

Language Choice of Shina Youth in Different Domains: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is a multilingual area where languages belonging to different language families are found. Apart from major languages like Kashmiri, Dogri, there are multitude of minority languages like Shina, Burushaski, Balti, Hindko, Punjabi, Pahari, Pashtu, Gojri, etc. Gurezi Shina is a lesser-known variety of Shina language being spoken by inhabitants of Gurez, a remote northern valley in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The Shina Language belongs to the Dardic sub-group of Indio-Aryan language family. This language is primarily spoken in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, Dah Hanu, Gurez and Dras in India. The alternate names of the language are Shinaki and Sina. The linguistic repertoire of the native speakers of Gurezi Shina mainly comprises of languages like Shina, Kashmiri, Urdu and English. This paper focuses on the domain analysis that is the domains where Shina is used and the domains where other languages are used. 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. The data for the present study was elicited through a well-designed questionnaire.

Keywords: Shina, Language Choice, Language Domains, Linguistic Repertoire, Domain Analysis, Language Preference.

Introduction

Shina is a language spoken by communities across a vast mountainous region that spans from the northern areas of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) in the east to parts of Gilgit-Baltistan in

Pakistan and northeastern Afghanistan. Kohistani and Schmidt (2006) identified specific areas where Shina is spoken, such as Gilgit, lower Hunza, Tangir-Darel, Astor, and Chilas valleys in Pakistan, as well as parts of Indus Kohistan. In India, Shina is spoken in areas like the Neelam (Kishenganga) valley, Gurez and Tiliel valleys, Drass plain, and Ladakh. In J&K, the language has two main varieties: Gurezi in the Gurez valley and Drassi in the Drass area. Additionally, there's a mention of a third variant, Tilieli Shina, primarily spoken in the Tiliel valley of Gurez, which is often considered a part of the Gurezi variety.

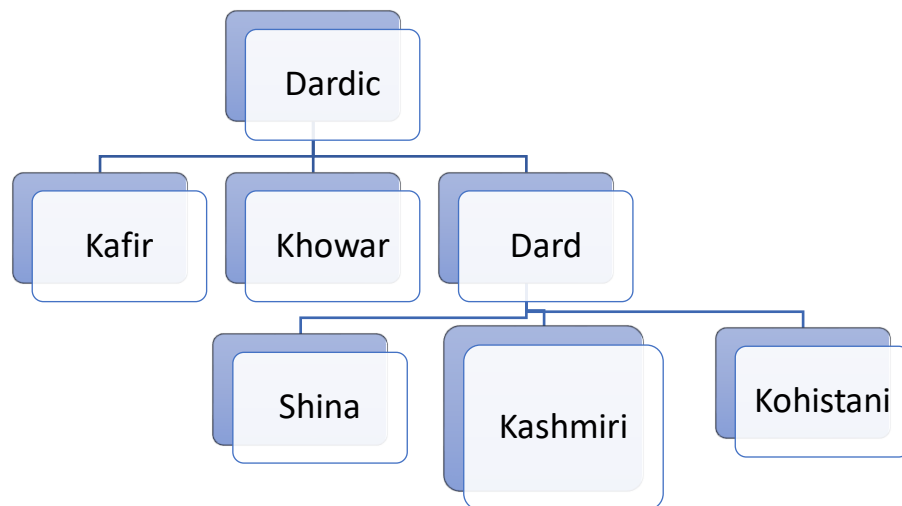
The first linguistic taxonomy for the languages of the northern territories from Kashmir to the northern parts of Afghanistan was proposed by George A. Grierson (1919) in his monumental work *Linguistic Survey of India* published in the early twentieth century. According to Grierson, Shina language belongs to the Dard group- a subgroup of Dardic groups of languages. Grierson (1919:2) presents Dardic as a separate branch of Indo-Iranian, with three groups:

The Kafir group

The Khowar group

The Dard sub-groups

The Dard group is in itself composed of Shina, Kashmiri and Kohistani. It can be shown diagrammatically as:



Gurez Valley

Gurez Valley is situated at the northernmost part of Indian Kashmir within the Bandipora district. On its northern boundary, barbed wires mark the Line of Control (LOC) separating it from areas controlled by Pakistan. The Kishenganga River, originating from Gangbal Lake in the Harmukh Mountains, runs east-west across the valley. In Pakistan, this river is known as Neelum and acts as the LOC for the lower parts of Gurez. The valley stretches about 95 kilometers in length and is, in some areas, only half a kilometer wide. As per the 2011 census, Gurez valley had a population of 34,390 in India, with around 25,000 being native Shina speakers. The rest primarily speak Kashmiri. The Shina-speaking inhabitants of the valley identify as Dards or Dard-shins. The linguistic repertoire of native speakers of Gurezi Shina typically encompass Shina, Kashmiri, Urdu, and English.

The main aim of this paper is to explore the language choices and areas of language application among young Shina speakers. The study specifically delves into analysing the specific contexts or domains where Shina is employed compared to other languages. Examining these domains offers insights into potential linguistic preferences across different settings and conversational partners. To gather data, a comprehensive questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire aimed to capture insights into language usage patterns, considering various social factors such as gender, age, and educational background. Additionally, participants were queried about their language preferences in more personal contexts, including interactions with siblings, close friends, and other acquaintances.

Methodology

This study has been carried out in the Gurez valley within the Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir. The study involved 45 respondents who are the native speakers of Shina language, within the age group of 16 to 30 years. Each participant filled out the prepared questionnaire and various questions were crafted and posed to assess the language choices of the research respondents. The respondents have been taken from the educational institutions comprising of schools, higher secondaries and colleges of Gurez Valley. From the total informants, 43% were males and 57% were females. The informants belonged to both the genders, as the research was carried in co-educational institutes.

The questionnaire has been the main tool employed for eliciting the sociolinguistic data from the Shina youth. It consists of two sections. Each section has its own focus.

Section 1 focused on discovering the background information of the subjects such as age, gender, education level and occupation.

Section 2 aimed to obtain the data in terms of the language use in different domains: home, education, religious, personal, and social domain.

Domain Analysis

Joshua Fishman has introduced domain analysis which describes the use of languages in various institutional contexts in a multilingual society. Fishman suggests that one language is more likely to be appropriate in some specific contexts than another (Fasold 1984). Domains are defined in terms of institutional contexts or socio-ecological co-occurrences. They attempt to designate the major clusters of interaction situations that occur in particular multilingual settings.

Analysis

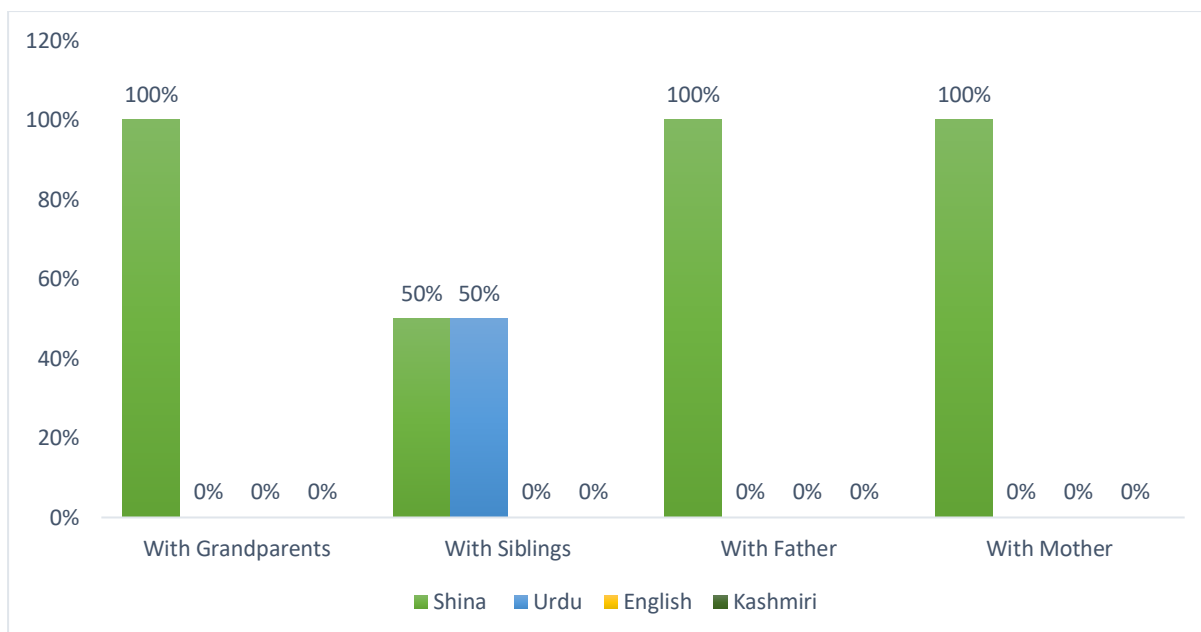
Home Domain

In sociolinguistics, the term "home domain" refers to the linguistic environment or context in which a person primarily uses a particular language or dialect. This setting usually takes place in a home or family environment where people are most comfortable using their native (Shina) or dominant language. Home domain can influence language maintenance, transmission, and change within a community or family unit.

Language Usage in Home Domain with Different Interlocutors

Language	With Grandparents(% age)	With Siblings(% age)	With Father(% age)	With Mother(% age)
Shina	100%	50%	100%	100%
Urdu	0%	50%	0%	0%
English	0%	0%	0%	0%
Kashmiri	0%	0%	0%	0%

Table 1.1: Language Usage in Home Domain with different Interlocutors



Graph 1.1: Language usage in Home Domain with different interlocutors

Graph 1.1 gives a clear representation of language usage in home domain. 100% respondents speak Shina at home with Grandparents and Parents while as,50% respondents speak Shina at home with Siblings and 50% speak Urdu at home with Siblings. From this graph, it is quite clear that, in home domain Shina is a preferred language as their mother tongue.

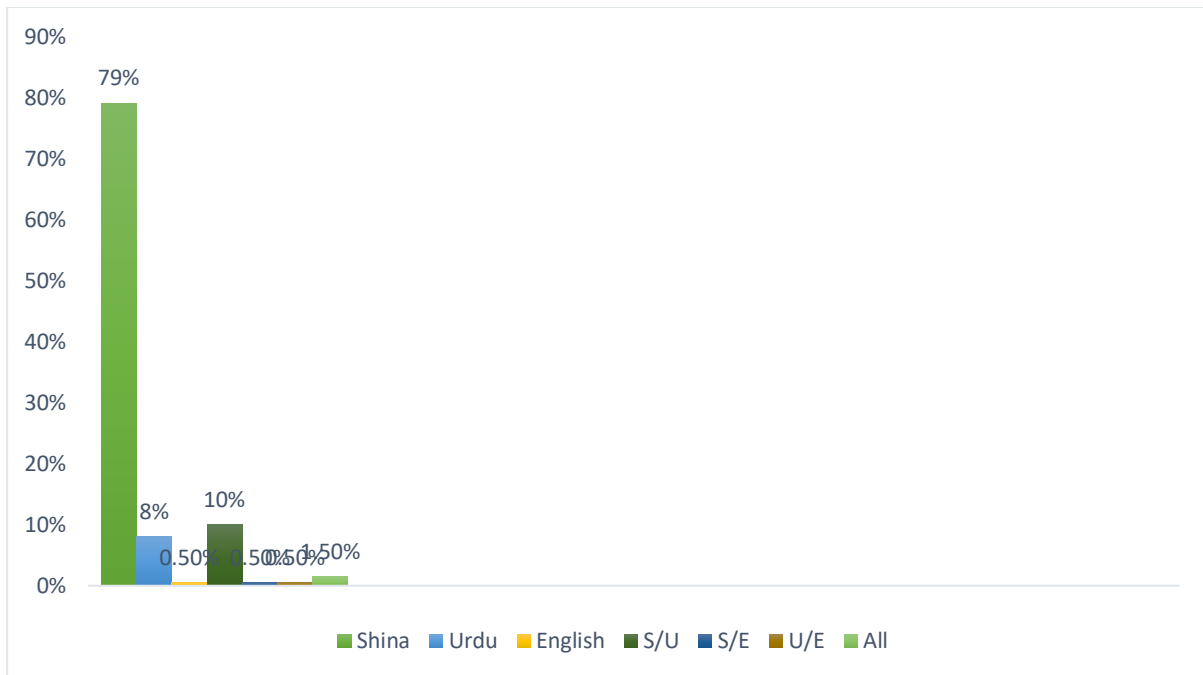
Personal Domian

The personal domain refers to linguistic behaviours and patterns that are unique to an individual in a particular social context. The way people use language in their most personal interactions was determined by questioning them about the languages they employ in certain day to day activities like language used for thinking, nicknaming, storytelling with their most intimate and private interlocutors.

Language Used while Thinking

Languages	Shina	Urdu	English	Shina/Urdu	Shina/English	Urdu/English	All
Percentage	79%	8%	0.5%	10%	0.5%	0.5%	1.5%

Table 1.2: Language used while thinking



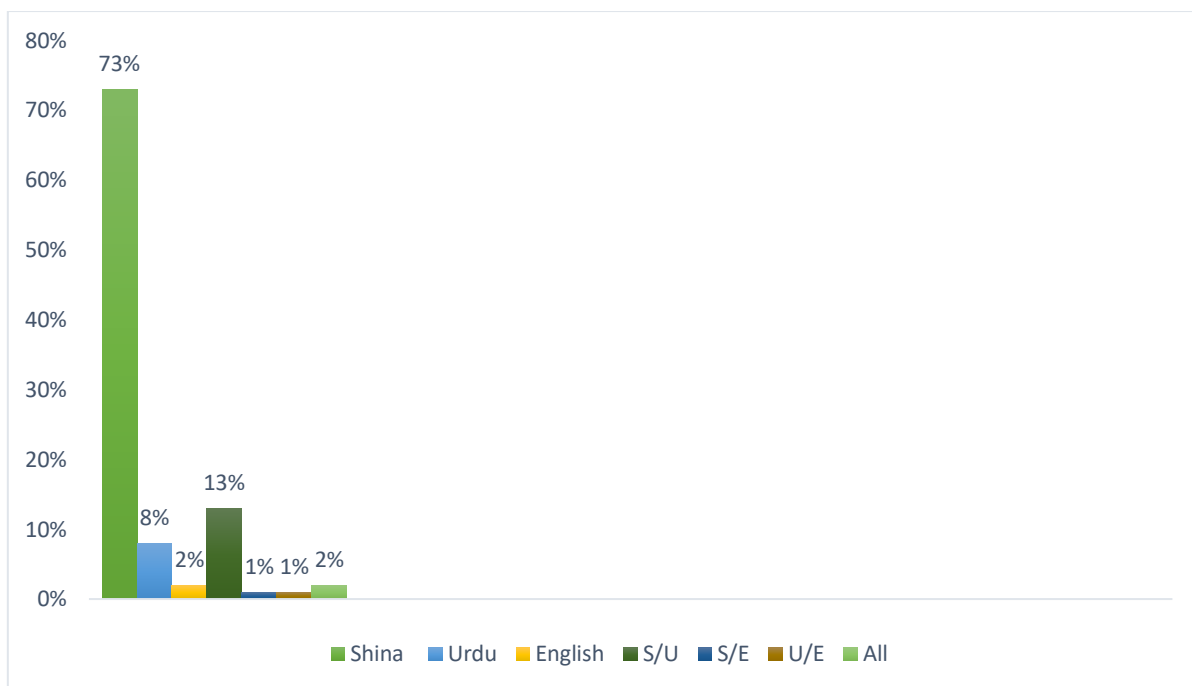
Graph 1.2: Language used while thinking

Above graph 1.2, clearly shows that 79% respondents use Shina language in thinking or planning, followed by Urdu which is 8%. Shina gets high percentage score as compared to Urdu and English, which once again reveals the fact that Shina is emotionally more dominant language than Urdu and English.

Language Used while Nicknaming

Languages	Shina	Urdu	English	Shina/Urdu	Shina/English	Urdu/English	All
Percentage	73%	8%	2%	13%	1%	1%	2%

Table 1.3: Language used while Nicknaming



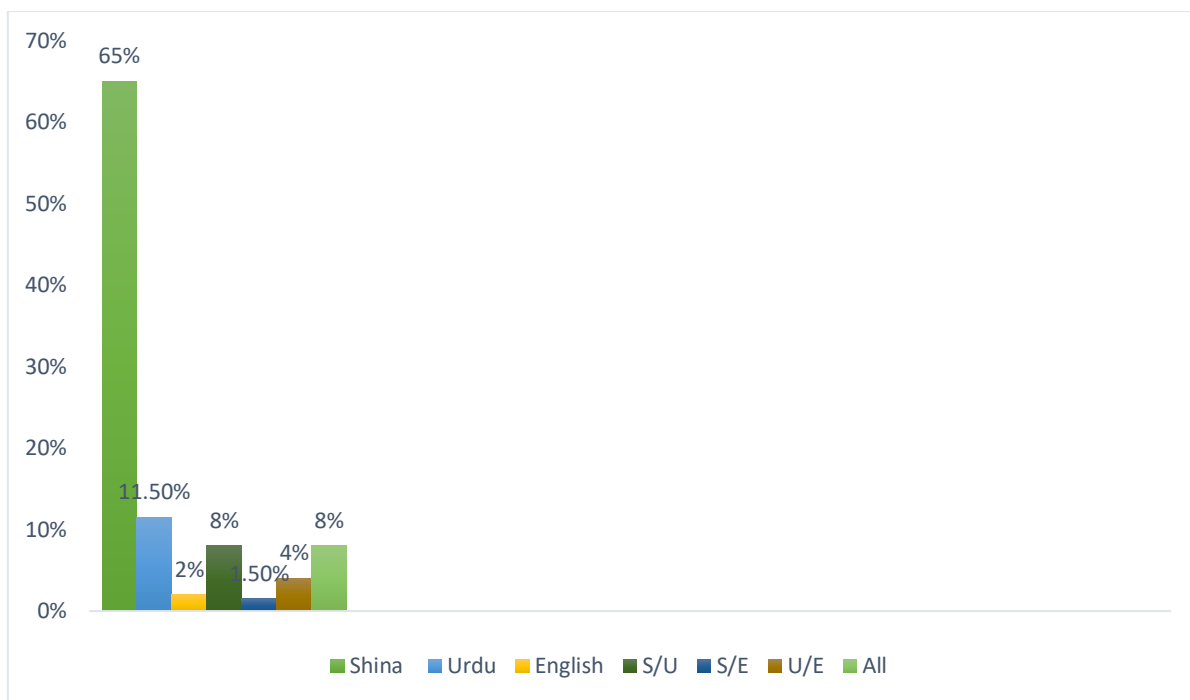
Graph 1.3: Language used while Nicknaming

From the above graph 1.3, it is seen that 73% respondents choose their native tongue i.e. Shina for nicknaming, followed by combination of Shina and Urdu which is about 13% of respondents. 8% of respondents use Urdu language for the same. Nicknaming in one’s native language may reflect certain cultural nuances, values, and traditions that are important within a particular community or context. It can also serve as a form of endearment, affection, or recognition, emphasizing a unique characteristic, quality, or experience associated with the person given the nickname.

Language Used for Storytelling

Languages	Shina	Urdu	English	Shina/Urdu	Shina/English	Urdu/English	All
Percentage	65%	11.5%	2%	8%	1.5%	4%	8%

Table 1.4: Language used for story telling



Graph 1.4: Language Used for Storytelling

From the above graph 1.4, one can see that 65% of informants use Shina while only 11.5% of informants use Urdu while telling stories to their children, friends, relatives etc. Telling stories in native languages is a powerful way to preserve cultural heritage, express identity, foster community connections, and enrich linguistic and cultural diversity.

School Domain

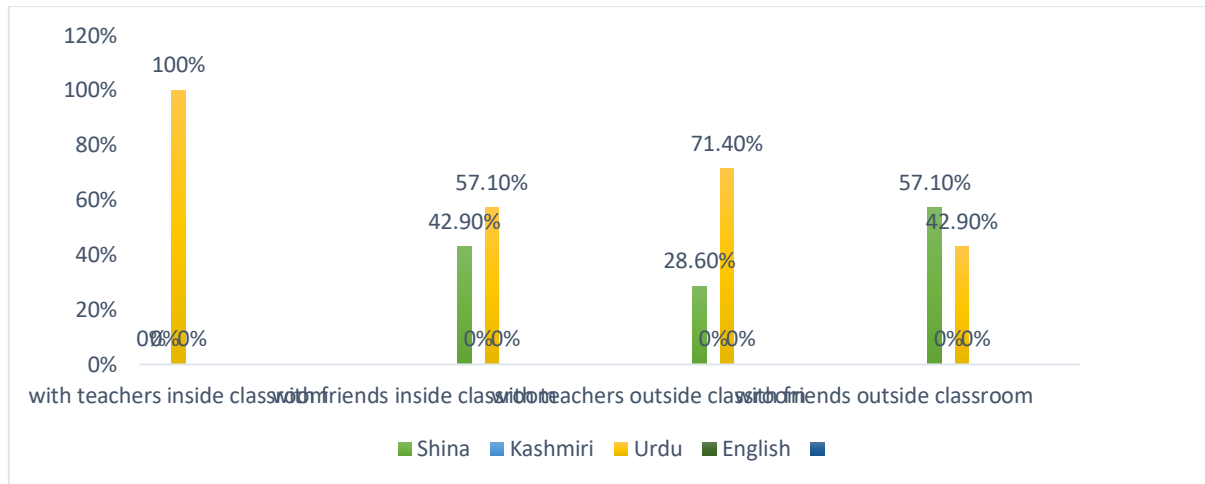
School domain refers to language practices and patterns associated with educational institutions, especially schools. This area includes the way language is used, learned, and perceived in educational institutions. The interlocutors in the school domain with whom the patterns of language use were observed are teachers and friends.

Language Usage in Schools

Language	With teachers inside classroom	With friends inside classroom	With teachers outside classroom	With friends outside classroom
Shina	0%	42.90%	28.60%	57.10%
Kashmiri	0%	0%	0%	0%
Urdu	100%	57.10%	71.40%	42.90%

English	0%	0%	0%	0%
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Table 1.5: Language Usage in School



Graph 1.5: Language Usage in School

Graph 1.5 represents languages spoken at school. From the graph, it is clear that 100% respondents speak Urdu language inside classroom with teachers and 55% respondents speak Urdu language with friends inside classroom and 45% speak Shina with friends inside classroom. However, 55% respondents prefer to use Shina language and 45% prefer Urdu language with teachers outside classroom and 75% respondents prefer Shina language and 25% respondents prefer Urdu language with friends outside classroom. Inside the classroom, 100% respondents prefer Urdu language with teachers as the respondents claimed that it is better to use Urdu in schools as this language is associated with greater prestige and power. It is pertinent to mention here that English is the medium of instruction in secondary and higher secondary schools. However, the elicited data, given in the table above, reveals that the students are reluctant to communicate in English which may perhaps be because of lack of confidence and poor communication skills.

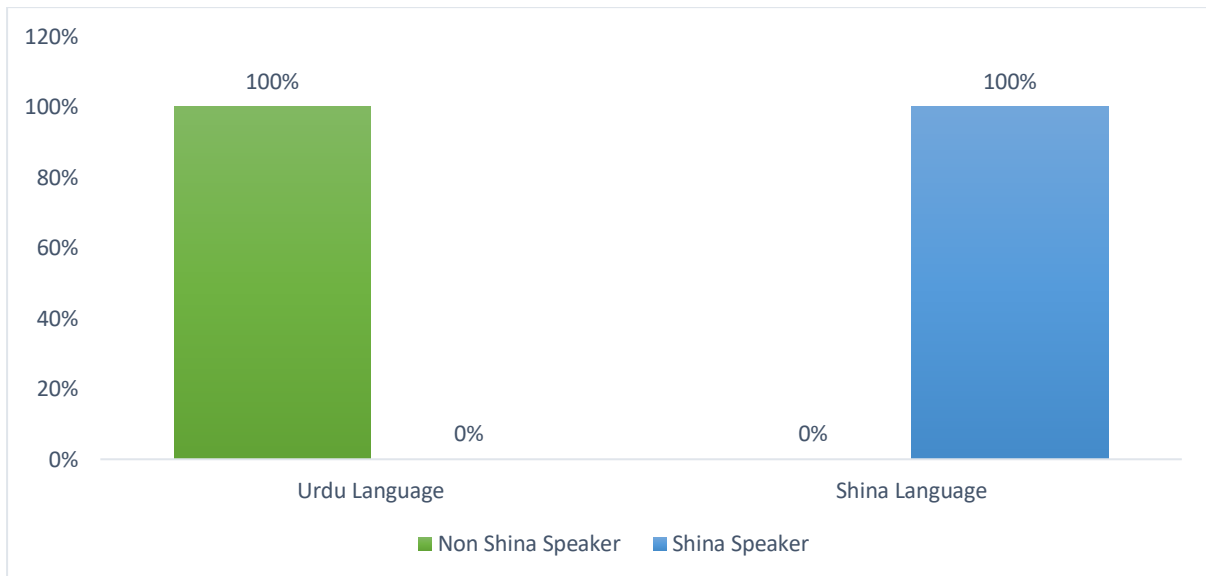
Social Domain

The social domain refers to a specific context or setting where language is used and understood by its participants. This includes situations such as community gatherings, market place interactions, religious ceremonies etc. Each social domain has its own set of linguistic norms, rules, and expectations that influence how language is produced and interpreted

Language Usage with Shina and Non-Shina Speakers at Market

Speaker	Urdu Language	Shina Language
Non-Shina speaker	100%	0%
Shina speaker	0%	100%

Table 1.6: Language Usage at Market



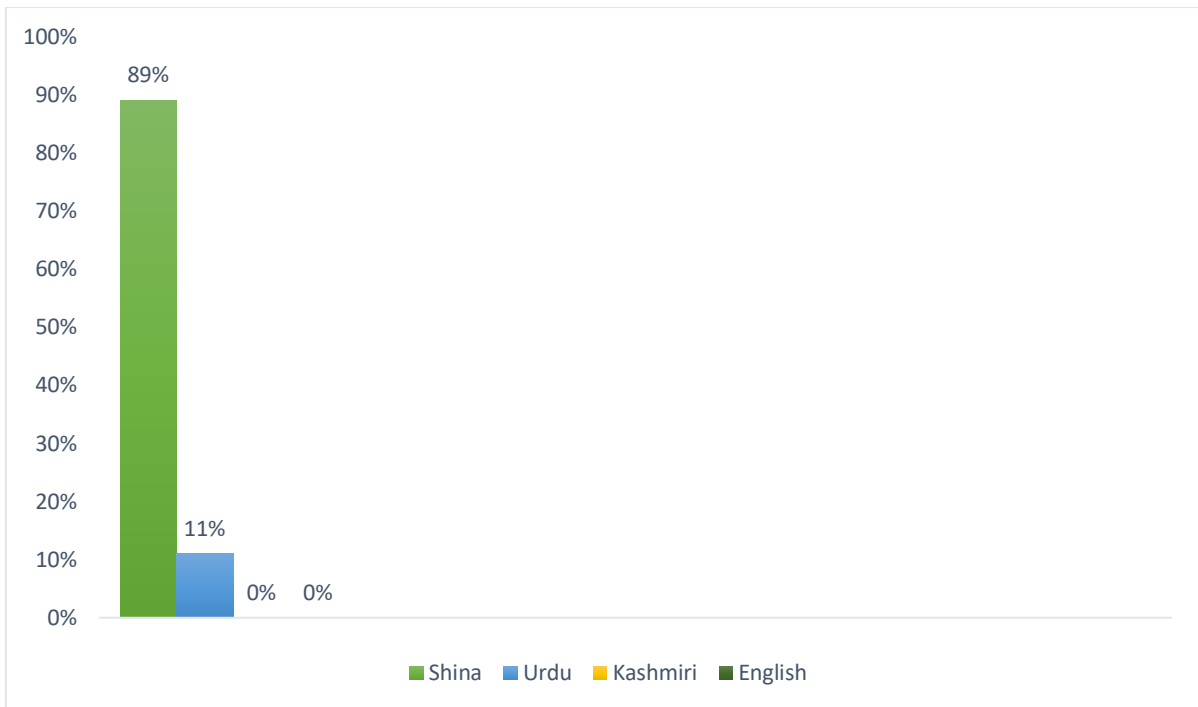
Graph 1.6: Language Usage at Market

Graph 1.6 represents language used with Shina and non-Shina speakers. The results shown in the above graph reveals that Shina people use Shina language while interacting with their own community people. While as, Shina people use Urdu language when interacting with the non-Shina speakers. Moreover, it is clear from the above given graph that Kashmiri and English languages have got 0% when it comes to interactional purpose.

Language Used in Community Gathering

Language used in	Shina	Urdu	Kashmiri	English
Community Gatherings	89%	11%	0%	0%

Table1.7: Language used in Community Gathering



Graph 1.7: Language used in Community Gathering

Graph 1.7 represents language used in community gathering. The results shown in the above graph reveals that 89% Shina youth use their mother tongue i.e., Shina in community gatherings whereas 11% of the youth prefer Urdu language over their mother tongue in community gatherings. Moreover, it is clear from the above given graph that Kashmiri and English languages have got 0% speakers when it comes to community gatherings. The use of mother tongue in community gathering reflects a complex interplay of cultural, social, historical and personal factors and contributes to the preservation, expression and celebration of linguistic diversity and identity in a community context.

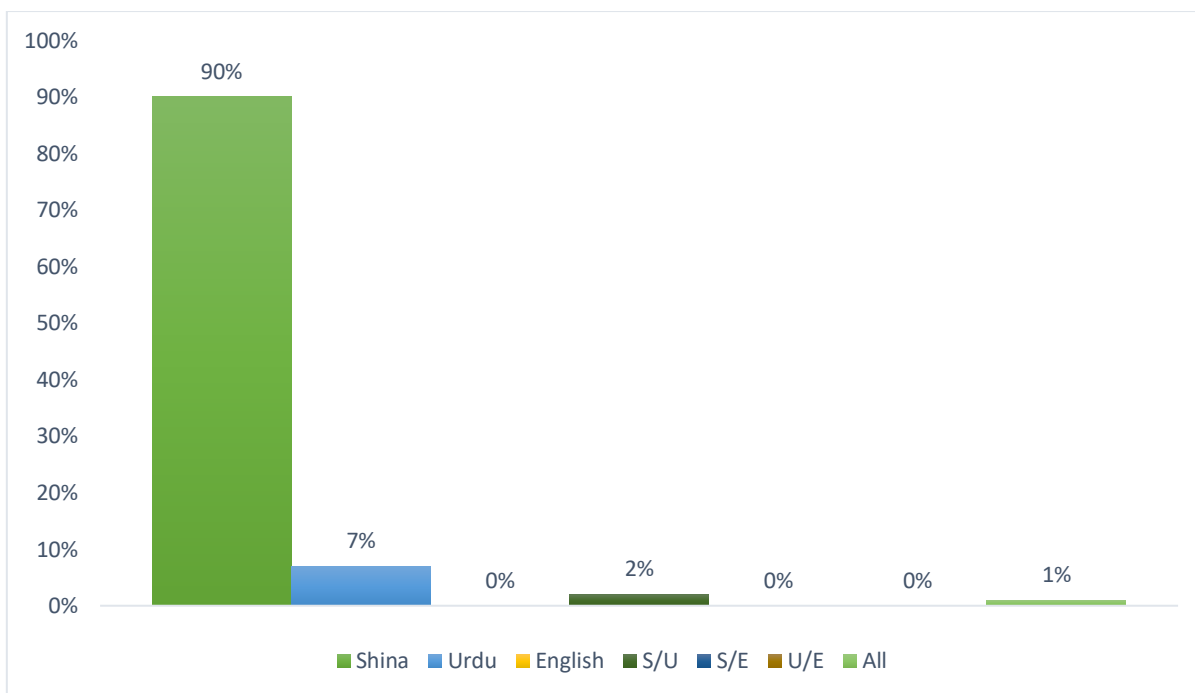
Religious Domain

The religious domain focusses on studying how language is used within religious communities, institutions and contexts.

Language Used while Making *Dua* (Asking God for something)

Languages	Shina	Urdu	English	Shina/Urdu	Shina/English	Urdu/English	All
Percentage	90%	7%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%

Table 1.8: Language used while making dua



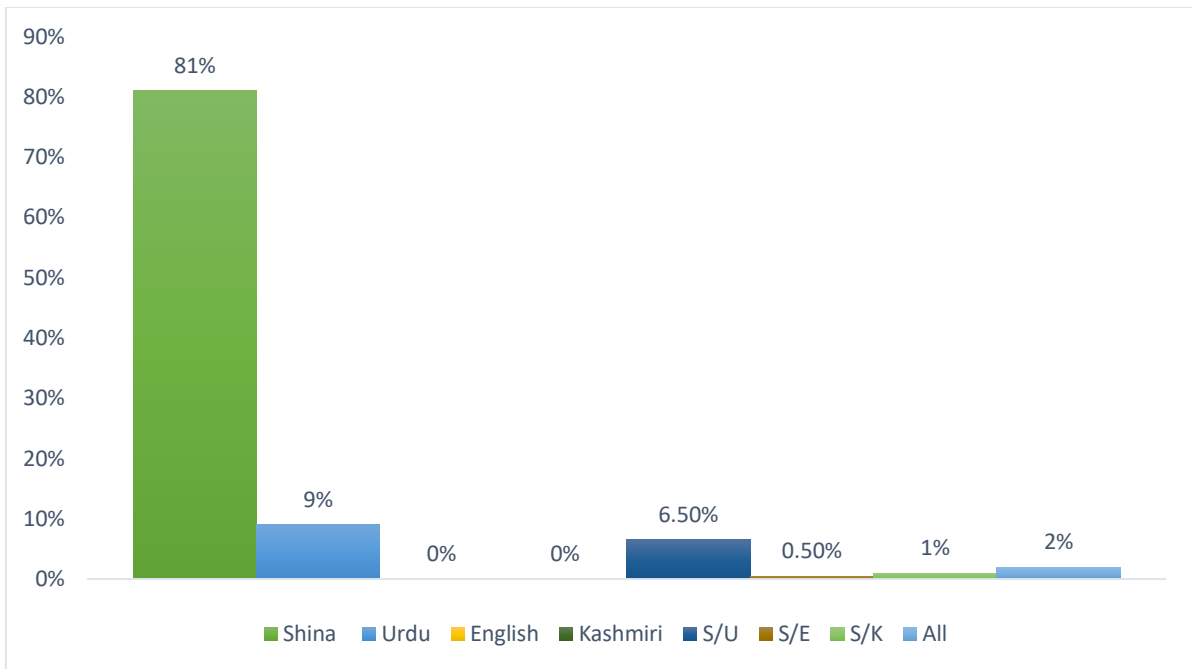
Graph 1.8: Language used while making dua

From the above graph 1.8, it can be observed that majority of respondents have claimed to use Shina while making dua i.e. asking God for something, followed by Urdu which is 7% and the combination of Shina and Urdu which is 2%. Shina gets maximum score, which may be construed as reflecting that Shina speakers are more attached to their native language.

Language Used while Talking with Other Worshipers in the Mosque

Languages	Shina	Urdu	English	Kashmiri	Shina/Urdu	Shina/English	Urdu/Kashmiri	All
Percentage	81%	9%	0%	0%	6.5%	0.5%	1%	2%

Table 1.9: Language used while talking with others worshipers in the mosque



Graph 1.9: Language used while talking with others worshippers in the mosque

It is evident from the above graph 1.9, 81% of informants use Shina language for religious discussions followed by Urdu language which is 9% and the combination of Shina and Urdu which is 6.50%. When people use their native language in religious discussions, it often reflects the complex interplay of language, culture, spirituality, and identity in forming religious beliefs, practices, and experiences. The importance of linguistic diversity and tradition is emphasized.

Conclusion

From the above discussion of domains of language use among Shina youth of Gurez valley, it becomes evident that they have maintained their mother tongue in the home domain. It was found that the informants find Shina more comfortable language in order to fully express themselves in informal situations. In educational domain the use of Shina is not as dominant as in the home domain because Shina youth prefer to speak Urdu with teachers and friends inside the classroom. The results also reveal that they use Shina while interacting with their own community people and prefer Urdu language when interacting with the non-Shina speakers at market. The Shina language appears to have a dominant role in the places of worship and in religious discourse.

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