Greeting Forms

Every society has its own particular ethnicity and means of acting. And it holds true for every community that greeting expressions form the part of their every day rituals. Greeting expressions can be distinguished into different forms that are sufficient to be employed in framing generalizations. On the basis of linguistic and paralinguistic attributes, greetings can be classified as 'Verbal greetings' and 'Non-Verbal greetings'. Verbal greetings are basically the utterances or expressions particular to a language and its culture. On the basis of different time frames, verbal greetings expressions in English language can be exemplified as 'Time-free greetings' and 'Time-bound greetings'. Greeting expressions commonly used to commence or to conclude conversations, or to enquire about one's wellbeing are referred to as time-free greetings, while as, daily formal greetings and seasonal greetings are referred to as time-bound greetings.

➢ **Time-free greeting expressions found in English language:**
  1. Hello
  2. Hie
  3. How do you do?
  4. How are you?
  5. Happy to see you.
  6. Good to see you again, etc.

➢ **Time-bound greeting expressions found in English language:**
➢
a. Daily formal greeting expressions
  1. Good morning
  2. Good afternoon
  3. Good evening
  4. Good night
  5. Good day

b. Seasonal greeting expressions
  1. Happy new year
  2. Happy birthday
  3. Many happy returns of the day, etc.

Non-verbal greeting expressions associated

Verbal greetings are deficient without some kind of non-verbal performance, implicit or explicit, in the use of any form of greeting. A greeting can consist of a barter of formal expression, a simple kiss, a hand shake or a hug. The type of greeting used is typically determined by social etiquette, as well as affiliation between the people. The verbal as well as the non-verbal expressions like hand-shake, facial expression, gestures, body language and eye contact, used while greeting, all signals the predictable greeting type between the interlocutors. Gestures are the most understandable indication. For example, greeting someone with open arms is usually a signal that a hug is expected. However, crossing arms can be interpreted as a symbol of unfriendliness. Facial expressions, body language and eye contact reflect emotions and interest level between the participants of conversation. A frown, slouching and lowered eye contact implies disinterest, however, smiling and a cheerful attitude is a sign of welcome. Throughout all the cultures people greet one another as a mark of gratitude, affection, friendship and respect. Hugs, handshakes, nods, bows and nose rubbing are all acceptable greetings. The most common greeting is a kiss, or kisses on the cheek and forehead.

Various other non-verbal greeting expressions used in different cultures are as:

• Bowing of head

• Fist pound (in which two persons touch fists)

• Handshake

• Hand-kissing

- Forehead Kissing

- Cheek Kissing

- High-five

- Hat raising or tipping

- Hug

- Pranama

- Pressing nose

- Waving (the gesture of moving one's hand back and forth), etc.

Greeting Expressions found in the Speech of Kashmiri Speakers:

On the basis of data collected from respondents belonging to three different zones of Kashmir valley, i.e., central zone, north zone and south zone, it is observed that four different types of greeting expressions are found in the speech of Kashmiri speakers. These are as religious patterned greetings, English patterned greetings, silent greetings and miscellaneous greetings. These four greeting expressions are classified under two major groups which are as 'verbal greetings' and 'non-verbal greetings'.

Verbal Greetings   **Non-Verbal Greetings**

Miscellaneous Greetings

Silent Greetings

Religious   English patterned Greetings
Patterned
Greetings
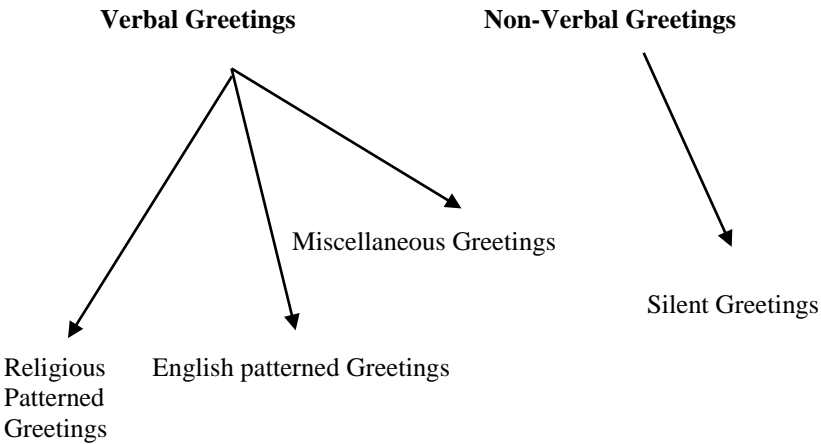
However, greetings based on different time-frames are not found in the speech of Kashmiri speakers. The four greeting expressions observed in Kashmiri language form the part of Kashmiri greeting ritual (KGR) and are explained in detail as under:

1. **Religious patterned greetings:** The most prominent religious patterned greetings which form the Kashmiri greeting rituals are /a-sala:mu-alajkum/, /namaska:r/ and /a:da:b ar‡z/. Verbal greeting expression /sala:m/ is the universal greeting form used by the Kashmiri speakers belonging to Muslim community, verbal greeting expression /namaska:r/ is used by the Kashmiri speakers belonging to the Hindu community (esp. Pandits) and /a:da:b ar‡z/

is the common verbal greeting form exchanged between these two communities to greet each other.

➢ **/sala:m/:** /a-sala:mu-alajkum/ is an Arabic greeting used by Kashmiri speaking Muslims to greet another Muslim. It nearly translates to 'peace be upon you', but is habitually considered equivalent to 'hello' or 'good day' in English. It is accompanied with certain gestures, like bowing of head or some people put a hand on their heart as they shake hands and greet. In India, this greeting is accompanied by raising the right hand to the chest. The expression /a-sala:mu-alajkum/ slightly varies in pronunciation from country to country, but it always remains comprehensible throughout. The proper fixed response for the expression /a-sala:mu-alajkum/ is /va:lajkum-sala:m/ which means 'may peace, sympathy and blessings of Allah be upon you too'. Moreover, it is also preferred to use the greeting when arriving and when leaving a place.

➢ **/namaska:r/:** /namaska:r/ is a universal spoken greeting or salutation originated from the Indian subcontinent and is used by Kashmiri speaking Hindus (esp. Pandits) to greet another Hindu. It is a customary greeting when individuals meet and a salutation when they take-leave. When spoken to another person, it is commonly convoyed by the slight bow of head with hands pressed together, palms touching and fingers pointed upwards, in front of the chest. /namaska:r/ corresponds to 'good day' in English, with the inherent connotation 'to be well'. /namaska:r/ is a non-contact form of greeting as no shaking of hands or kissing is involved between the communication partners. The gesture /namaska:r/ symbolizes the conviction that there is a divine ember within each of us that is positioned in the heart chakra. In Sanskrit, the word is 'namah + te' which means 'I bow to you' – my greetings, and prostration to you. /namaska:r/ has evolved from the word /namaste:/. The proper fixed response for the greeting expression /namaska:r/ is /namaska:r/, there is no change in its fixed response.

➢ **/a:da:b ariz/:** /a:da:b ariz/ has been derived from the Arabic word /a:da:b/ meaning 'reverence and politeness'. Such a verbal greeting expression is linked with the ethnicity of south Asian Muslims. Since the universal greeting of Muslims, i.e. /a-sala:mu-alajkum/ is meant as a greeting between Muslims only, and Muslims in India live in a multi-religious culture, thus this alternate form of greeting was coined. The non-verbal expression accompanied with this verbal greeting is raising the right hand towards the face with palm inwards such that it is in front of the eyes and the finger tips are almost touching the forehead, as the upper torso is bowed frontward. Thus, in Kashmiri speaking community, /a:da:b ariz/ is used between the two communities, i.e. Muslim and Hindu community to greet each other. The proper fixed response for the expression /a:da:b ariz/ is /a:da:b ariz/ or simply /a:da:b/.

2. **English patterned greetings:** A limited figure of English greeting expressions have found their easy way in Kashmiri greeting rituals. These greeting expressions are more frequently used among the young and close

friends. They have become part of Kashmiri greeting rituals as a result of mass media, and direct contact with English native speakers through living, working and studying in English-speaking countries. Moreover, English is also one of the compulsory subjects in school curriculum, thus creating its impact over the speech acts of Kashmiri speakers. English patterned greetings include hello, hi, good morning, etc.

3. **Silent Greetings:** Silent greeting expressions (non-verbal greetings) are also used as a part of Kashmiri greeting rituals. Hands, fingers, eyebrows and head form the tools for these greetings. In many cases, movements and gestures made by different parts of body are used as forms of greeting expressions when the one being greeted is far away or passing by. Also, such gestures might be accompanied by one of the verbal greeting expressions that are mentioned previously in order to give assurance for the greeting and to reflect the intimate feeling of the greeter towards the one being greeted. Many people would elevate their hands particularly the right one with their palm completely open to greet others. Moreover, raising of brows, waving of hands and fingers and slight head movement is also used to signal the response to the greeting.

4. **Miscellaneous Greetings:** Miscellaneous greetings are also found as a part of Kashmiri greeting rituals. Miscellaneous greetings act as the initiators of main conversation, for example, /va:raj ʧʰiv həz/ (Are you fine?)

Miscellaneous greeting phrases are generally related to queries about one's health and well-being. Some of the recurrent greeting phrases used by Kashmiri speakers are as:

*   /va:raj ʧʰiva:/

[How are you?]

*   /kʲa:sa: va:raj ʧʰivɨ/

[How are you?]

*   /t̪ʰi:k pət̪ʰʲ ʧʰiva:/

[Are you fine?]

*   /sə:ri: ʧʰivɨ: va:ray/

[Are all OK?]

*   /kʰɔʃ pə:t̪ʰʲ ʧʰiva:/

[Are you happy?]

*   /kʲa:sa: kʰɔʃ pə:t̪ʰʲ ʧʰiva:/

[Hey, are you happy?]

*   /kʲo: va:rajav/

[Hey, how are you?]

- /sehat ʧʰuva: ʈʰi:k/

[How is your health?]

- /mahra: ʈʰi:k pəʈʰʲ ʧʰivɨ/

[How are you?]

- /mahra: kʰɔʃ pə:ʈʰʲ ʧʰivɨ/

[Are you happy?]

- /va:raja:/

[Fine?]

- /kʰɔʃ pəʈʰʲa:/

[Happy?]

- /va:raje:/

[Fine?]

- /va:raj ʧʰukʰa:/

[How are you?]

- /va:raj ʧʰakʰaj/

[How are you?]

- /kehaj va:raj ʧʰakʰaj/

[Hey, how are you?]

- /kʲo: kʰɔʃ pə:ʈʰʲ ʧʰukʰa:/

[Hey are you happy?]

The replies for the greeting phrases given by the elders usually take the form of blessings as shown in the below given expressions:

- /or zuv/

[Healthy!]

  - /dor koʈʰ/

[Good health!]

  - /rumɨ reʃun a:j/

[As long life as that of a great Rishi!]

  - /ɖekɨ boɖ/

[Lucky!]

  - /ləsiv/

[May you live long!]

- /potrɨ ga:ʃ/

[Enjoy the pleasure of children!]

- /ətʃʰ pu:r/

[May your eyesight last forever!]

Statistical Analysis of Usage of Greeting Expressions in the Speech of Kashmiri Speakers

Based on the data obtained from 240 Kashmiri speakers, mutually divided into three age groups and two gender classes (already mentioned in methodology), the quantitative analysis is provided as under:

1. Usage of Greeting Expressions by Informants Belonging to Different Age Groups and Different Genders:
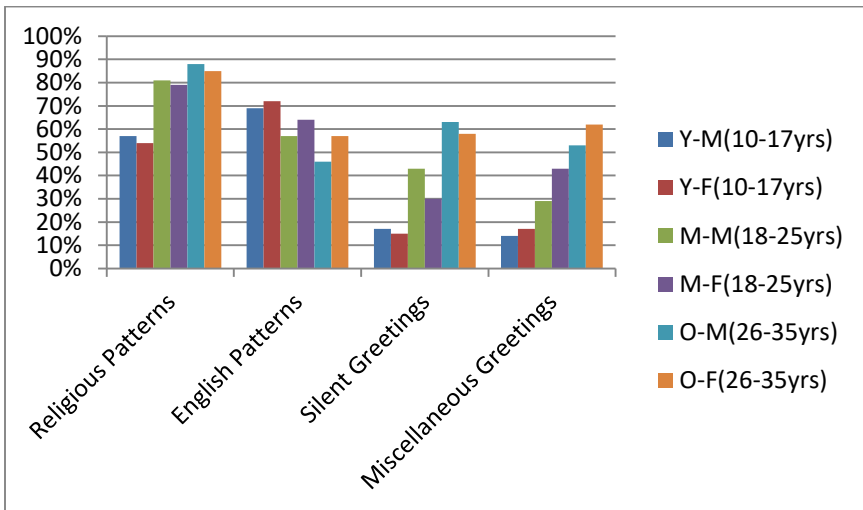

Graph 4.1: Usage of G.E by different age and gender groups

From the graph 4.1, it is quite obvious that the overall usage of religious patterned greetings is more in usage than other three types of greeting expressions. However, young aged males and females i.e., falling under the age group 10-17 years show high frequency usage of English patterned greetings than religious patterned greetings. The high usage of English patterns among young aged informants is found because of their high inclination towards English language. The reason behind this inclination is that, the English language is usually more preferred by parents and teachers for their young children, and it is made one of the compulsory languages in the school curriculum, thus, creating its impact on their speech and different speech aspects. In all the three age groups it is also found that, male respondents use religious patterned greetings more as compared to females, while as, females use English patterned greetings more than male respondents. It is also noteworthy to mention here that considering the overall

trend, as the age increases the usage of religious patterned greetings take-over English patterned greetings among both male as well as female respondents. Moreover, silent greetings are used more frequently by males of all the three age groups than females, and the overall trend of silent greetings usage among both the genders increases as the age increases. However, usage of miscellaneous greetings is found more among females than males, and the usage among both the genders increases as the age increases.

2. **Usage of Greeting Expressions by Informants Belonging to Different Occupational Groups:**
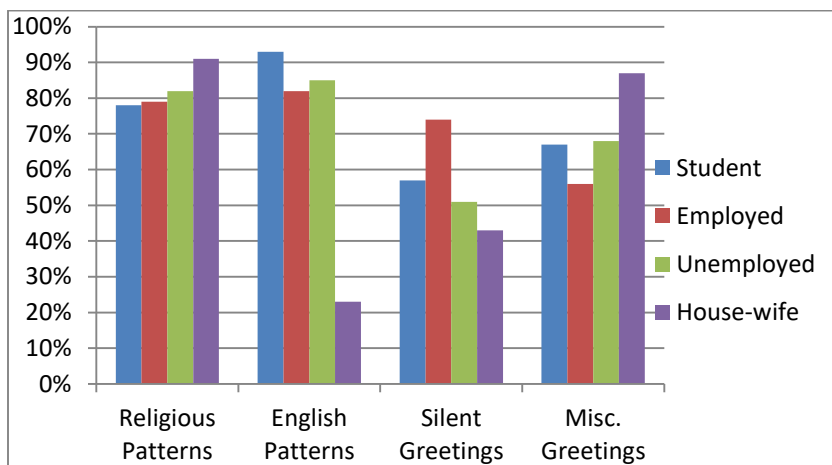
Graph 4.2: Usage of G.E by different occupational groups

The graph 4.2 portrays the usage of different greeting expressions by different work-related groups. The usage of religious patterned greetings is marked high among house-wives chased by unemployed group, next by employed group and least usage publicized by student category. The English patterned greetings usage is high among student category and least among house-wife category; however, employed and unemployed groups claim almost same usage of English patterned greetings. Employed group shows high usage of silent greetings than other three work-related groups and house-wife falls at last when taking into consideration the usage of silent greetings. However, the category of house-wife again takes the first place when the frequency usage of miscellaneous greetings is taken into consideration. While as, employed group shows the least frequency usage of miscellaneous greetings.

3. **Usage of Greeting Expressions by Informants Belonging to Different Educational Groups:**
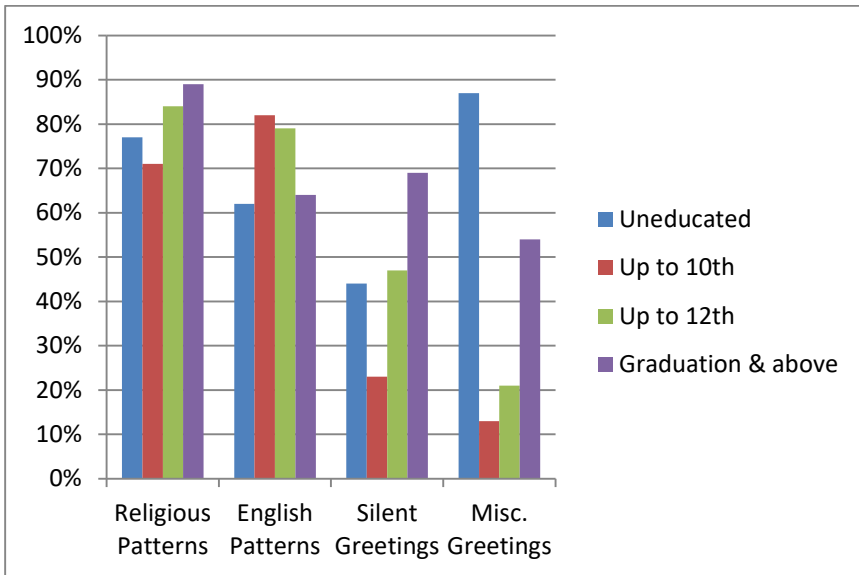
Graph 4.3: Usage of G.E by different educational groups

From the graph 4.3, it is quite clear that uneducated respondents show remarkably high frequency usage of miscellaneous greetings followed by religious patterned greetings, next by English patterned greetings and lastly by silent greetings. Respondents falling under the category 2, i.e., having the educational qualification up to 10th, show high frequency usage of English patterned greetings followed by religious patterned greetings, next by silent greetings and lastly by miscellaneous greetings. The category 3, i.e., respondents having educational qualification up to 12th, claim to use religious patterned greetings more frequently than English patterned greetings, then followed by silent greetings and lastly by miscellaneous greetings. In the category 4, i.e., respondents having educational qualification of graduation & above, claim to use religious patterned greeting more than other three greeting types. However, in 4th category there is slight shift in the trend, instead of being followed by English patterned greetings, the religious patterned greeting are followed by silent greetings, then by English patterned greetings and lastly by miscellaneous greetings.

4. **Usage of Greeting Expressions by Informants Residing in Three Different Zones of Kashmir Valley:**
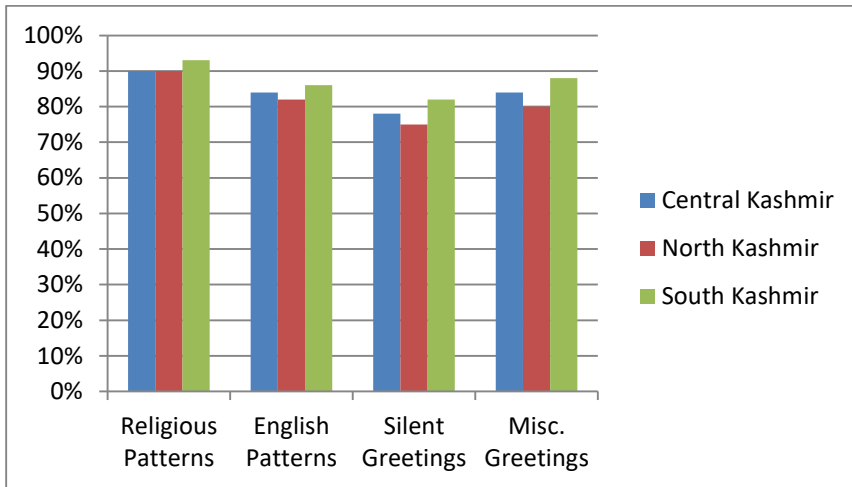
Graph 4.4: Usage of G.E by residents of different zones of Kashmir valley

As per graph 4.4, it is apparent that the respondents belonging to south Kashmir zone claim to show more frequency percentage in the usage of all the four greeting expression types than the other two zones, i.e., central Kashmir and north Kashmir. However, the overall trend for all the three zones is same i.e., respondents belonging to these three zones claim to use religious patterned greetings more frequently than English patterned greetings, which is followed by usage of miscellaneous greetings and lastly by silent greetings. Thus, the overall usage trend shows the least frequency usage rate of silent greetings and the highest frequency usage rate of religious patterned greetings.

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