

LANGUAGE CHOICE AND LANGUAGE USE IN COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF KASHMIRI SPEAKERS

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Abstract:

With the advent in science and technology, the mode of communication has also changed and internet has revolutionized every sphere of life. Internet serves multiple functions. One of the key functions which it serves is that of a medium of communication. The communication that takes place through internet comes under the realms of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). Computer Mediated Communication is the encoding and decoding of information through electronic gadgets like mobile phones, computers, tabs, etc. Most of the communication that takes place through internet is text based. The use of internet for the communication purposes lies at the heart of Computer Mediated Communication. The present paper aims to study the language preferences of Kashmiri people while communicating online. The study will take into account the language choice of people while communicating online either in formal or informal settings. The paper will also study the choice of script while typing urdu/Kashmir in online communication.

Key Words: Computer Mediated Communication, Language Choice, Language Use, Online Communication & Script Switching

1. Introduction:

Computer Mediated Communication refers to any human communication achieved through, or with the help of computer technology [1]. The communication that takes place with the help of internet includes emails, instant messaging, gaming interaction and bulletin boards. Computer Mediated Communication is the communication that takes place between human beings through the instrumentality of computers [2]. Crystal [3] views Computer Mediated Communication as an emerging third medium, a hybrid between traditional speech and writing where certain properties are shared by Computer Mediated Communication while others are not. Computer Mediated Communication can be classified either as synchronous or non-synchronous. Synchronous is that type of CMC in which the interaction takes place in real time, example: text based online communication like Facebook and WhatsApp. Asynchronous or non – synchronous is that type of CMC where interaction does not take place simultaneously, example: communication through emails. The following table is taken from Crystal's Criteria for speech and writing applied to computer mediated communication [3]

Criteria	Speech	Writing	Computer Mediated Communication
Space/Time Relation	Time Bound	Space Bound	Time-bound in different ways, Space bound with restrictions
Spontaneity	Spontaneous	Contrived	Variable
Visual Contact	Face to Face	Visually Decontextualized	Visually decontextualized
Structure	Loosely Structured	Elaborately Structured	Loosely structured.
Function	Socially Interactive	Factually Communicative	Socially interactive with restrictions, variably factually communicative
Revisability	Immediately Revisable	Repeatedly Revisable	Immediately and repeatedly revisable
Richness	Prosodically Rich	Graphically Rich	Prosodically rich in different sense, variably graphically rich

Thus, the communication that takes place online shares both the features of face to face (spoken) communication as well as written communication. Kashmir is the multilingual area. Kashmiri is the mother tongue of the natives; Urdu is the lingua franca of the state. English has entered through education in Kashmir, serving language of media and education. English has not yet gained the status of language of Spoken communication (informal communication). Mobile internet services began popular in Kashmir since 2009. Now every house owns a mobile phone with internet connection. Day by day more and more users are adding up to it. The more users of internet are of young age 20-35. Now the users of older age group are also adding up. With the advent of internet, communication has evolved and has become global, instant and easy. Most of the online communication is text based. As Kashmir is the multilingual area, Kashmiri speakers have more than one language at their disposal both in speaking, writing and also in online communication.

1.1 Literature Review:

Computer mediated communication is relatively recent field. In this regard, various studies have been conducted. Nishimura (2007) investigated linguistic innovations and interactional features of casual online communication in online Japanese context. Using (Bulletin Board System) messages as the primary sources of data, Nishimura investigated the uses of Kanji and examined the incorporation of informal spoken features as the use of final particles. Young Japanese BBS users are found to employ colloquial language online and use such spoken features as final particles in order to interact with other users online as if they were in face-to-face conversation. She also found that the varying degrees of style mixture in Japanese text-based CMC are related to the extent to which the users feel involvement and closeness to each other. [4] Warschauer et al (2007) have worked about language choice and language use in Egypt. In Egypt, Classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic are in diglossic position. Classical Arabic is used in formal domains while as Egyptian Arabic in informal situations. Apart from Arabic, English is used in the educational domain. The research has shown that English is dominantly used as the online language. Egyptian Arabic is also used but with the Romanized script in the informal interactions. [5] Palfreyman and Al-Khalil (2007) carried out research among

female university students in UAE. The data taken for the research was the IM chats and emails. The studies revealed that there was a fair amount of code switching and code mixing. [6] Su (2009) has worked on Taiwanese language. In Taiwan, three main languages are spoken; Mandarin, Taiwanese and Taiwanese accented mandarin. In formal contexts, mandarin holds the highest prestige while Taiwanese accented mandarin is generally the most stigmatized and Taiwanese seems to be located in between. Mandarin is used mostly online with the use of Chinese characters. [7]

2. Aim of the Study:

The study aims at knowing language choice and language use by the Kashmiri speakers via text based computer mediated communication in formal and informal contexts. The paper will also study the communicative function of script switching.

3. Methodology:

The research design applied in the present study can be regarded as the mixed method research design. To achieve the aim of the study, data was gathered from participants and was first analyzed qualitatively and then quantitatively to strength the validity of findings. For the current study, a questionnaire (consisting of 20 questions) was designed, which was circulated among 24 multilingual speakers whose mother tongue is Kashmiri and Urdu and English are learned as second language. The following table illustrates the information about participants taken for study:

Group	Age	Sex	Area	Total
Group A	20-35 years	Male	Rural	3
Group B	20-35 years	Female	Rural	3
Group C	20-35 years	Male	Urban	3
Group D	20-35 years	Female	Urban	3
Group E	35and above	Male	Rural	3
Group F	35and above	Female	Rural	3
Group G	35and above	Male	Urban	3
Group H	35and above	Female	Urban	3
Total				24

4. Analysis:

The responses that were marked on questionnaire were analyzed statistically.

4.1 Social Media Access:

The core aspect of the paper is to know the language choice and language use in the computer mediated communication. Social networking apps form one of the part of CMC. The main social networking apps include Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. The Group A accesses WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The group B accesses WhatsApp and Facebook only. The group C accesses WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The group D also accesses WhatsApp and Facebook mostly and Twitter and Instagram little less than former. The group E accesses Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. The group F accesses Facebook and WhatsApp only. The group G access Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter. The group H accesses Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram.

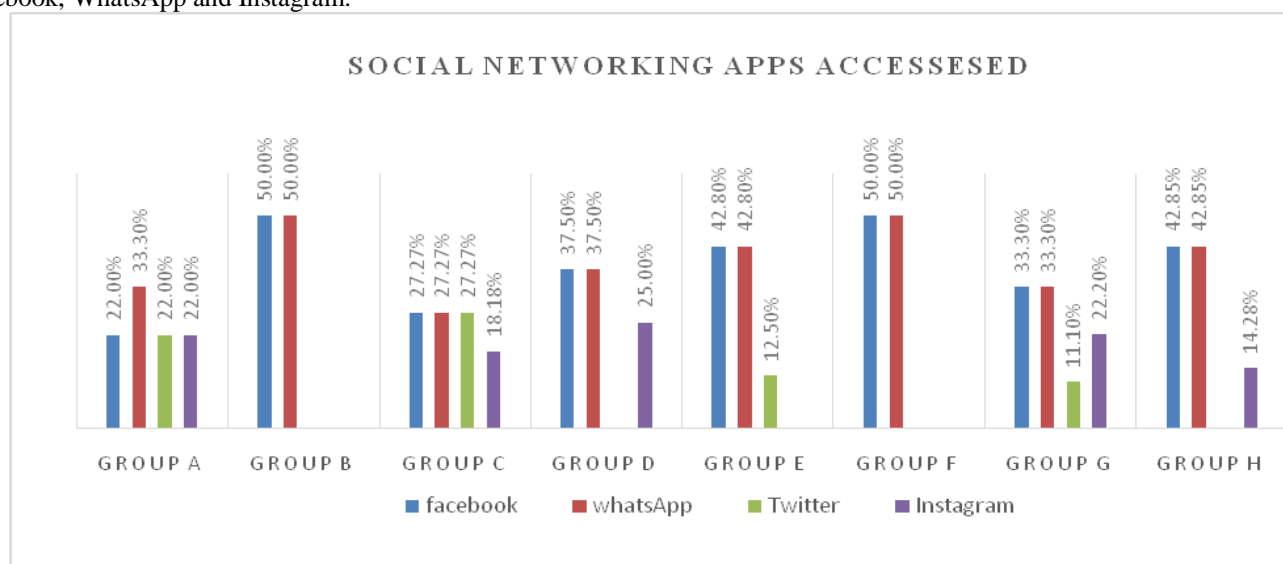


Figure 4.1: Social Networking Apps Accessed

4.2 Send / Receive Messages per Day:

Communication through CMC takes place through sending and receiving text messages. The analysis of study revealed that, in group A and Group B, 25 % send and receive less than hundred messages per day and 75 % send and receive more than hundred messages per day. The Group C and D send and receive more than hundred messages per day. The group E and F send and receive less than hundred text messages per day. In the group G, 75% send and receive less than hundred messages per day and 25% send and receive more than hundred messages per day. The group H sends and receives less than messages per day.

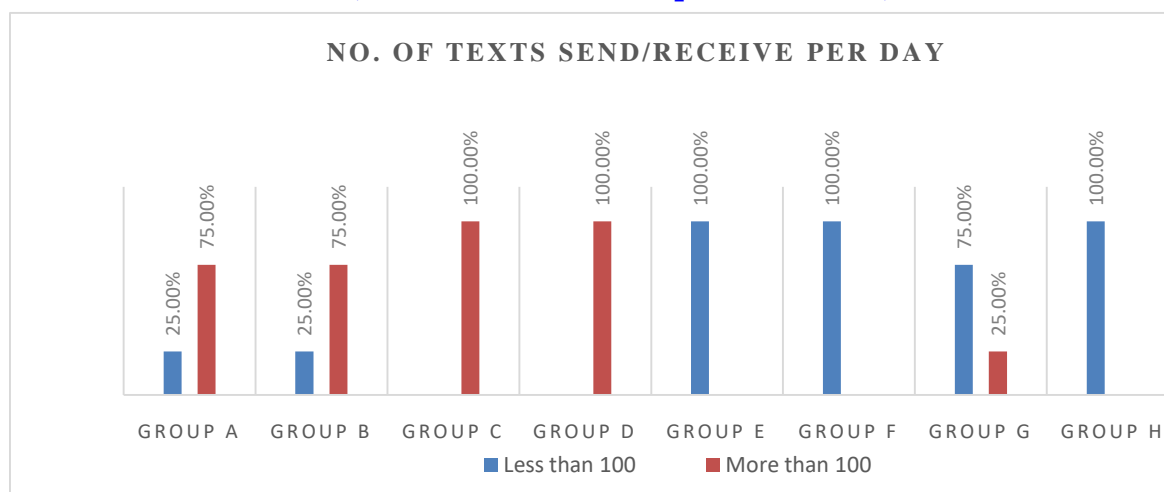


Figure 4.2: No. of texts send/receive per day

4.3. Send / Receive Texts From:

Exchanging text messages varies from being formal to informal. The analysis revealed that the group A sends and receives texts from friends (37.5%), family (25%) and colleagues (37.5%). The group B sends and receives text messages from friends (37.5%), family (37.5%), colleagues (12%) and teachers (12%). The group C sends and receives text messages from friends (30%), family (30%), colleagues (30%) and teachers (10%). The group D sends and receives text messages from friends (33.3%), family (33.3%), colleagues (22.2%) and teachers (11.2%). The group E sends and receives messages from friends (37.5%), family (37.5%) and colleagues (25%). The group F sends and receives text messages from friends (37.5%), family (37.5%) and colleagues (25%). The group G sends and receives text messages from friends (33.3%), family (33.3%) and colleagues (33.3%). The group H, sends and receives text messages from friends (33.3%), family (33.3%) and colleagues (33.3%).

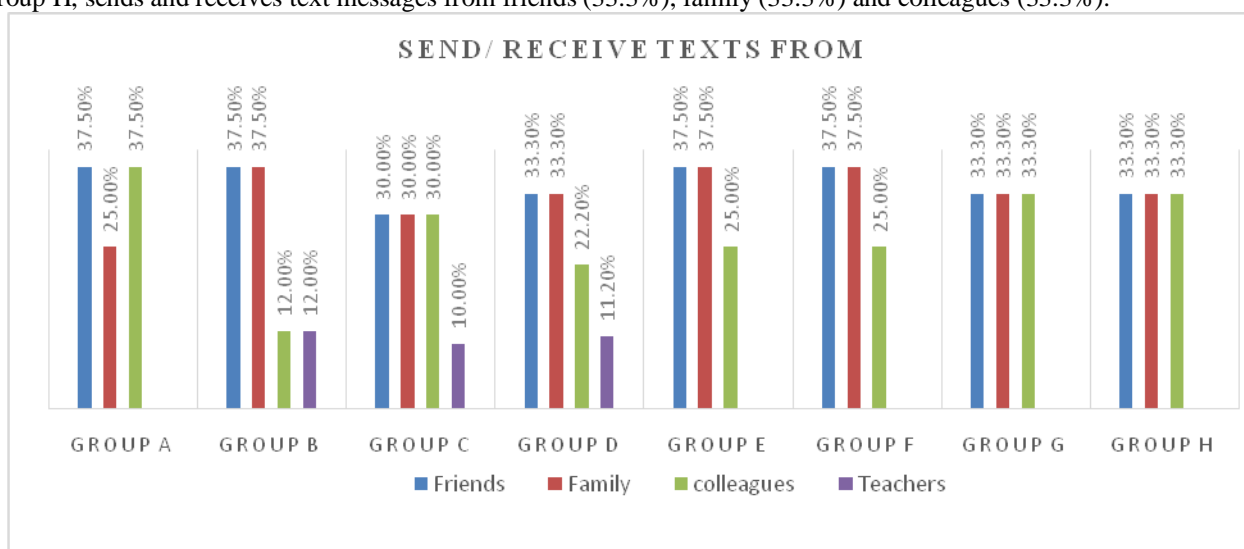


Figure 4.3: Send/receive texts from

4.4 Language choice and Language Use in composing Message:

The advantage of being multilingual is that one has more than single code at its disposal. It has been observed from the data that the language choice and language use of the group A in composing text message is English (37.5%), Urdu (37.5%), and Kashmiri (25%). The language choice and language use of the group B in composing message is English (42.8%), Urdu (28.5%) and Kashmiri (28.5%). The language choice and language use of the group C and group D, in composing text message is English (50%), Urdu (33.3%) and Kashmiri (16.7%). The language choice and language use of the group E in composing text messages is English (60%) and Urdu (40%). The language choice and language use of the group F in composing text messages is English (60%) and Urdu (40%). The language choice and language use of the group G in composing text messages is English. The language choice and language use of the group H in composing text messages is English.

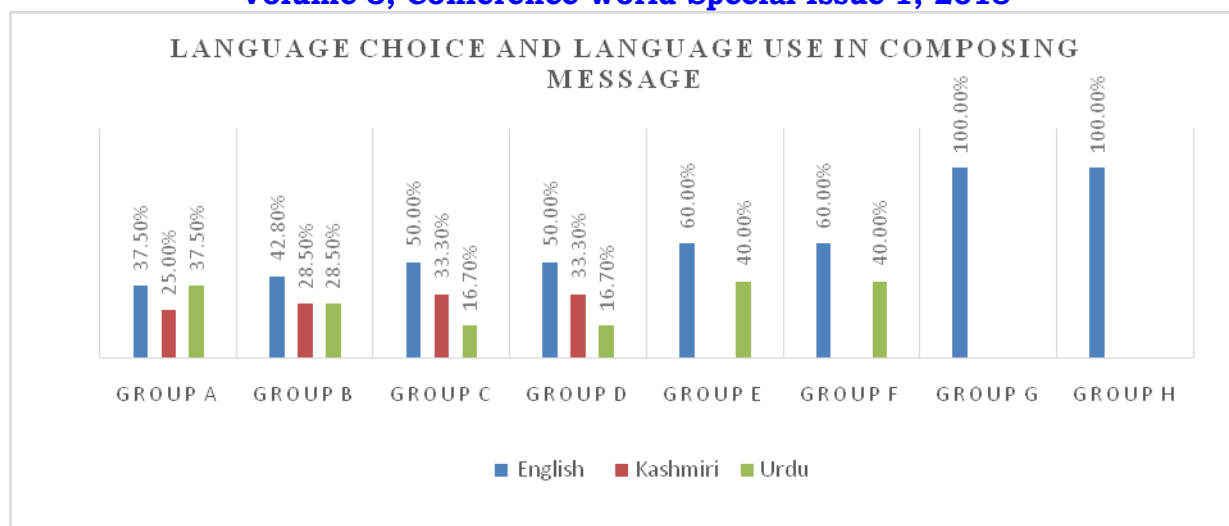


Figure 4.4: Language Choice and Language Use in Composing Message

4.5 Use of English:

English is the language of education and media in the Kashmir. And all the participants have acquired English through education. In the group A, 60% use English in formal situations, 20% use English for discussing technology / studies and 20% use English to show prestige. In the group B, 75% use English in formal situations and 25% use English to show prestige. The group C uses English in formal situations. In the group D 75% use English in formal situations and 25% use English in informal situations. In the groups E, F, G and H, English is used in the formal domains. Thus, it can be concluded that English is used in formal contexts in all the groups while communicating online.

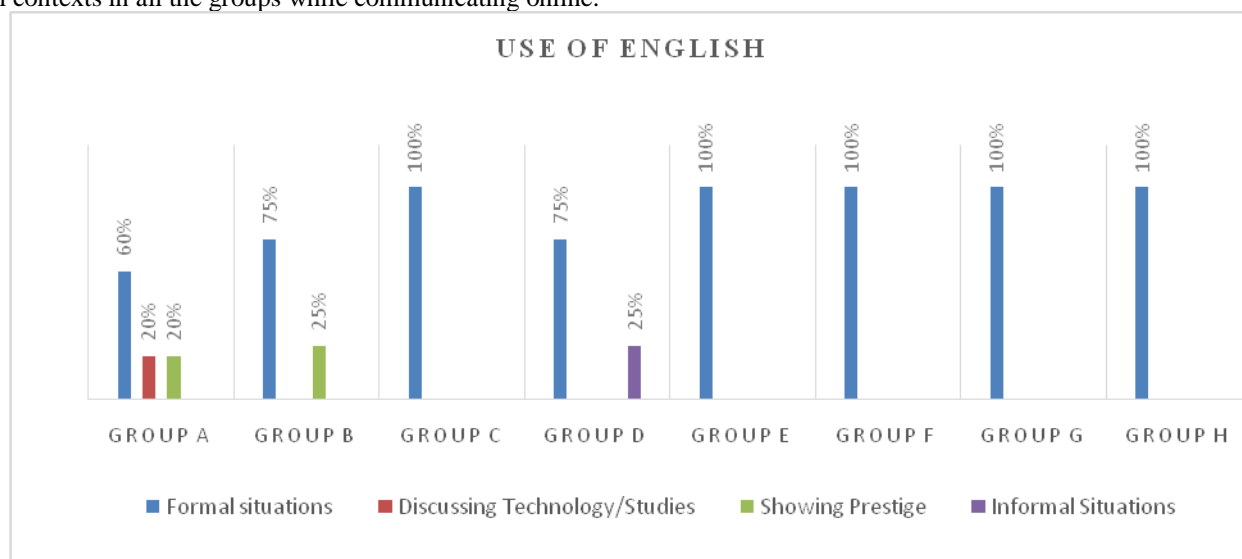


Figure 4.5: Use of English

4.6 Use of Urdu: Urdu serves as the lingua franca of the state. Urdu is even used in the face to face conversations. In all the groups, Urdu is used in informal situations while communicating online.

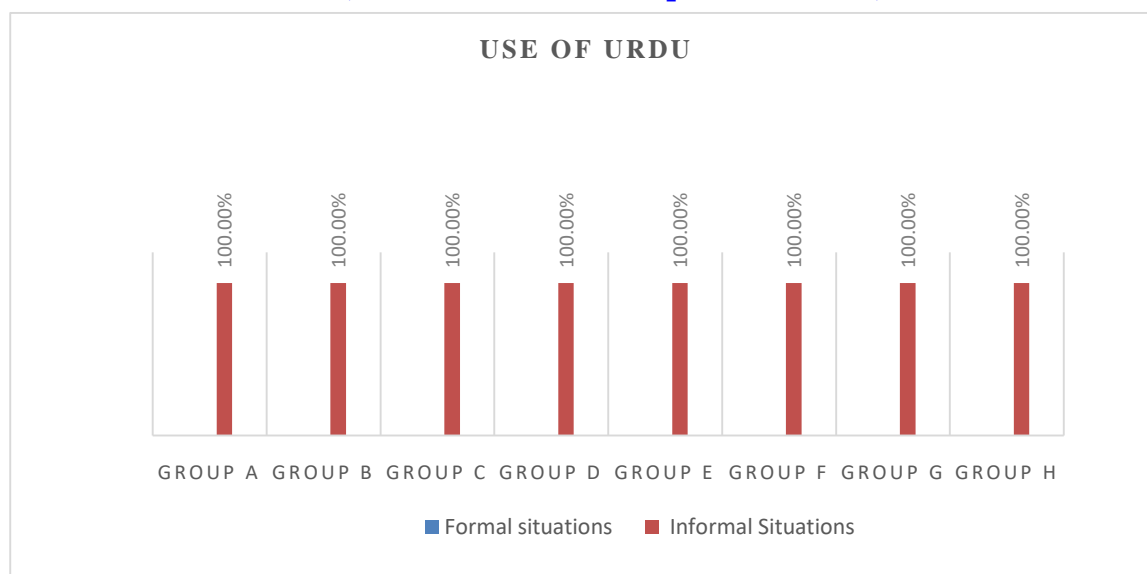


Figure 4.6: Use of Urdu

4.7 Use of Kashmiri: Kashmiri is the native language of the Kashmir region. In all the groups, Kashmiri is used in informal situations.

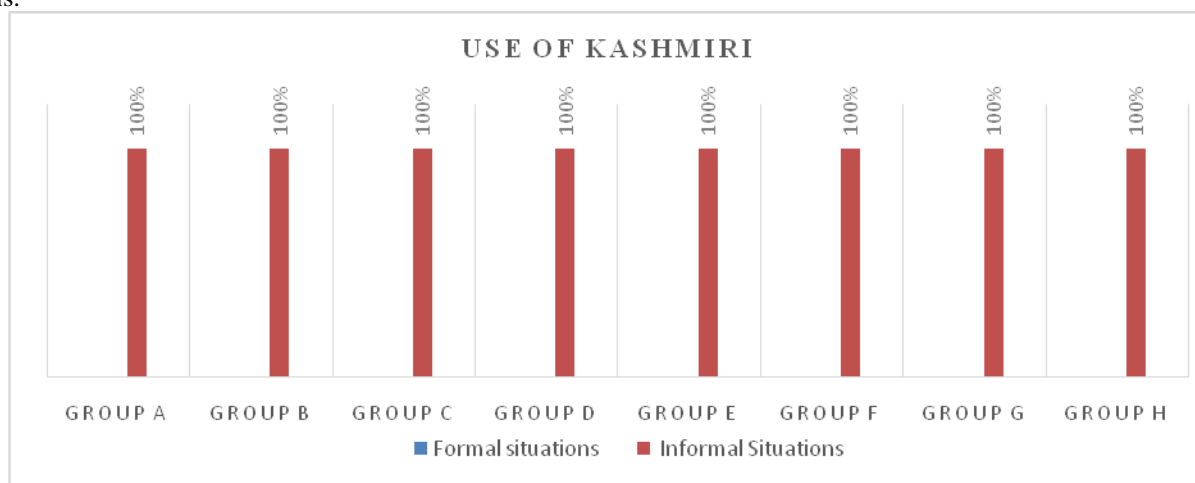


Figure 4.7: Use of Kashmiri

4.8. Language Choice and Language Use while messaging Superordinate:

In the group A language choice and language use while messaging superordinate is English (60%) and Urdu (40%). Language choice and language use, while messaging superordinate in the group B is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%). In the groups C and D language choice and language use while messaging superordinate is English (100%). The language choice and language use, while messaging superordinate in the group E is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%). In the group F, the language choice and language use while messaging superordinate is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). The language choice and language use while messaging super ordinate in the group G and H is; English (100%).

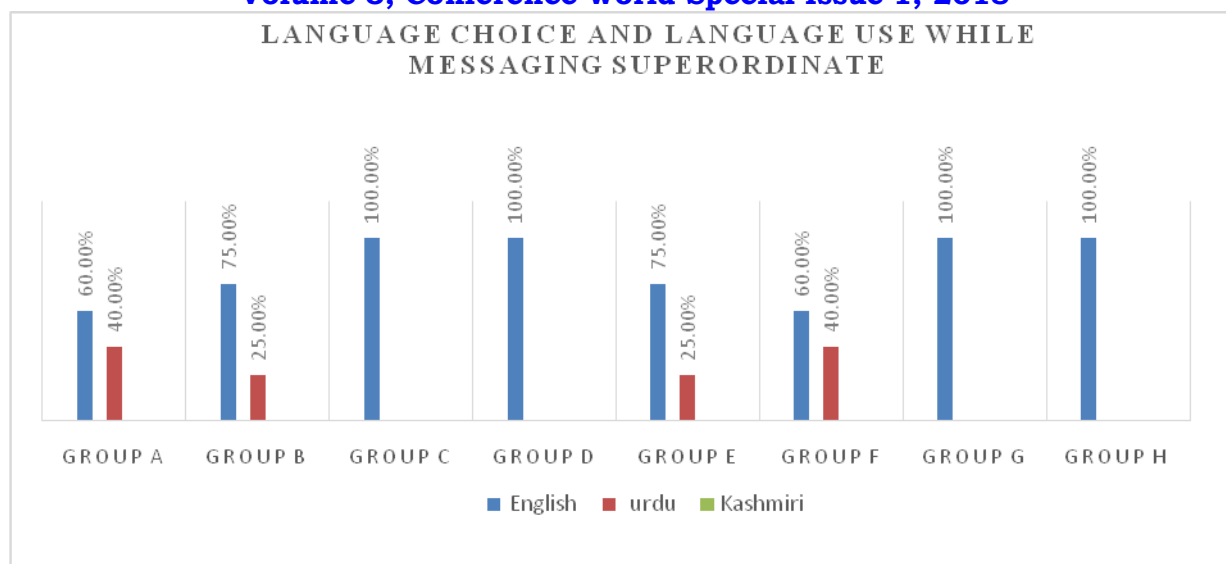


Figure 4.8: Language Choice and Language Use while messaging Superordinate

4.9. Language Choice and Language Use while Messaging Subordinate:

In the group A, the language choice and language use, while messaging subordinate is; English (50%) and Urdu (50%). Language choice and language use, while messaging subordinate in the group B is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). In the groups C, the language choice and language use, while messaging subordinate is English. In the group D, language choice and language use while messaging subordinate is English (75%) and Urdu (25%). Language choice and language use, while messaging subordinate in the group E is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). In the group F language choice and language use, while messaging subordinate is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). Language choice and language use, while messaging subordinates in the group G is English. Language choice and language use, while messaging subordinates in the group H is English (75%) and Urdu (25%).

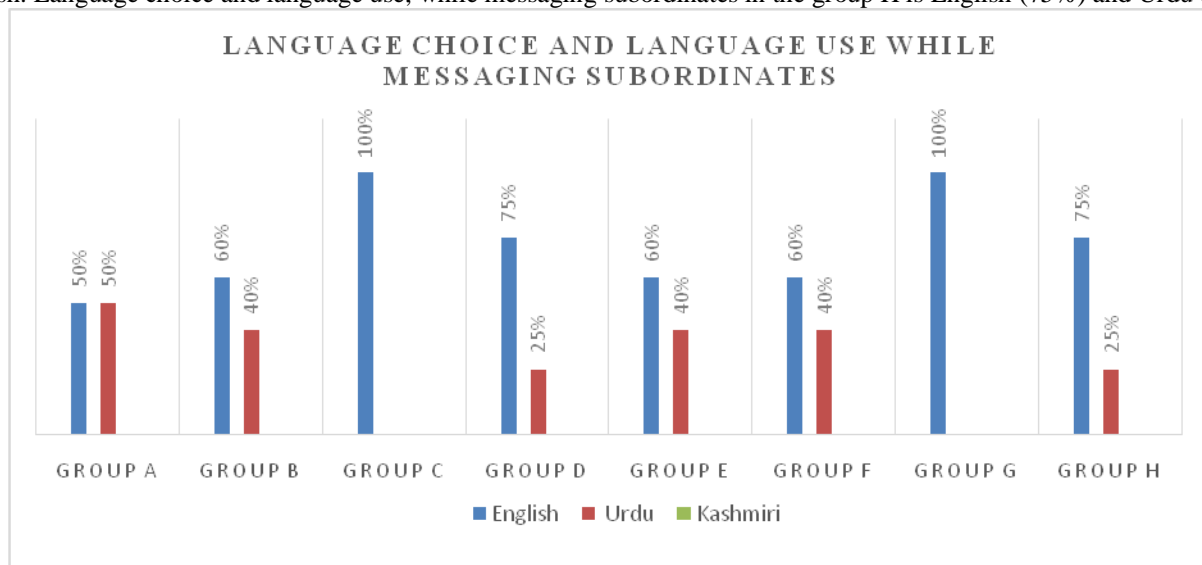


Figure 4.9: Language Choice and Language Use while Messaging Subordinate

4.10 Language Choice and Language Use in posting status in social media:

In the group A, language choice and language use while posting status in social media is English (75%) and Urdu (25%). Language choice and language use, while posting status in social media in the group B is English (60%), Urdu (20%) and Kashmiri (20%). In the groups C, language choice and language use while posting status in social media is English (50%), Urdu (33.3%) and Kashmiri (16.7%). In the group D, language choice and language use while posting status in social media is English (42.8%), Urdu (28.5%) and Kashmiri (28.5%). Language choice and language, while posting status in social media in the group E is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). In the group F language choice and language use while posting status in social media is English (42.8%), Urdu (28.5%) and Kashmiri (28.5%). Language choice and language use while posting status in social media in the group G is English. Language choice and language use, while posting status in social media in the group H is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%).

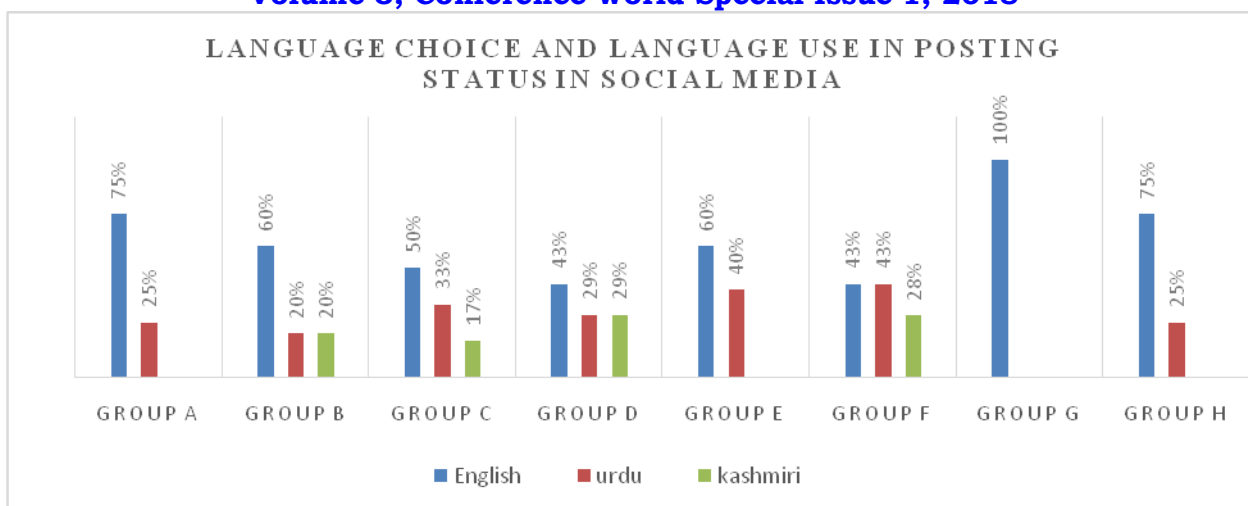


Figure 4.10: Language Choice and Language Use in posting status in social media:

4.11 Language Choice and Language Use in Greetings:

The data was collected from Muslim participants only, so Islamic greeting is also used in online communication. In the group A, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (42.85%), English (42.8%) and Kashmiri (14.4%). In the group B, the language choice and language use in Greetings of is; Arabic (50%) and English (50%). In the group C, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (37.35%), English (37.35%) and Kashmiri (25%). In the group D, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (40%) and English (60%). In the group E, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (50%), English (33.3%) and Kashmiri (16.7%). In the group F, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (50%) and English (50%). In the group G, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (50%) and English (50%). In the group H, the language choice and language use in Greetings is; Arabic (50%) and English (50%).

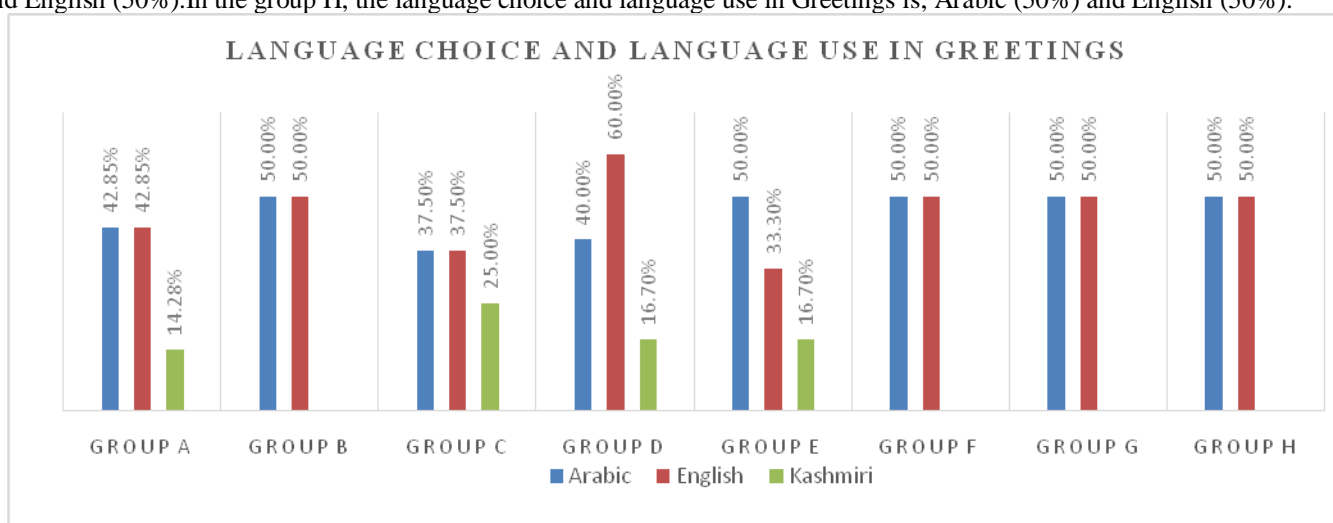


Figure 4.11: Language Choice and Language Use in Greetings

4.12 Language Choice and Language Use in synchronous Chat:

CMC is mostly text based. In synchronous chat, messages are sent and received in a real time (simultaneously). In the group A, the language choice and language use in chat is; English (50%), Kashmiri (16.7%) and Urdu (33.3%). In the group B, the language choice and language use is; English (60%) and Urdu (40%). In the group C, language choice and language use in chat is; English (100%). In the group D, the language choice and language use in chat is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%). In the group E, the language choice and language use in chat is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%). In the group F, the language choice and language use in chat is; English (75%) and Urdu (25%). In the group G & H, the language choice and language use in chat is; English (100%).

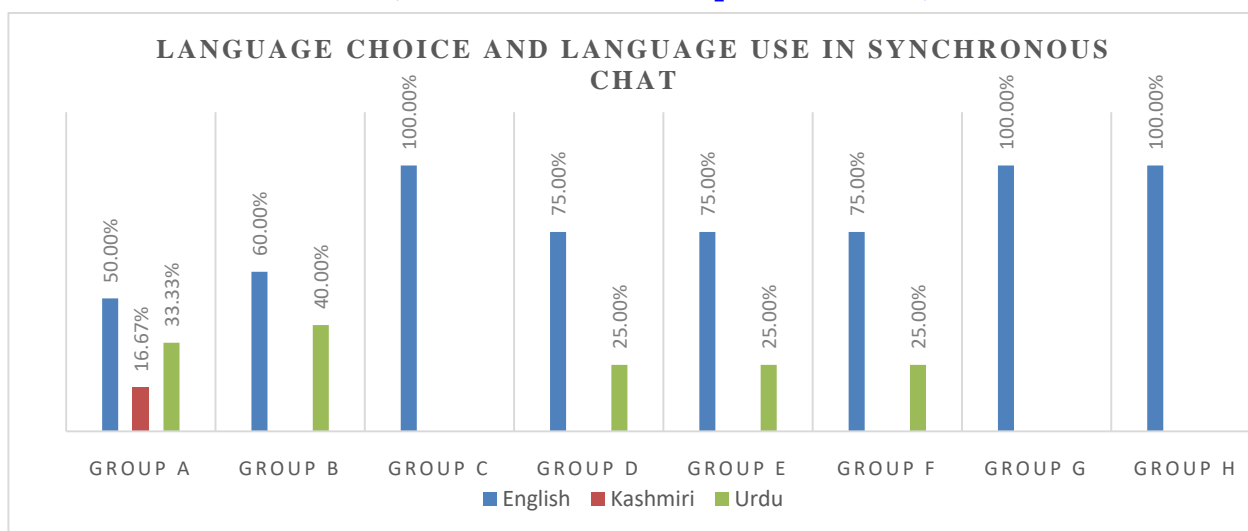


Figure 4.12: Language Choice and Language Use in synchronous Chat

4.13 Script Switch:

With the start of internet, the keyboard for typing was based on only ASCII character set, which is based on Roman alphabets (sounds of English). ASCII character set includes 128 seven-bit codes. Of which 33 are non-printing control characters, 94 are printable characters and space is considered as invisible graphic. With the popularity of internet and massive increase in users across the globe, Unicode Protocol was developed and many other scripts were developed including right to left ones. The script used for English is Romanized. Urdu and Kashmiri are written in Perso- Arabic Script. The study revealed that participants use only Romanized urdu/Kashmiri. Perso-Arabic script for urdu/Kashmiri is not preferred while communicating online. Out of 24 respondents, only one respondent marked the use of perso-Arabic script for typing urdu/Kashmiri while communicating online.

5. Conclusion:

As the technology of communication is becoming cheaper, easy to access and global, it is changing the communicating codes of the global people. The main objective of the paper was to know the language choice and language use of Kashmiri people while communicating online. After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the language choice and language use of Kashmiri speakers is English while communicating online. English is the preferred language used in formal context by all the groups. English is also used to discuss about studies and technology by the group A. Group A and group B prefer English in online communication because it is associated with prestige. A small percentage (25%) of group D, use English in informal situations while communicating online. Urdu and Kashmiri are predominantly used in informal contexts while communicating online by all the groups. English is mostly used in texting super-ordinates, posting status, greetings and most favored language while chatting. Urdu is favored language, while messaging friends, family and subordinates. A less percentage of participants like to chat in Urdu. Kashmiri is rarely used, and is preferred language while messaging close friend and family. A little percentage of Kashmiri is used in greeting while communicating online. The language preferred for greetings is, Arabic and English mostly and very rarely Kashmiri while communicating online. Urdu/Kashmiri in online communication is used only in Romanized script. Perso-Arabic script is rarely used while using Urdu/Kashmiri in online communication.

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