

## Patterns of Language Use in Pashtuns of Kashmir

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### Introduction

The sociolinguistic notion of domain was formalized by Joshua Fishman (1972), who stressed that different settings characteristically call for the use of different languages in a multilingual society. At one level a domain is a concrete setting like the home, the street, the classroom, a shop, university, a religious institution, the media etc. More plausibly, the determinant of using one language variety over another is not the physical setting alone, but the general activity (“event”) conventionally associated with the setting. According to Fishman, domains are institutional contexts in which one language variety is more likely to be appropriate than another. Domains are taken to be constellations of factors such as location, activities and participants.

By looking at language use in different domains one can get an idea whether there are any particular linguistic preferences for different domains and different interlocutors. What remains to be seen is whether this multilingual community is stable or unstable. In the unstable case the gradual reallocation of different languages to different domains occurs so radically that over a period of time people may give up one language in favour of the other. In this backdrop the present paper aims to look into the patterns of language use in Pashtuns of Kashmir.

Pashtuns comprise the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, comprising 42% of Afghanistan's population<sup>1</sup>, and about 1.5 million continue to live as refugees in Pakistan. The term Pashtun is historically synonymous with

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/goes/af.html>

Afghan, a term now used to describe any citizen of Afghanistan. After Kabul (the capital of Afghanistan), Kandahar is the second major city in Afghanistan and a stronghold of the Pashtun culture. The second largest ethnic group of Pashtuns is in Pakistan, comprising 15% of Pakistan's population, with a population of 28 million<sup>2</sup>.

India, as a British colony, once had a large Pashtun population roughly equal to that of Afghanistan, mostly concentrated in what were then the British Indian provinces of the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the number of Pashtuns in all of India was nearly 31 million, but the speakers of Pashtu numbered less than 14 million<sup>3</sup>. Most of this population was allotted, along with its respective provinces, to Pakistan after the Partition of India. Today the Pashtuns in India can be separated into those who speak Pashtu and those who speak Urdu, with the latter being by far larger.

There is a large number of Pashtu speaking Pashtuns living in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Although their exact numbers are hard to determine, it is estimated that there are more than 100,000 Pashtuns living in present day Kashmir but the accurate figure are not available. This is also clear from the fact that in 1954 over less than 100,000 nomadic Pashtuns living in Kashmir valley were granted Indian citizenship<sup>4</sup> but unfortunately no accurate census data is available. Those settled and living in the Kashmir Valley speaks Pashtu, and are found chiefly in the southwest of the valley, where Pashtun colonies were found from time to time. In Kashmir, we have the Pashtu community in various parts of the Kashmir, spread almost in 6 districts of Kashmir division namely

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<sup>2</sup> Population Census Organization, Government of Pakistan-Population by Mother Tongue

<sup>3</sup> "Pathan". Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition.

<http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/PAS-PER/PATHAN.html>. Retrieved 2007-06-07.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hindu.com/2004/2004/07/20/stories/200407200/220900.htm>  
Retrieved 2009-08-22

Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kupwara and Shopian districts. Pashtu community is also found outside Kashmir division in Doda, Kishtwar and Jammu. Major concentration of this community is found at Gutlibag (Ganderbal) and Wantrag (Anantnag). During the interaction with the Pashtu speakers it was found that business seemed to have been the main motive for migration to Kashmir. This community is believed to have migrated in groups for business purposes and settled in low hilly areas of Kashmir in close proximity with forests where from firewood could be easily had for cooking purposes.

Pashtu belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Its closest major relatives are Persian, Kurdish, Buluchi, Tajik and Ossetian, and these languages are spoken in the area around Afghanistan.

### Method

This study is based on the analysis of the speech of seventy language users of the Pashtun community and all of them are the native speakers of Pashtu.

The study of patterns of language use of Pashtuns was carried out by means of a sociolinguistic questionnaire, which was administered to seventy subjects at two test sites. The sites were located in the districts of Anantnag and Ganderbal. Subjects were asked questions about which language they use in particular domains.

### Overview of the Method

Study	Method	Brief Description	Focus	Sample size
Patterns of language use	Sociolinguistic questionnaire	18 questions	Patterns of language use in different domains	70 subjects from two districts.

### **Patterns of Language Use**

Language preferences and domains of different languages in a society can essentially reflect the organization of a particular society and can become an essential guide for charting out the sociolinguistic setup of that community. This paper deals with language use in different domains among Pashtuns in Kashmir and its relevance in understanding their sociolinguistic setup. In the questions pertaining to the language use in different domains, the informants use the following choices: only Pashtu (P), only Urdu (U), only Kashmiri (K), and combinations of these three languages i.e. Pashtu-Urdu (PU), Pashtu-Kashmiri (PK), Urdu-Kashmiri (UK) and Pashtu-Urdu-Kashmiri (PUK), thus choosing from a set of 7 options.

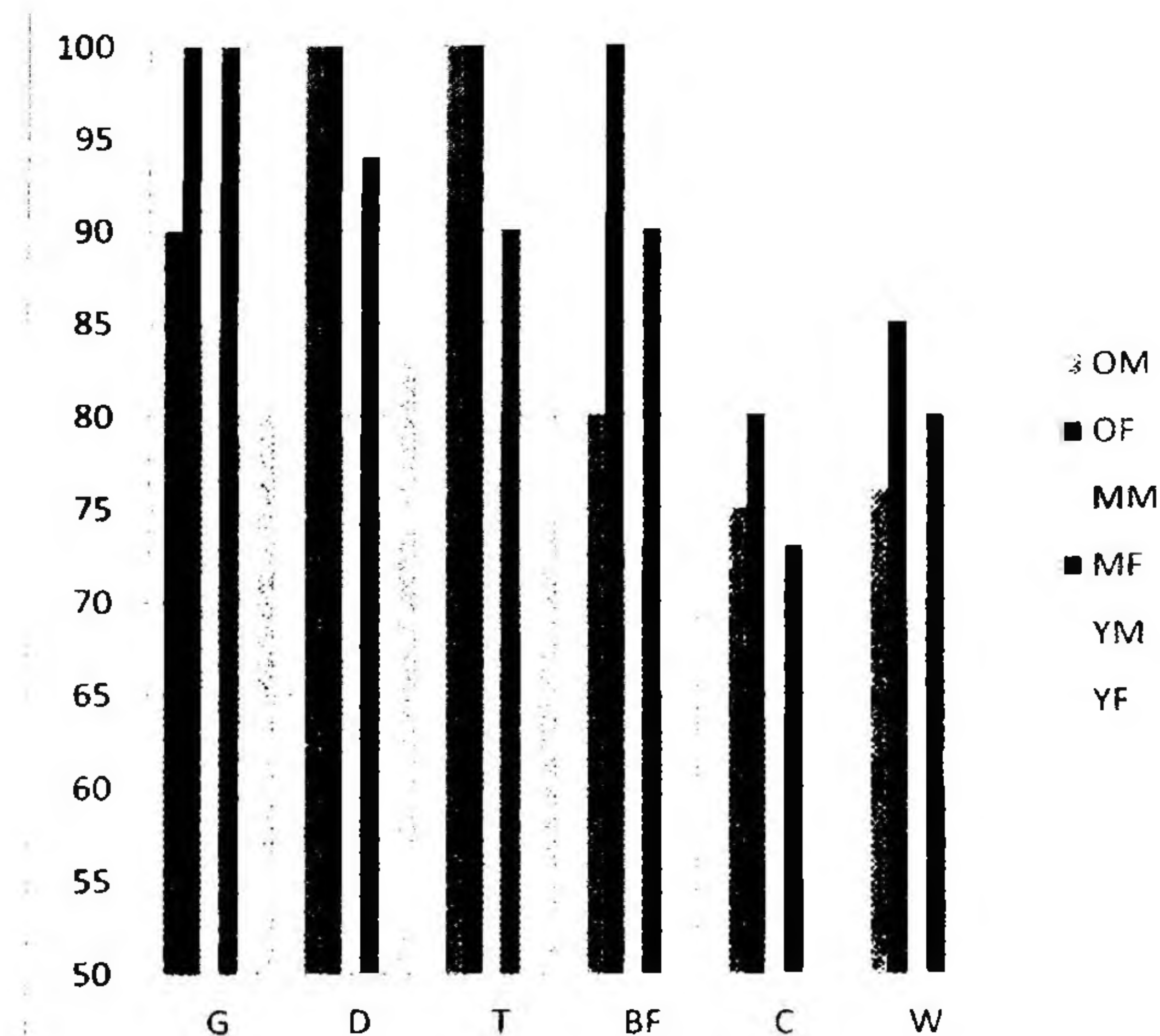
The main purpose of the elicitation of this data was to observe and understand the patterns of language with special reference to Pashtu.

- a. Across different domains.
- b. Across interlocutors in each domain and
- c. Across informal and formal contexts.

### **Personal Domain**

The patterns of language use were observed in the most personal domains by asking the language users the languages which they used with their most intimate and private interlocutors like God, Self, Subconscious and Best Friend and certain other day to day functions like languages used for counting and naming the days of the week. Language users were asked the language/languages they used for

- a. Asking God for something (G),
- b. Dreaming (D)
- c. Thinking (T)
- d. Talking to their best Friend (BF),
- e. Counting (C) and
- f. Naming of the days of the Week (W)



**Fig. 1: Use of Pashtu in the Personal Domain**

From this graph, it is observed that the use of Pashtu in personal domain decreases with a decrease in age and this pattern appears to be consistent. The youth and to some extent Middle aged males show a tendency towards decrease in Pashtu usage when compared to the other age groups. Among all the categories from asking God to naming the days of the week, more loss is found in 'counting' and 'naming the days of the week'. On the other hand, the old females show maximum retention of Pashtu. Across the sexes, comparative loss in the use of Pashtu is found in the males and retention is in females. Among all the age groups more loss is found in middle aged males and the youth.

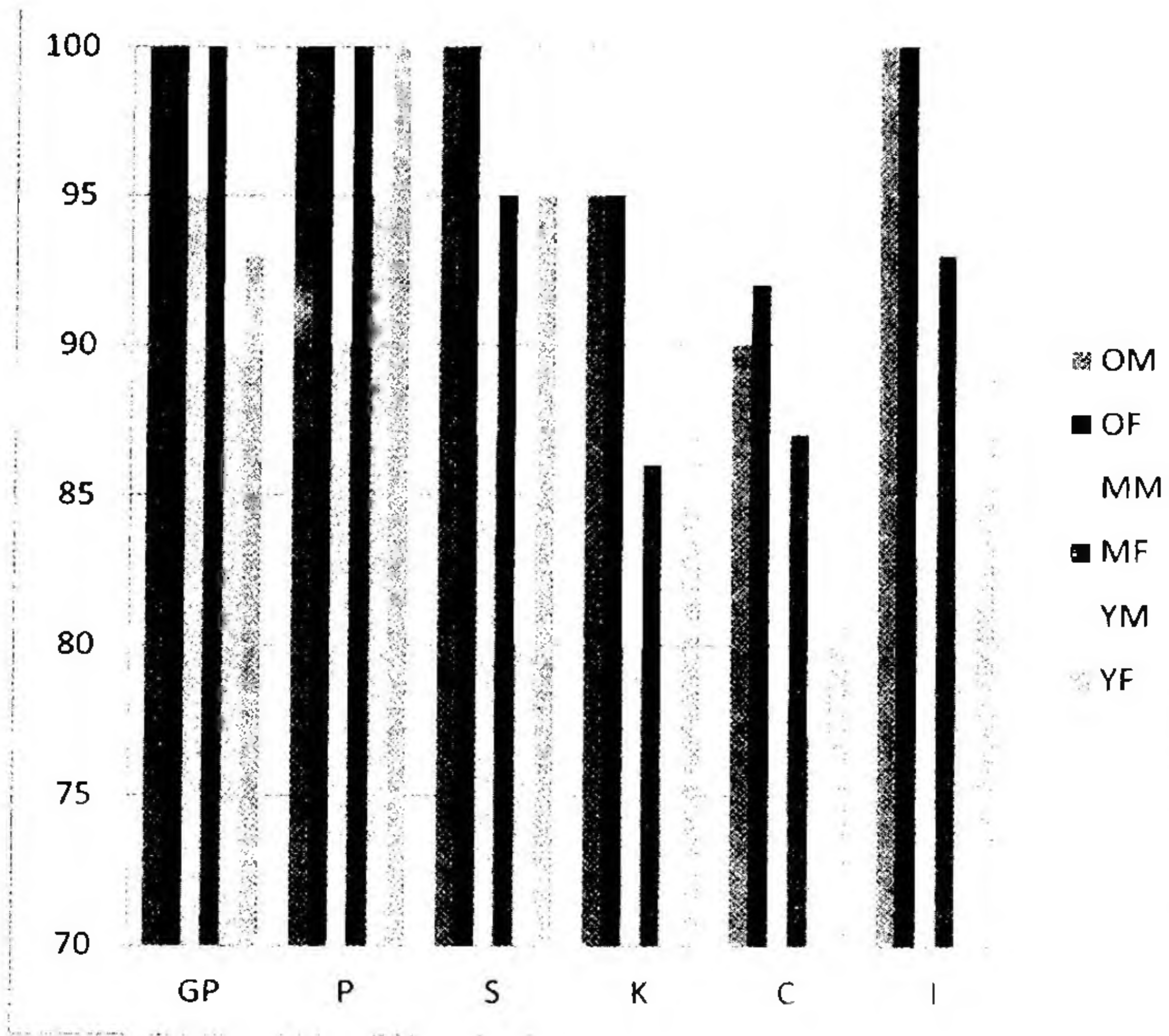
The socio-psychological aspects, which Urdu and Kashmiri stand for, play an important role in determining the language in the intimate domains. Middle aged males and youth in Gotlibagh and Wantrag are shifting from Pashtu towards the use of Urdu and Kashmiri. If we compare the young males and young females, the loss is comparatively low in young females

than that of young males. As it has been seen across sexes, females show comparatively higher maintenance tendencies than males. The reason behind this is that females are mostly confined to the home domain and are not given permission by their community to work outside their home domain. On the other hand, the movement of male population outside their homes causes them to interact with non-Pashtuns, thereby making them familiar with Urdu and Kashmiri. Furthermore, the higher literacy level in the comparatively younger age groups is another reason for this shift. Overall regarding the use of Pashtu in personal domain, it is observed that the hierarchy is somewhat like OF>MF>OM>YF>MM>YM.

### **Home Domain**

Home is the domain where interaction is mainly with members of the family, and it is expected that the mother tongue will be the language of home. Fishman (1972) has discussed two different approaches (those of Braunshausen & Mackey, and Gross) in studying language use in the home domain. One is what Braunshausen and Mackey (1962, 1965, 1966) has specified as family “members” - father, mother, child, domestic, governess, etc. and the other is what Gross (1951) specified as dyads: grandfather to grandmother etc., i.e. language of interaction between speaker and hearer within the home domain. In this study the informants returned their use of language with eight role-relationships within the family, such as grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, spouse, brothers/sisters/cousins and in-laws. Each subject returned the language used with and used by his addressee. More often the language used by the addresser and the addressee in the home domain is the same.

Fig. 2 shows the use of ‘only Pashtu’ (P), of the informants with their family members. The interlocutors are represented on the horizontal axis and the percentage of Pashtu usage by the informants is represented on the vertical axis.



**Fig. 2: Use of Pashtu in the Home Domain**

An interesting pattern observed in the figure is that there is a general decline in Pashtu usage as we move from grandparents to children. An interesting observation is the increase in Pashtu with the in-laws. The old aged males and females seem to follow a similar pattern and their Pashtu usage starts declining in the case of kin, and more so, with children. The middle aged males and females show divergence in their Pashtu use which is not unexpected considering the greater exposure and interaction of the middle aged males with other communities. Interestingly, the young females show greater similarity in approach with middle aged females in Pashtu usage. The young males show maximum divergence from Pashtu. As indicated in the graph, the young males are only superceded by the middle aged males in this count, in the case of interaction with parents and in-laws.

To get a clear picture into what exactly is happening in the home domain, the responses of the informants were tabulated.

	Grandparents			Parents			Spouse			Kin			Children			Inlaws		
	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK	P	PU/PK/PUK	U/K/UK
<b>OM</b>	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	90	7	3	90	10	0	100	0	0
<b>OF</b>	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	95	5	0	92	7	0	100	0	0
<b>MM</b>	95	5	0	90	10	0	87	10	3	80	14	6	78	15	7	83	12	5
<b>MF</b>	100	0	0	100	0	0	95	5	0	86	12	2	87	9	4	93	7	0
<b>YM</b>	90	10	0	95	5	0	80	15	5	76	17	7	77	15	8	85	11	4
<b>YF</b>	93	7	0	100	0	0	95	5	0	87	9	4	81	14	5	89	11	0

**Table 1: Language Use in Home Domain**

Table 1 shows the percentages of the use of 3 sets of language choices in the home domain. In this table the (P) set stands for the use of only Pashtu. In the second set i.e. the (PU/PK/PUK) set, the use of Pashtu along with along with Urdu (PU) or Kashmiri (PK) or with both Urdu and Kashmiri (PUK) is indicated. In the third set i.e. the (U/K/UK) set, the use of language or languages other than Pashtu are indicated which include Urdu (U), Kashmiri (K) and Urdu-Kashmiri (UK).

From Table 1 it is observed that Pashtu appears to be the dominant language in the home domain (never going below 77, as observed in the case of interaction of young males with children). Incidentally the highest Urdu or Kashmiri usage does not go beyond 8 as again observed in the case of young males and children interaction. The most striking observation that evolves out of Table 1 is the overall very low score in the ‘U/K/UK’ set as compared to the ‘P’ set and after that ‘PU/PK/PUK’ set. In other words the informants in their home domain appear mostly to prefer to use Pashtu followed by mixed Pashtu with Urdu and Kashmiri. On observing the scores from old aged males to young males, old aged females are showing maximum retention of use of Pashtu in home domain, and in the case of young males, use of Pashtu decreases. From the table 1,



it is clear that old generation uses Pashtu exclusively with grandparents (100%), parents, spouse and in-laws, and in case of kin and children, there is a slight shift. In the case of middle aged and young aged generation, females are at the top position in use of the pure Pashtu in the home domain. From the above table it is also observed that, some slight shift has started and some Urdu and Kashmiri is also used in the home domain. The hierarchy in the use of Pashtu in home domain is somewhat like OF>OM>MF>YF>MM>YM.

Overall it can be said that that Urdu and Kashmiri are slightly intruding in the public domains but home domain is comparatively free from Kashmiri and Urdu. During this survey many difficulties were faced when interviewing females who could understand Urdu and Kashmiri to some extent but could not speak these languages. A Pashtu male was used for interpretation of data collected from the female informants. It was observed that these people carry a notion of being ethnically superior to local Kashmiris and this can be one reason for their resistance in giving up Pashtu.

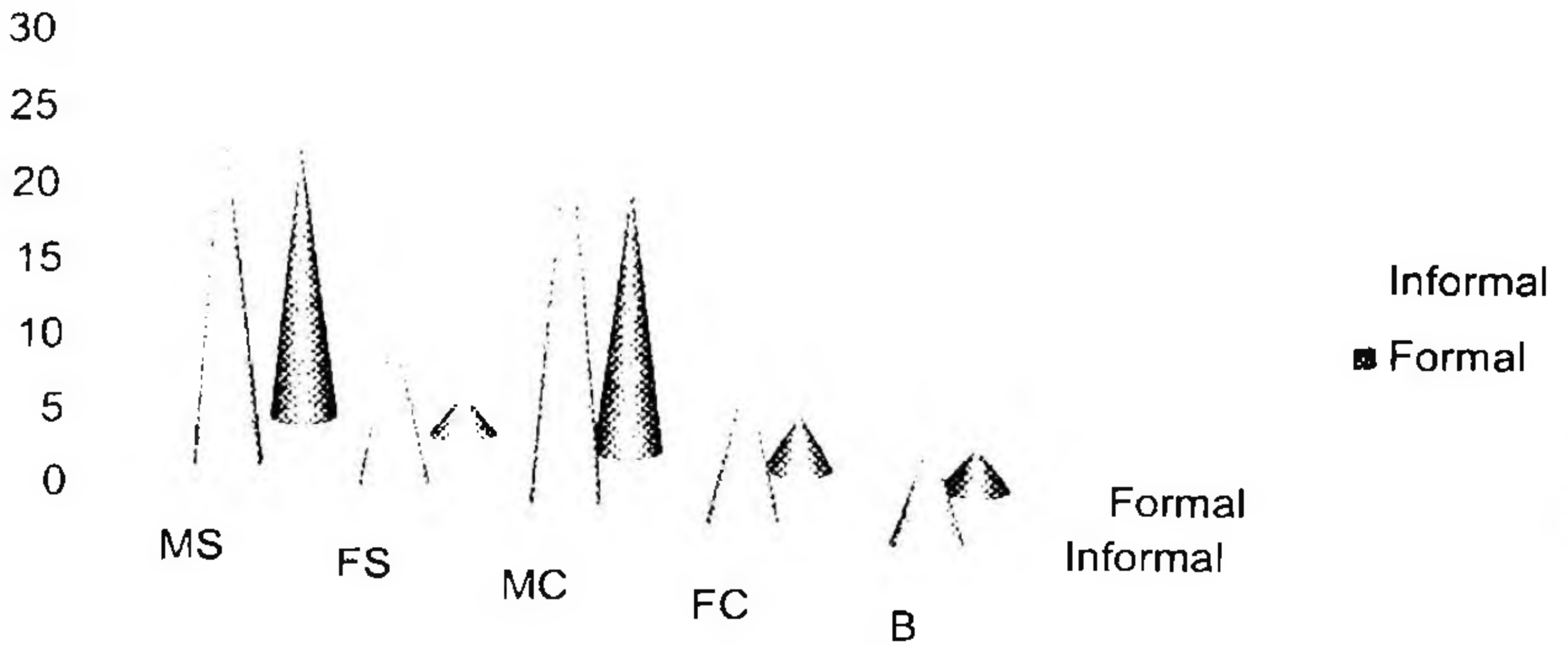
### **Office Domain**

In the office domain, the status of the office in particular and the status of interlocutors in general determine the language used by the people working in the office. As we know females of the Pashtu community do not work in any government or private sector, so the analysis in office domain will only involve male informants from Pashtu community.

The interlocutors in the office domain on whom the patterns of language use were observed included.

- a. Male subordinates (MS)
- b. Female subordinates (FS)
- c. Male colleagues (MC)
- d. Female colleagues (FC) and
- e. Boss (B)

Fig. 3 shows the graphic representation in percentages of the use of Pashtu in the formal and informal context in the office domain with different interlocutors.



**Fig. 3: (% Use of 'only Pashtu' in the Office Domain**

As seen in the above figure, it is interesting to note that in both the informal and formal contexts, the use of Pashtu is quite low (<30%) indicating thereby greater use of Urdu and Kashmiri in the offices. Also, it is evident that the use of Pashtu shows a consistent decline across all interlocutors as the conversation shifts from informal to formal contexts. A fast decline in the use of 'only Pashtu' is observed in female subordinates, female colleagues and superiors as compared to male subordinates and male colleagues because these females are non-Pashtuns and are working within the Pashtun community. The use of only Pashtu in office domain across interlocutors can be represented as Colleagues>Subordinates>Superiors.

	Subordinates	Colleagues	Superiors
<b>OM</b>	22	18	5
<b>MM</b>	15	14	3
<b>YM</b>	8	8	2

**Table 2: Use of 'only Pashtu' in the Office Domain (Both Formal and Informal Context)**

Looking at table 2, it is observed that there is a decrease in the use of Pashtu from the subordinates to the superior in all groups. In the case of subordinates and colleagues, old males show slight difference in scores, middle aged males have equal scores and the young males in the same pattern show the equal scores for subordinates and colleagues. The variation in the use of Pashtu from subordinates to superior is least in the case of old informant males and maximum in the case of young informant males.

From the above analysis, it becomes evident that office is the place where Pashtu language usage is negligible and employed males Urdu and Kashmiri are used more in the office domains. Pashtu on its part does not go beyond 34% as observed in the interaction of old males with male colleagues (who are Pashtu speakers) and goes as low as 3% as observed in the case of interaction of young males with superiors. Urdu/Kashmiri/Urdu-Kashmiri appears to be the most dominant in the office domain.

### Social Gatherings

The use of languages used by the informants with their office members was also elicited in the domains of social gatherings in both the contexts of informal and formal discourse.

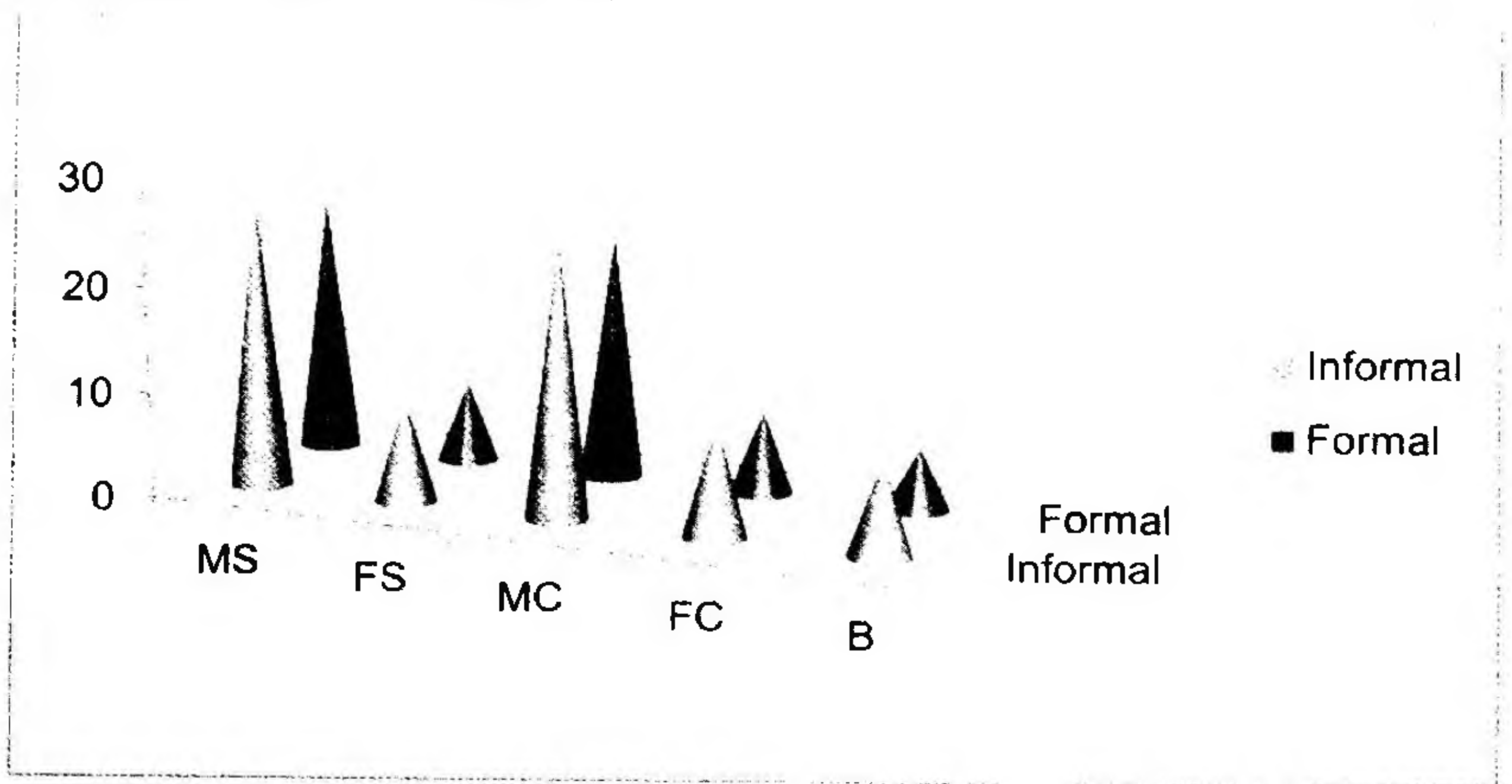


Fig. 4: % Use of Pashtu in Social Gatherings Domain

On comparing the use of Pashtu with office members in social gatherings and in the office domain, it was noticed that there is a significant difference between the formal and the informal curves in the office domain when compared to social gathering. The curves are seen to be placed fairly close together in the domain of social gatherings. This indicates that there is a greater variation in the use of Pashtu in the formal and informal contexts in the case of office domain than in the domain of social gatherings. Overall, it appears that domains have an important role to play in determining language use.

	<b>Subordinates</b>	<b>Colleagues</b>	<b>Superiors</b>
<b>OM</b>	28	24	11
<b>MM</b>	20	12	7
<b>YM</b>	6	16	5

**Table 3: (%) use of ‘only Pashtu’ in Social Gatherings Domain**

In Table 3 the decrease in the use of Pashtu is again evident as we move from the subordinates to the superior. It is interesting to note that young male informants use more Pashtu with their colleagues than the middle aged male informants in social gatherings. On comparing the use of Pashtu in the domain of social gatherings with office across all the three age groups, it is observed that except for the discourse of middle- aged male informants with their colleagues and young-aged male informants with their subordinates, the other instances of discourse show less use of Pashtu in the office domain than in the domain of social gatherings. So, due to social setting they shift from Pashtu to Urdu and/or Kashmiri. This also indicates that the hierarchy of the office is not only restricted to the office but is carried on to the domain of social gatherings as well. Furthermore, it also indicates that social gatherings are not independent of the bindings and constraints of the society as well as the restrictions of the office.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion of domains of language use in Pashtun community of the Kashmir, it becomes evident that Pashtun communities have maintained their mother tongue in the family domain and use of

Kashmiri and Urdu is negligible in home at present. On the other hand, in the domains of office and social gatherings, Pashtu is being replaced by Kashmiri and Urdu. This tendency of replacing Pashtu with Kashmiri and Urdu is more evident among employed and educated young males in the office domain. In personal domains and social gatherings of Pashtuns, a tendency has been observed in youngsters to shift towards Urdu, Kashmiri and Urdu –Kashmiri. It is a matter of time to see whether Pashtu language will be able to preserve its status in the home domain.

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