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## **LANGUAGE USE IN NEWSPAPERS IN KASHMIR: ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES**

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### **LINGUISTIC COMPOSITION: INTRODUCTION**

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is inhabited by multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic groups. The linguistic composition of the State is very complex and this linguistic complexity is enunciated by the fact that the state is inhabited by the speakers of three language families like Indo-Aryan, Dardic, and Tibeto-Burman. Some of the languages are Kashmiri, Shina, Kohistani etc (examples of Dardic) Dogri, Pahari, Punjabi, Goujri (examples of Indi-Aryan) Ladhakhi, Balti, Tibeti etc (examples of Sino-Tibetan), Burushaski which is considered as language isolate or orphan language is also spoken here by some Burshus. Apart from these, Urdu, non-indigenous language, is the lingua franca and official language by means of which people of different speech communities communicate with each other particularly in the situation where communication becomes unintelligible. The speakers of these diverse and mutually unintelligible languages are socially situated in such a way that they have no option but exchange services and interact regularly with each other. English, a global language, serves the function of official language and language of education at present both in primary and higher education. These languages serve particular social, cultural and religion functions. All the languages and varieties serve their domains of use, for example, language of media, language of education, language of business, language for international communication, language for

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administration, court etc. Interestingly, the aboriginal languages were always confined to their native speakers to the limits of the group. Mostly these languages have been restricted as language of home which is used in defined social situations in limited domains. Thus the mentioned varieties or languages almost never enjoyed the equal status.

The Linguistic situation and domains of the function of these languages in Kashmir valley is so complex that language contact is indispensable. People besides immediate access to native language-Kashmiri, have to learn Urdu and English as far as the need and the status of these languages are concerned. Such language contact situation has resulted in a change of the linguistic behaviour of the Kashmiri speech community.

### **MEDIA AND LANGUAGE CONTACT**

The situations pertinent to the process of language contact, which were rigorously studied, are political, historical, social, urbanization, globalization, education, trade and commerce. However, in present day circumstances, mass media plays an important role in language contact. But “the effect of the mass media on the speech of its audience are not well established as a field of research yet, due to the uncertainty to which media may affect people’s habits”. (Matsumoto Kazuko 2001:99). It is important to shed light on the bodies that can reinforce a particular language by encouraging and its retention as a functional language. And this important body is “media” which can provide institutional support to safeguard the linguistic and cultural identity. This paper is exploring the study on how far print media provides an institutional support to indigenous languages and stimulates the change in linguistic attitudes of the Kashmiri society?

### **MEDIA IN KASHMIR**

In Kashmir Valley, mass media is acting as a significant tool in crafting modern culture. The different forms of media whether print, broadcasted or telecasted etc is communication that reaches a large Kashmiri audience. The influence of the media on this modern culture is reflected in their life style, topics of discussion, thoughts, language, customs, food etc. Kashmiri Community is constantly influenced and changed with media culture and language of their messages from media. The print as well as electronic media assists the Government in support by improving the conditions of the people, improving the literacy rate by providing basic information

about available opportunities and modern methods of knowledge. As the people below poverty line acquires new skills through media which helps their living standards to improve. The present-day media of communication, based on electronics, have set in motion a continuing process of change which have been impacting the mind and the attitudes of the present day society. The electronics media - radio, television, cable networks, and now Internet have ushered in revolutionary changes in the Kashmir society. It has not been bound to certain economical, political, socio-psychological, and cultural domains of Kashmiri society but has also altered the linguistic domain of the society at large. Consequently, in present day circumstances, mass media plays an important role in language contact situation in Kashmir valley.

In the valley, print media (particularly local dailies and magazines) have established the grounds by the use of the Urdu language. In 1876, the first ever newspaper from Srinagar city called "Tohfai Kashmir" was published in Urdu language. Electronic media has also given considerably a major place to Urdu language in covering its programmes. By the mid of 20th century, media has played the eminent part in the context of language contact of Kashmiri with Urdu language among Kashmiri natives. It has influenced linguistic and psychological behaviour of Kashmiri bilingual speaker particularly in terms of language preference and language attitude.

#### **PRESENT ACCOUNT OF NEWSPAPERS**

Over the last seventy years, though Jammu and Kashmir was going through instabilities and turbulences, the number of Urdu and English newspapers, both weeklies and dailies and readership increased tremendously. Print media, in Kashmir, is under the private ownership. The following table presents the total number of weeklies and dailies in three languages – Urdu, English and Kashmir in the year 2008 which includes both litho and offset printed. However a few newspapers which are not approved in this year are also given in the following table 1.

Offset printed English dailies	13
Offset printed Urdu dailies	23
Litho printed Urdu dailies	33
Offset printed English weeklies	11
Offset printed Urdu weeklies	15
Offset printed Kashmiri Weeklies	2
Litho printed Urdu weeklies	33

**Table 1. Number of English, Urdu and Kashmir Weeklies and Dailies.**

Source: Government of Jammu and Kashmir Department of Information, Press and Public relation, Kashmir. (2008)

#### **DESCRIPTION ABOUT NEWSPAPERS**

Firstly, the examination of the data presents the number of languages in which newspapers are published in the year 2008 and the number of the newspapers launched in different languages till date. From the analysis of this data, the situation is quite clear in print media:

1. The number of languages in which newspapers are published are three; Urdu, English and Kashmiri. No newspaper is printed in national language Hindi from the valley.
2. The number of Urdu dailies launched till date including both offset and litho is 23 and 33. Urdu dailies rank top position in number.
3. The number of English dailies launched only offset printed till date is 13. Urdu dailies are approximately four time the English dailies.
4. No Kashmir daily newspaper has been launched.
5. The number of Urdu weeklies including offset and litho printed is 15 and 33. Urdu weeklies also rank top position in number.
6. The number of English weeklies only offset printed is 11. Urdu weeklies are also four times the English weeklies.
7. Only two Kashmiri weeklies Sangar Mall and Soan Meerass are launched. But these newspapers are not for the mass circulation.

8. Rest is quarterly, fortnightly and monthly newspaper in Urdu and English. The number is 13.

Consequently it can be concluded that print media is not playing any worth mentioning role of institutional support for the maintenance and promotion of the indigenous language(s)- Kashmiri and others. It has supported Urdu and English language. In Kashmiri, print media make the first move for the publication of one weekly newspaper Soan Miraas for mass circulation which was later discontinued. At present the number has increased only upto two and that too not for mass publication. At grass root level if this issue is analyzed, the problem is almost negligible readership and less proficiency of Kashmiris in reading skill as compare to Urdu language. The reading skill in Urdu has been developed by the language policy in education system adopted. The literacy in Urdu language is almost 100%.

#### **ANALYSIS ON THE BASIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

The present study attempts to find out what happens to the pattern of language use particularly in print media in a multilingual setting like a Kashmiri speech community. For this purpose, a questionnaire was designed and has been distributed to among 498 respondents who are acquainted with Kashmiri-Urdu-English in Srinagar city. The selected respondents belong to three age groups: 166 from Group A (over 55 old generation), 166 from Group B (30-55 young generation) and 166 from Group C (15-25 new generation). The old generation is literate; mainly civil servants and business class, young generation has qualifications either equivalent to graduates and some are now studying higher studies in universities. They make use of Kashmiri, Urdu and English languages in everyday life.

The ratio of male to female respondents was put at 1:1. Most of the questions in the questionnaire were designed to find out from the respondents the language of their interest used in reading the news papers and other sources of print media. The questionnaires were designed to find out the language attitude towards the language preferred to read the newspaper.

The analysis of information gathered from the questionnaire was undertaken by means of a simple statistical method. In this process, it was ensured that the questionnaire was properly filled out by the respondents. An attempt was also made to find how in actual practice people choose the language for the above mentioned

activity in the questionnaire. After this, the results obtained were correlated with the already analyzed respondent's choice of language from the questionnaire in order to show how the respondents in actual practice use all the languages for purposes and functions to which the languages are placed. The findings are presented as follows:

#### **LANGUAGE(S) IN READING NEWSPAPERS**

The focus was to find out the language(s) used by the respondents for reading newspaper. From the respondent's response, interview and readership survey in Srinagar city, it was found most educated people read daily newspapers either in Urdu or English. The reasons for why don't they use the native language Kashmiri are:

First, the less proficiency or no proficiency in reading in Kashmiri language.

Second, the Non-availability of dailies and weeklies in Kashmiri language.

#### **GROUP A (OVER 55) OLD GENERATION**

This group of respondents was divided into two subgroups—

Male sub-group of respondents and

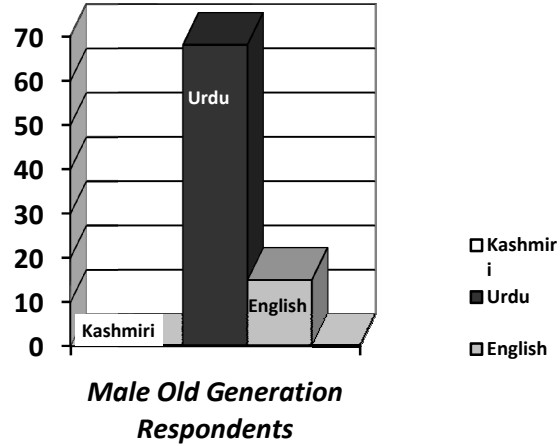
Female sub-group of respondents.

The analysis of the data suggest that if the family subscribes for the supply of daily newspapers for the interest of the elder member belonging to both the subgroups, like the grandparents, then first preferences is given to Urdu language and second preference is given to English language. Families which subscribe for more than one, choose at least one from each. The analysis of the data suggest that male sub-group of respondents in comparison to female subgroup of old generation have developed daily paper reading as habit in day to day routine. The data is presented in the table 2.

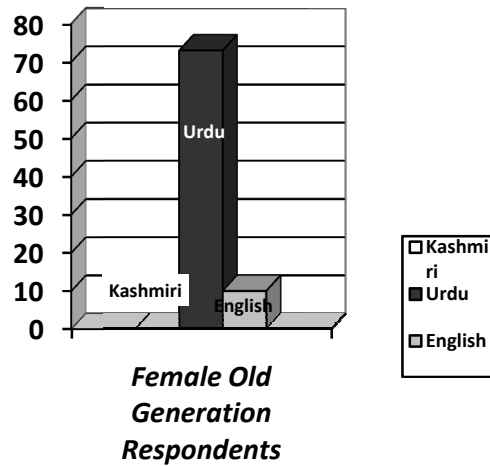
Group A (over 55) Old Generation		
Languages	Male	Female
English	15	10
Urdu	68	73
Kashmiri	0	0

**Table 2. Group A- Respondent's Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers.**

The graphical representation of the results is shown below:



**Graph-1: Comparisons of Old Generation Male Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers in Srinagar City.**



**Graph-2: Comparisons of Old Generation Female Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers in Srinagar City.**

**GROUP B (30-55) YOUNG GENERATION**

This group of respondents was also divided into two subgroups—

Male sub-group of respondents and

Female sub-group of respondents.

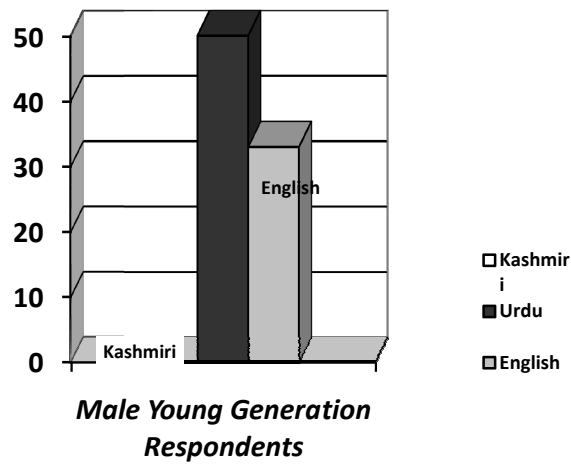
The analysis of the data suggest that if the family member of this group subscribes for the supply of daily newspapers for the interest of their own interest belonging to both the subgroups, then approximately 60% of the respondents' choice of this generation if subscribed, is for Urdu dailies and 40% for English dailies. First preference is given to Urdu language and second preference is given to English language. Families which subscribe for more than one, choose at least one from each. The analysis of the data suggests both the sub-groups have developed daily paper reading as habit in day to day routine.

Group B (30-55) Young Generation		
Languages	Male	Female
English	33	39
Urdu	50	44
Kashmiri	0	0

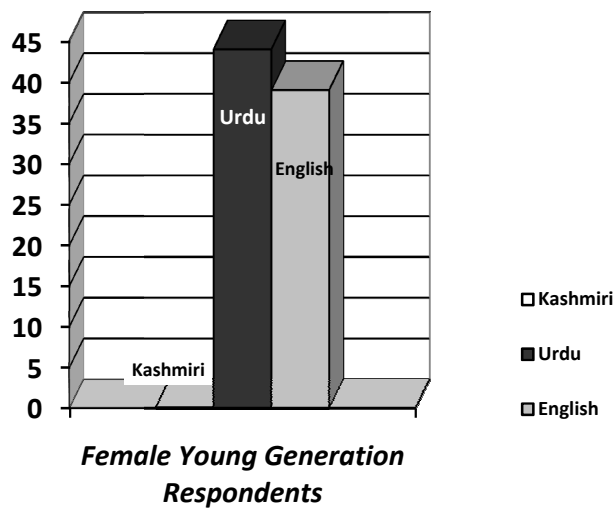
**Table 3. Group B- Respondent's Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers.**

The graphical representation of the results is shown below:





**Graph-3: Comparisons of Young Generation Male Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers in Srinagar City.**



**Graph-4: Comparisons of Young Generation Female Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers in Srinagar City.**

**GROUP C (15-25) NEW GENERATION**

This group of respondents was also divided into two subgroups—

Male sub-group of respondents and

Female sub-group of respondents.

The percentage of the newspaper readers in Urdu language in this age is comparatively less than group A and group B. If the family subscribes for the supply of daily newspapers for the interest of their children, then first preferences is only given to English language. They or their parents consider it as a part of their language education.

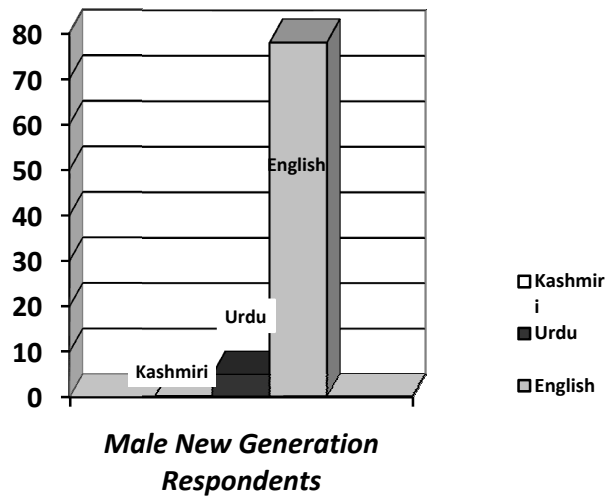
The analysis of the data suggest that if the family subscribes for the supply of daily newspapers for the interest of their children belonging to both the subgroups, then approximately 95% of the respondents of this generation opt for English dailies and 5% for Urdu dailies.

First preference is given to English language and least preference is given to Urdu language. The analysis of the data also suggests that the proficiency in reading in English compared to Urdu language in both groups of respondents is high.

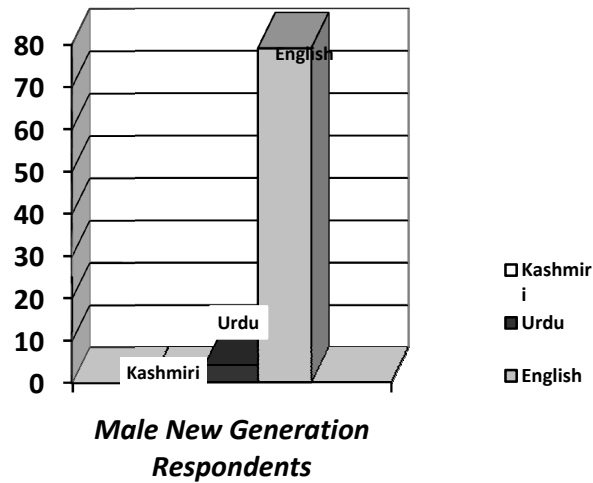
Group C (15-25) New Generation		
Languages	Male	Female
English	78	77
Urdu	5	6
Kashmiri	0	0

**Table 4. Group C- Respondent's Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers.**

The graphical representation of the results is shown below:



**Graph-5: Comparisons of New Generation Male Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers in Srinagar City.**



**Graph-6: Comparisons of New Generation Female Respondent’s Choice of Language for Reading Newspapers In Srinagar City.**

The overall analysis of the data suggested the direction of the changing attitude and linguistic preferences towards three language- English, Urdu and Kashmir is from group A to group C. From the analysis of the graph-(1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6), show the shift in attitude towards Kashmiri, Urdu and English. It suggested how new generation –group C behaves distinctly to its native language. Kashmiri language (indigenous one) is being underestimated in comparison to English and Urdu (non-indigenous one). While as the old generation –group A prefer their own native language relative non-indigenous languages. However, the young generation-group B bridges the gap between the two opposite perceptions, continuing the process of shift. Like for Kashmiri language, it forms a hierarchy of value in shift in positive attitude to negative attitude from Group A→ Group B→ Group C.

Statistical observation, survey and discussion with the natives in Srinagar suggested the readership of the available newspapers and literature in the languages spoken in the valley depend on:

1. The availability.
2. The quality of the production that has affected the overall development print media in the respective language.
3. The level of education.
4. The respondents' frequency of exposure.
5. Sex of respondents.
6. Age of respondents.
7. Status of respondents.
8. Attitude towards the native language.
9. Attitude towards the in-group culture.
10. Attitude towards the other language.
11. Attitude towards out-group culture.
12. Proficiency in language of the communication used in variety of programmes.

## CONCLUSION

Urdu has been given much institutional support by media, education, and administration etc in comparison to indigenous languages. All the indigenous languages spoken in Jammu & Kashmir are listed as minority languages. However, the constitution of India has listed Kashmiri in the Eighth Schedule, means recognised Kashmiri as official language, language for education, administration and media. In

spite of being a scheduled language, Kashmiri is not enjoying the status it could have. The Three Language Formula adopted by the State of Jammu and Kashmir must have envisaged the study of Kashmiri as one of the language and used as language for medium of instruction. However, there are certain problems that the native languages and the linguistic communities are in front of, and the future prospects for the development of the language in such a contact situation.

By this study, it is established that media can act as a source for formal education that extends institutional support for a language to survive and get standardized. It has proved as one of the most powerful motivation that can influence linguistic norms and linguistic attitudes. As the different styles of language used in newspaper add to the linguistic knowledge of audience. Interestingly, as the language is a part of culture, the internalization of language through media exposure will also help in cultural awareness. The measures of media exposure keep the literacy rate in check.

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