Burushaski in Kashmir: Contact and Vitality

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Abstract

The present paper aims to examine the claimed language proficiency of Burushos in terms of four language skills i.e. understanding, speaking, reading and writing for their mother tongue Burushaski and other languages known them. The main purpose to obtain the information is to ascertain the language vitality for Burushaski and other languages comprising their linguistic repertoire.

Keywords: Language Proficiency, Language Vitality, Burushaski, ANOVA, Post-hoc

Introduction

Burushaski, also known by the names of Boorishki, Brugaski, Kanjut, Werchikwar and Mishaski, is a language isolate spoken by some 87,000 Burusho people in Hunza, Nagar and Yasin area of Northern Pakistan. Linguistically, Burushaski has been termed as a language isolate because it does not characterize the genetic relationship with the surrounding language families like Indic, Sino-Tibetan, Dardic etc. Ethnologue (2005) mentions Burushaski speakers in India but does not provide specific information about the number of speakers and their exact location. According to the members of this speech community 300-350 Burushos live in Srinagar. Burushaski speakers of Jammu and Kashmir are settled in and around a small locality by the foothills of Hariparbat in Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The locality is known as Mohalla Azur Khan, named after Raja Azur Khan. Jammu and Kashmir. Burushos are also reported to live in Tral (Pulwama), Batamaloo, and Dandusa in Bemina area of Srinagar. Burushos form a minority speech community of J & K. The dominant language which is spoken within this community is their mother tongue i.e. Burushaski. Burushaski is acquired mainly in the home domain. The other languages known to this community are Balti, Kashmiri, Urdu, and English which are acquired from various sociolinguistic contexts like school, environment, social interactions, mass media etc. All the five languages i.e. Burushaski, Balti, Kashmiri, Urdu and English form the linguistic repertoire of Burushos.

Methodology

The present study is based on the data collected from 76 language respondents during an intensive field work. The respondents were stratified on the basis of age and gender. The respondents were taken from Mohalla Azur Khan, Kathi Darwaza, Srinagar. All the respondents were the native speakers of Burushaski. In the present paper the claimed proficiency in terms of four language skills i.e. Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing has been examined on five point scale of proficiencies i.e. (0-nil, 1-very little,2-moderate,3-good,4-very good).The overall coding of the data has been done as under:

Nil	0
Very little	1
Moderate	2
Good	3
Very good	4

The Data for each respondent after codification was fed into an excel sheet and after that it was tabulated. Overall proficiency in languages was obtained by using SPSS version 14. ANOVA and Post hoc test were employed to check out the significant differences in proficiency (if any) among the three age groups.

Claimed Proficiency in Burushaski

Claimed Proficiency in Burushaski was elicited in terms of four skills-Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Table 1 shows the mean scores in these four skills.

	Understanding	**Speaking**	**Reading**	**Writing**
Old Male (OM)	3.9	3.9	0.8	0.8
Old Female (OF)	4	4	0	0
Middle-aged Male (MM)	3.7	3.8	1.7	1.7
MF (Middle-aged Female)	4	4	0.4	0.2
YM (Young Male)	3.8	3.7	0.7	0
YF (Young Female)	3.9	3.9	0.1	0.1

Table 1: Mean scores of Claimed Burushaski Proficiency

Table 1 clearly shows that out of four components of proficiency i.e. Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Understanding, two skills Reading and Writing are close to zero. Proficiency in terms of Understanding is near to 4 on the five point scale and the data shows that it has remained

constant for most of the social variables. In case of Speaking skill the females score more as compared to males. The claimed proficiency in Burushaski also declines as we move from 'Understanding' to 'Writing' in all genders. Also within the Kashmir valley Burushaski literature is not available and majority of Burushos do not know the Burushaski script. So this low score of reading and writing skills are because of the lack of knowledge and practice in Reading and Writing Burushaski.

And those who claim to have proficiency in Reading and Writing make the use of either Roman or Persio-Arabic script to transliterate Burushaski. Thus it can be assumed that Burushos of Kashmir are proficient in two language skills of Burushaski i.e. Understanding and Speaking. Most of the Burushos in Kashmir do not know to read and write in their mother tongue Burushaski.

To ascertain whether there is a any significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the three age group one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out which shows that there is a significant difference between the mean proficiency level of Burushaski speaking males between the groups with F value =8.30 and P value =.001.However there is no significance difference between the mean proficiency in case of the females. Thus post hoc test is not applicable.

ANOVA

	Old aged		**Middle aged**		**Young aged**			
	Mean	**S.D**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**F**	**Sig (P)**
Male	2.00	.21	2.79	.98	1.90	.26	8.301	.001
Female	2.00	.00	2.14	.41	2.04	.31	.706	.500

Table 2: ANOVA of Claimed Burushaski Proficiency

Table 2 Shows that the mean proficiency level is highest in case of Middle aged males that is 2.79 with standard deviation of .98.It is least in case of Young aged males i.e. 1.90 with Standard deviation of .26.However the mean proficiency in females remains same in all the three age groups .

Since the difference is significant in case of Burushaski speaking males multiple comparison test (LSD) least significant difference test was employed to see the pair wise difference.

POST HOC TEST
Males

Dependent Variable	(I) age	(J) age	Sig.
Proficiency in Burushaski	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.003
		Young aged group	.694
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.003
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.001
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.694
		Middle aged group	.001
		Young aged group	

Table 3: Post hoc Test of Burushaski Claimed Proficiency in Males

The Table 3 depicts that Old aged males differ significantly in the proficiency level in comparison with Middle aged males with significance (p) value of .003.Similarly there is also a difference in the proficiency level when young aged male group are compared with the Middle aged male group with a significance (p) value of .001. It can be assumed that Middle aged male group shows higher score in the claimed proficiency as compared to the old aged males and young aged males. The possible reason for this variation may be due to the fact that middle aged males are relatively more conscious for linguistic vitality of Burushaski. Since this group is a transitional group and may have the feeling to maintain Burushaski for their identity. The assumption is supported by the fact that this group use Persio-Arabic script for writing of Burushaski language. The trend is also spreading to standardize the Persio-Arabic script for Burushaski. Burushaski Academy Hunza is planning Persio-Arabic script for Burushaski. Shahnaz Hunzai (2009) has published two volumes of Burushaski-Urdu Dictionary using Persio-Arabic script for Burushaski language.

Claimed Proficiency in Balti

Table 4 shows the mean scores of claimed Balti proficiency in terms of Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

	Understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing
OM	3.5	3.3	0.4	0.4
OF	3.5	3.5	0	0
MM	3.2	3.1	1.6	1.6
MF	3.1	2.7	0.7	0.3
YM	2.5	2.2	0.07	0
YF	2.3	2.0	0.2	0.07

Table 4: Mean scores of claimed Balti proficiency

As can be seen from Table 4 the claimed proficiency of the respondents in case of Balti decreases from understanding to the writing skills. The skills of the respondents also decrease from Old age group to the Young age group. The reason behind it is that the social domain of elderly generation and the social domain of younger generation vary considerably. The elderly generation follows the traditional kind of social relationship in which the Balti speakers are of large number. The younger generation is exposed to the population of Balti speakers to a marginal level.

To ascertain whether there is a any significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the three age group one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out which shows that there is a significant difference between the mean proficiency level of Balti speaking males and females between the groups with F value =7.569 and P value =.002.and F Value=3.552 and P value =.039 respectively.

ANOVA

	Old aged		**Middle aged**		**Young aged**			
		S.D	**Mean**	**S.D**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**F**	**Sig (P)**
Male	1.92	.77	2.40	.93	1.21	.63	7.569	.002
Female	1.75	.35	1.73	.79	1.14	.70	3.552	.039

Table 5: ANOVA of Claimed Balti Proficiency

Table 5 Shows that the mean proficiency level in case of males is highest for Middle aged males that is 2.40 with standard deviation of .93.It is least in case of Young aged males i.e. 1.21 with standard deviation of .63. In case of females mean proficiency is highest in case of Old aged female that is 1.75 and low in case of Young aged female that is 1.14.

Since the difference is significant in case of Balti speaking males and females multiple comparison test (LSD) least significant difference test was employed to see the pair wise difference.

POST HOC TEST
Males

Dependent Variable	(I) age	(J) age	Sig.
Proficiency in Balti	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.130
		Young aged group	.031
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.130
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.000
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.031
		Middle aged group	.000
		Young aged group	

Females

Dependent Variable	(I) age	(J) age	Sig.
Proficiency in Balti	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.949
		Young aged group	.034
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.949
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.025
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.034
		Middle aged group	.025
		Young aged group	

Table 6: Post hoc Test of Claimed Balti Proficiency in Males and Females

The Table 6 depicts that Old aged males and females differ significantly in the proficiency level in comparison with Young aged males and females with significance (p) value of .031 and p value of .034.Similarly there is also a difference in the proficiency level when Young aged male and female group are compared with the Middle aged male and female group with a significance (p) value of .000and p value of .025 respectively. The difference in the proficiency of old aged and middle aged males and females with young aged group is due to the fact that the respondents claimed that most of their domestic helpers during their childhood were from Balti tribe. In order to communicate with them they had to learn that language. But now days the trend has changed and the domestic helpers are being replaced by Kashmiri's. The younger generation does not have much need to learn Balti. Besides, other things the language is not carrying any economical resource for the population.

Claimed Proficiency in Kashmiri

Claimed Proficiency in Kashmiri was elicited in terms of four skills- Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Table 7 shows the mean scores in these four skills.

	Understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing
OM	3.6	3.2	0.4	0.3
OF	3.1	2.3	0.3	0.3
MM	3.4	2.8	1.5	1.4
MF	3.1	2.1	0.9	0.4
YM	2.9	2.5	2.3	0.3
YF	2.6	1.5	0.8	0.7

Table 7: Mean scores of Claimed Kashmiri Proficiency

It is interesting to observe that the scores in Kashmiri Reading and Writing are quite low for all age groups of both genders. Another point which we observe is that for all the groups there is a steady decline as we move from Understanding to Speaking to Reading to Writing. In the case of different skills in different age groups there is not a systematic pattern other than that where females appear to show a decrease in proficiency as we move from older to younger age groups. Males, on the other hand show a decline in Understanding Kashmiri as we move from older to younger males. However, an opposite trend in Reading and Writing where younger males are observed to be more proficient than the older males. This may be attributed to the inclusion of Kashmiri at the school level Curriculum.

To ascertain whether there is a any significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the three age group one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out which shows that there is a significant difference between the mean proficiency level of Kashmiri speaking males between the groups with F value =3.14 and P value =.05.However there is no significance difference between the mean proficiency in case of the females. Thus post hoc test is not applicable.

ANOVA

	Old aged		Middle aged		Young aged			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	F	Sig (P)
Male	1.85	.56	2.27	.75	1.62	.68	3.145	.055
Female	1.50	.50	1.64	.52	1.41	.87	.431	.653

Table 8: ANOVA of Claimed Kashmiri Proficiency

Table 8 Shows that the mean proficiency level is highest in case of Middle aged males that is 2.27 with standard deviation of .75.It is least in case of Young aged males i.e. 1.62 with standard deviation of .68.However the mean proficiency in females remains almost same in all the three age groups .

Since the difference is significant in case of Kashmiri speaking males multiple comparison test (LSD) least significant difference test was employed to see the pair wise difference.

POST HOC TEST
Males

Dependent Variable	**(I) age**	**(J) age**	**Sig.**
Proficiency in Kashmiri	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.132
		Young aged group	.381
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.132
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.018
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.381
		Middle aged group	.018
		Young aged group	

Table 9: Post hoc Test of Kashmiri Claimed Proficiency in Males

The Table 9 depicts that middle aged males differ significantly in the proficiency level in comparison with young aged males with significance (p) value of .018.Similarly there is no significant difference in the proficiency level when young aged male group are compared with the old aged male group. The Middle aged male group has higher level of claimed Kashmiri proficiency .The density of communication of Middle aged male group is quite thick because of various reasons and few are mentioned below:

a. Mostly this group is earning source for the family. The majority of the group earn through government sector .The Government sector is dominated by the Kashmiri linguistic group. Thus, it becomes indispensable for this group to interact with their fellow beings in Kashmiri language. With the result this group relatively develops close affinity with Kashmiri language.

b. This social group develops social relationship in their surroundings and in their offices with Kashmiri speakers. This also enhances linguistic affinity of this group to Kashmiri speakers.

c. The respective families also engage this group for shopping various domestic and other items. Most of the shopkeepers are Kashmiri speakers. Therefore the frequent rapport with Kashmiri speakers is obvious.

Claimed Proficiency in Urdu

According to Table 10 the scores in Urdu Understanding, Reading, Speaking and Writing are quite high for all age groups of both genders except for old females where scores in reading and writing are low. Another Point which has been observed in the present study is that for all the groups there is a decline as we move from Understanding and Speaking to Reading and Writing. In case of different skills in different age groups there is not a systematic pattern other than that where females appear to show decrease as we move from younger to older age groups. Males on the other hand show a decline in understanding as we move from older to younger males. However an opposite trend in Reading and Writing were younger females are observed to be more proficient than older females

	Understanding	Speaking	Reading	Writing
OM	4	4	3.8	3.8
OF	3.8	3.8	2.2	2.2
MM	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8
MF	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6
YM	3.9	3.9	3.5	3.4
YF	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9

Table 10: Mean scores of Claimed Urdu Proficiency

To ascertain whether there is any significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the three age group one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out which shows that there is no a significant difference between the mean proficiency levels in males as well as females(p value>.050) (Table 11).Thus post hoc test is not applicable.

ANOVA

	Old aged		Middle aged		Young aged			
	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	F	Sig (P)
Male	3.90	.20	3.83	.34	3.67	.49	1.203	.312
Female	3.00	1.13	3.66	1.07	3.86	.35	2.817	.073

Table 11: ANOVA of Claimed Urdu Proficiency

The Claimed mean proficiency level in Urdu remains consistent across all the age groups due to the fact that Urdu is placed at second number after Burushaski in their home domain for communicative purposes. Urdu is also the lingua franca across diverse linguistic groups in the valley. Due to this reason Urdu is also used for communication (Speaking &Reading) where the native language fails to communicate between the different linguistic groups. Language resource is found to be one of the important resources for economic development and stability in the societies. Urdu has occupied the status of economical resources across the country and abroad. In this context, Urdu has become the language of wider communication in Kashmir valley. This factor has due impact upon Burushaski speakers like other linguistic communities in the Valley. Therefore the consistency in claimed proficiency found in Urdu in the present study is apparent. As all the age groups across all the social variables hold the view that Urdu is the language which cannot be disposed for healthy survival.

Claimed Proficiency in English

Proficiency in English was elicited in terms of four skills-Understanding, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Table 12 shows the mean scores in these four skills. As can be seen from the Table 12 that all the four skills increases as we move from older generation to the younger ones except for Older females where all the four skills are considerably low. The reason behind such a fall in mean scores is that Old females are relatively lesser educated and comparatively have less exposure to the outer world as compared to the other age groups.

	Understanding	**Speaking**	**Reading**	**Writing**
OM	3.2	2.7	2.9	2.8
OF	0.8	0.5	0.8	0.6
MM	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.4
MF	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.6
YM	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.9
YF	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.8

Table 12: Mean scores of Claimed English Proficiency

To ascertain whether there is a any significant difference between the mean proficiency levels of the three age group one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out which shows that there is a significant difference between the mean proficiency level English speaking males and females between the groups with F value =8.133 and P value =.001and F value=61.958 and P value =.000 respectively. Thus post hoc test is applicable for both males as well as females.

ANOVA

	Old aged		Middle aged		Young aged			
	Mean	**S.D**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**Mean**	**S.D**	**F**	**Sig (P)**
Male	2.90	.74	3.35	.71	3.88	.30	8.133	.001
Female	.68	1.1	3.59	.57	3.70	.49	61.958	.000

Table 13: ANOVA of Claimed English Proficiency

Table 13 Shows that the mean proficiency level is highest in case of Young aged males that is 3.88 with standard deviation of .30. It is least in case of Old aged males i.e. 2.90 with standard deviation of .74. The mean proficiency in females is highest in case of Young aged females that is 3.70 with standard deviation of .49 and least in Old aged females with mean proficiency of .68 and standard deviation of 1.1.

Since the difference is significant in case of English speaking males and females multiple comparison test (LSD) least significant difference test was employed to see the pair wise difference.

POST HOC TEST

Males

Dependent Variable	**(I) age**	**(J) age**	**Sig.**
Proficiency in English	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.076
		Young aged group	.000
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.076
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.032
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.000
		Middle aged group	.032
		Young aged group	

Table 14: Post hoc Test of English Claimed Proficiency in Males

The Table 14 depicts that Old aged males differ significantly in the proficiency level in comparison with Middle aged males with significance (p) value of .032.Similarly there is a significant difference in the proficiency level when Old aged male group are compared with the Young aged group with significance (p) value .000. However there is no significant difference when old aged group are compared with the middle aged group.

The higher mean proficiency of Young aged males as compared to Old and Middle aged males is due to the reason that the educational institution from which they get education the medium of instruction is English. The exposure to mass media is high among the young males in

comparison to their older counterparts. More over young males are more mobile and have more exposures towards the English language.

Females

Dependent Variable	(I) age	(J) age	Sig.
Proficiency in English	Old aged group	Old aged group	
		Middle aged group	.000
		Young aged group	.000
	Middle aged group	Old aged group	.000
		Middle aged group	
		Young aged group	.698
	Young aged group	Old aged group	.000
		Middle aged group	.698
		Young aged group	

Table 15: Post hoc Test of English Claimed Proficiency in Females

The Table 15 depicts that Old aged females differ significantly in the proficiency level in comparison with Middle aged females with significance (p) value of .000.Similarly there is a significant difference in the proficiency level when Old aged female group are compared with the Young aged group with significance (p) value .000. However there is no significant difference when middle aged group are compared with the young aged group.

The differences in claimed proficiency level between the Old aged female group as compared to Middle aged female group and Young aged female group is due to the fact that Old females are relatively less educated confined mainly to their home domain and have less exposure to the mass media.

Claimed proficiency: Overall View

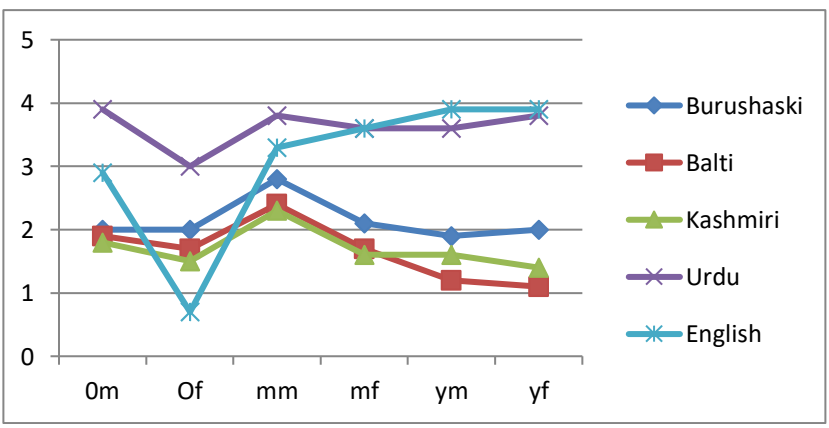

Fig. 16: Claimed proficiency in Burushaski, Balti, Kashmiri, Urdu, and English

Fig. 16 depicts the claimed proficiency in Burushaski, Balti, Kashmiri, Urdu, and English. The respondents claim least proficiency in Kashmiri (the dominant language of Kashmir valley) and maximum in Urdu (the official language of Jammu and Kashmir Valley). Burushaski, Balti and Kashmiri are closely placed and away from the Urdu curve indicating a close proximity of Burushaski, Balti and Kashmiri as compared to Urdu and English. The high claimed proficiency in Urdu can be explained by taking into account the skills which were taken into consideration for this study which included Speaking, Understanding, Reading and Writing. Burushaski language is not taught in schools, thus the scores for the skills reading and writing skills is very low.

Conclusion

Burushos, the community under study, comprise minority group in the Kashmir valley and have been living here for past 120 years. In spite of being a minority community, Burushos have maintained their language and culture and have kept themselves distinct from the main stream society. The present paper depicted the following points regarding the claimed proficiency of Burushos:

1. Highest Claimed proficiency is in Urdu followed by Burushaski. Considering inclusion of reading and writing skills which are higher in Urdu.
2. The Claimed proficiency of Burushaski is highest among the Middle aged males (MM).The possible reason for this variation may be due to the fact that Middle aged males are relatively more conscious for linguistic vitality of Burushaski. Since this group is a transitional group and may have the feeling to maintain Burushaski for their identity.
3. The Claimed proficiency of Kashmiri is highest among Middle aged males(MM).The density of communication of middle aged male group is quite thick because of various reasons and few are mentioned below:
    a. Mostly this group is earning source for the family. The majority of the group earn through government sector .The Government sector is dominated by the Kashmiri linguistic group. Thus, it becomes indispensable for this group to interact with their fellow beings in Kashmiri language. With the result this group relatively develops close affinity with Kashmiri language.
    b. This social group develops social relationship in their surroundings and in their offices with Kashmiri speakers. This also enhances linguistic affinity of this group to Kashmiri speakers.

c. The respective families also engage this group for shopping various domestic and other items. Most of the shopkeepers are Kashmiri speakers. Therefore the frequent rapport with Kashmiri speakers is obvious.

4. The Claimed proficiency level in Urdu remains consistent across all the age groups among Burushos due to the fact that Urdu is placed at second number after Burushaski in their home domain for communicative purposes. Therefore, the consistency in claimed proficiency found in Urdu in the present study is apparent. As all the age groups across all the social variables hold the view that Urdu is the language which cannot be disposed for healthy survival.
5. The Claimed proficiency of English is highest in Young aged males (YM). It is due to the reason that the educational institution from which they get their education the medium of instruction is English. The exposure to mass media is high among the young males in comparison to their older counterparts. More over young males are more mobile and have more exposures towards the English language.
6. The Old aged female group(OF)has lower claimed proficiency in English as compared to Middle aged female group (MF)and Young aged female group(YF) is due to the fact that old females are relatively less educated confined mainly to their home domain and have less exposure to the mass media.

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