Language choice and language use patterns among Parmi speakers of Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract: *Linguistically, the state of Jammu and Kashmir is multilingual. The main mother tongues in the state are Kashmiri, Dogri, Balti, Dardi, Punjabi, Pahari and Ladakhi. Urdu and English are the two official languages. In India the sociocultural and sociolinguistic boundaries are not clearly marked as they are in some Western parts of world. Factors such as language contact, language accreditation by the State, prestige associated with a language, political and social pressure seem to determine the nature of multilingualism in a particular speech community Regarding the linguistic situation in Parmi speech community it is observed that English and Urdu are overtaking Parmi in inter-group communication domains. The contact of Urdu, English, and Kashmiri with Parmi is not through any migrant population but chiefly through political patronage, education and mass media. This contact situation has led to multilingualism in active, as well as, passive forms and has also resulted in a high degree of code mixing. This study aims at throwing some light on a steady shift of language choice and preferences taking place in Parmi speech community.*

Key Words: *language shift, language choice, attitudes, language identity, Parmi.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Language use is determined by a set of demographic, social and cultural factors (Pendakur 1990). When studying language maintenance and shift, it is important to detect external pressures which result in choice of language, determine how well a minority language is learned at the community and define the influence of the majority group on the minority language preservation (Weinreich, 1964). Thus, Pendakur (1990, p. 5) suggests that at issue "then are the social and demographic attributes in a society or group which cause a language to be maintained or dropped in favour of another". The linguistic scenario in the state of Jammu and Kashmir is very complex as we find a diversity of languages and dialects spoken by people inhabiting various areas exposed to various processes of social interactions. In different areas along with Kashmiri some dialects and other languages are also spoken. Occasionally, some minority sector of speakers suddenly rises up to demand the inclusion of their community under various categories to fulfill their socio cultural aspiration or political ambition. A study of the linguistic composition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir presents an interesting picture. In Ladakh, we find Ladakhi in Leh and Balti in Kargil . The Kashmir Valley has by and large Kashmiri with strips of Pahari, Gojri, Shina and Punjabi linked together by Urdu and Kashmiri. Linguistic exchange occasionally gives rise to new varieties.

Parmi is an Indo-Aryan language and is spoken by Batla Khan Community of Limbar village; district Baramulla, state of Jammu and Kashmir. Parmi speaking community is identified as a separate ethnic group on the basis of the language they speak. Language is used as a key point for identification of other communities as well, like Kashmiri speaking people called Kashmiris Dogri speaking people called Dogras, , Balti speaking as Baltis and Gojri speaking as Gujars etc. Language is the most powerful means of communication, vehicle of expression of cultural values and aspirations and instrument of conserving culture. As such language is an important means to acquire and preserve identity of a particular group or community. Language and culture are interrelated because the language regions possess certain homogeneity of culture and are characterized by common traits in history, folklore and literature. Among various cultural symbols like religion, race, language, traditions customs etc. Language is the most prominent cultural and identity marker, providing for group identity. Its spatial spread over a fixed territory makes language more important than religion as a basis for ethnic identity formation. Language is an important means to acquire and preserve identity of a particular group or community. Parmi speaking community in Jammu and Kashmir draw the reference of their ethnic identity from Parmi language, which acts as a marker of their identity in the social stratification and are identified as Batla Khan. It is pertinent to mention that in the modern world political assertion of language identities has assumed importance in the fast changing scenario. Though Parmi has no functional role as written language now, it is "overwhelmingly" used as the language of personal and in group communication. It is the medium of dreams, mental arithmetic and reflection, of communication within the family, with friends and in the market places etc.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

The earliest discussion regarding language maintenance and shift is by Bloomfield (1933). He brings to our notice the phenomenon where certain immigrants in the United States give up their native language in favour of a

foreign one, thereby instigating a shift of language. He also focuses on bilingualism, which for him involves 'native like control of two languages'. Weinreich (1953), discussing Yiddish in the United States raised some fundamental issues about the relationship between language change and language shift in a contact situation. Fishman (1972) points out that the basic prerequisite of language maintenance and language shift is a contact situation. The contact situation may give rise to either bilingualism or language shift.

3. METHOD:

The research design applied in this study is an interactive design, in which multiple data gathering procedures were employed for the data collection. To achieve the objectives of the study, community profile technique was used. In addition to that, informal interviews and a sociolinguistic questionnaire were also employed. The data was collected from 60 informants for this study. Care was taken to have a representative sample which included male and female informants from Limbar village. All the informants were native speakers of Parmi.

4. DATA ANALYSIS:

For purpose of determining the patterns of language use in different domains, the informants indicated the use of only Parmi (P), only Urdu (U), only Kashmiri (K) ,English (E), and combinations of these 4 languages i.e. Parmi-Urdu (PU), English-Parmi (EK), Parmi-Kashmiri (PK) and English-Urdu-Kashmiri-Parmi(EUKP), thus choosing from a set of 8 options.

The main purpose of the elicitation of this information was to obtain a clearer picture regarding any shift away from Parmi (P) as a dominant code.

a) Across different domains
b) Across the interlocutors in each domain and
c) From the informal to the formal context.

Language use in different domains can give a clear idea about the language preferences of an individual for different linguistic settings. If these preferences are found towards a language other than mother tongue, it's quite possible that over a period of time the community can make a complete shift to other language and give up their mother tongue completely.

The informants were asked about the language/s they used with their family members i.e. Grandparents, Father, Spouse, Kin (Brothers and Sisters), and Children, with their Friends and with their office members i.e. Male Subordinates, Female Subordinates, Male Colleagues, Female Colleagues and Boss.

5. PERSONAL DOMAIN:

The personal domain include the language which informants use with their most private interlocutors like God, Self, Subconscious and Best Friend and for certain other day to day functions like language for counting and language for naming the days of the week. The informants were asked about the language they use 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 the days of week (W).

The purpose was to study the amount of Parmi used in each case across the six groups (Old, Middle-aged and the Youth of both genders). A graphic representation is presented in Fig 1.1.
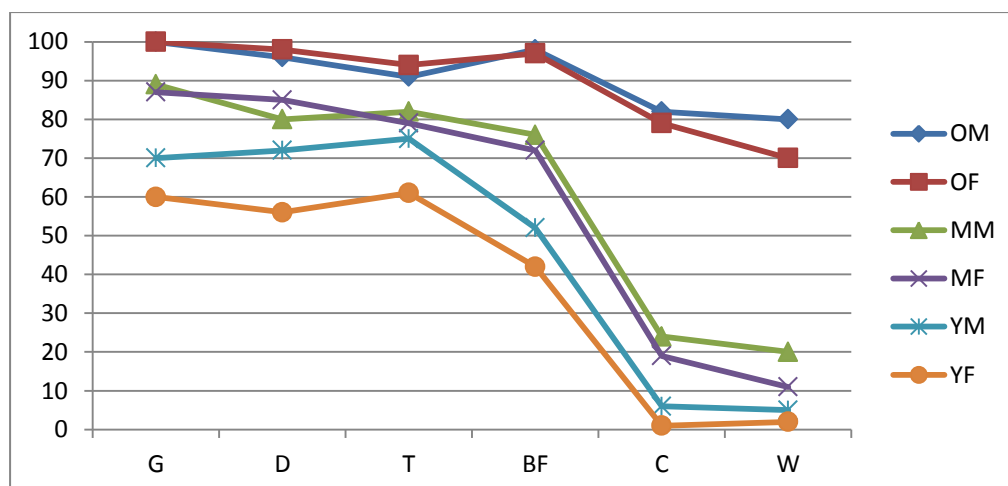

Fig. 1.1: Use of Parmi in the Personal Domain

A clear cut distinction regarding the language use within personal domain across all age groups and genders can be seen emerging in the above graph. The young females and males are seen to loose Parmi maximally followed by Middle aged group. The maximum loss of language can be seen in Counting and Naming week domains with young males and females almost losing Parmi completely. The old male and female group show almost total retention of Parmi in Personal domain. Old male and female curve in the graph is seen closely placed to each other. Same picture emerges from the Middle age male and female group where the curves can be seen closely placed together. A remarkably different picture is seen with the Young age group where there is a considerable different between the male and female responses. Overall, Young group is seen to lose their language significantly in personal domain. The most important point to be noticed here is that the language loss in personal domain is mostly subconscious, which is an indication, that the speakers of Parmi have substituted their mother tongue with other languages on a mental level.

6. HOME DOMAIN:

Fig 1.2 represents the use of only Parmi (P) in the Family domain. The horizontal axis represents the interlocutors and the vertical axis represents the mean percentage of each age group using only Parmi to interact with their family members.
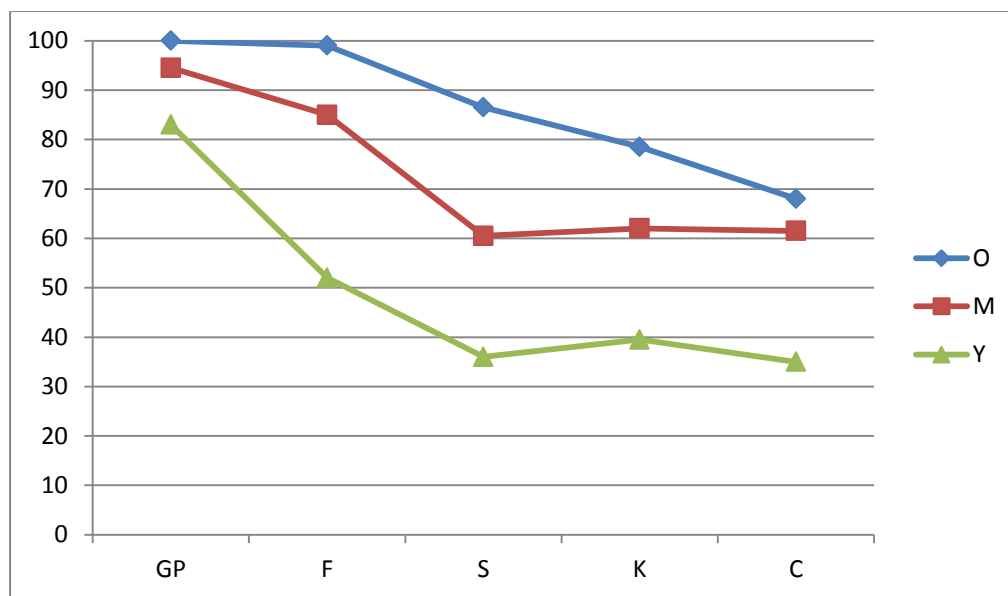
Fig. 1.2: Use of 'Only Parmi' in the Home Domain

Fig. 1.2 shows a clear distinction across the age groups in their choice of language to interact with their family members. It can be seen that Old aged group seems to use Parmi maximally followed by Middle aged group. Considerable drop can be seen in the curves as, we move from Grandparents to Children which to some extent can be attributed to the less interaction in Parmi with children.

To get a better understanding of the linguistic situation in Home domain the responses of the informants were tabulated.

	Grandparents			Father			Spouse			Kin			Children		
	P	PU/PK/PE PEUK	U/E/EU	P	PU/PK/PE PEUK	U/E/EU	P	PU/PK/PE PEUK	U/E/EU	P	PU/PK/PE PEUK	U/E/EU	P	PU/PK/PE PEUK	U/E/EU
OM	100	0	0	100	0	0	88	12	0	76	14	10	71	23	6
OF	100	0	0	98	2	0	85	15	0	81	19	0	65	30	5
MM	98	2	0	91	9	0	59	40	1	72	17	11	68	15	17
MF	91	9	0	79	21	0	62	32	6	52	35	13	55	18	27
YM	87	13	0	61	30	9	41	43	16	41	43	16	41	36	23
YF	79	21	0	43	49	8	31	52	17	38	47	15	39	34	27

Table 1.1: Language Use (%) in the Home domain

Table 1.1 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 Parmi. In the second set i.e. the (PU/PK/PEUK) set the use of Parmi along with Urdu (PU) , Kashmiri (PK) or English (PE) or with all the three Urdu and English (PEUK) is indicated. In the third set i.e. the (U/E/EU) set, the use of language or languages other than Parmi are indicated which include Urdu (U), English (E) and English-Urdu (EU).

The pattern of language use observed from tabulated data in home domain was again elicited from our six groups i.e. Old Males (OM), Old Females (OF), Middle-aged Males (MM), Middle-aged Females (MF), Young Males (YM) and Young Females (YF) with their family members i.e.

      a.   Grand parents (GP),
      b.   Father (F),
      c.   Spouse (S),
      d.   Kin i.e. brothers and sisters (K) and
      e.   Children (C)

By looking at the tabulated data one might see Parmi as a dominant code in family conversations, but a shift can be seen in the figures that involve interaction with children. A shift away from Parmi is also seen in terms of socio psychological features of informants. A very interesting picture evolves when we look at the figures in Table 1.1. there is a considerable increase in the overall score of Parmi (P) set as compared to PU/ PK/ PEUK and the U/E/EU set. As, far as age groups are concerned it is clearly seen in the graph and table as well that as we move from old aged to young the responses gets less favourable for Parmi. There is a consistency in percentage of use for Parmi by Old females when interacting with Grandparents, Spouse and Kin, Father but when it comes to talking with Children these scores drop considerably.

On comparing the scores given in favour of Parmi by old and young generation a clear shift from Parmi is seen in case of young generation. The shift in young generation is far more than that in Old generation. Of all the groups Young females seem to shift away from parmi maximally and old females seem to retain the language in Home domain. Overall results show a clear distinction among three generations regarding the linguistic shift in home domain. The hierarchy of language loss can be shown as following

<p align="center">Old aged < Middle aged < Young aged</p>

7. OFFICE DOMAIN

At workplace different situations may arise that govern the choice of language used. When maximum number of people employed belongs to a single linguistic group, then their language becomes the language of the workplace. If two or more linguistic groups, in more or less equal proportions form the work force, then the language of the superior group is used, though any of the languages may be employed for inter group communication. The status of the interlocutor and office largely determine the language used by the people working in that office. The social status of the officer also affects the language preferences of the workers.

The interlocutors in the office domain with whom the patterns of language use are observed are:

      a.   Male Subordinates denoted by MS,
      b.   Female Subordinates denoted by FS,
      c.   Male Colleagues denoted by MC,
      d.   Female Colleagues denoted by FC and
      e.   Boss denoted by B.

The use of Parmi in the office setting involving different interlocutors is graphically represented in Fig 1.4.
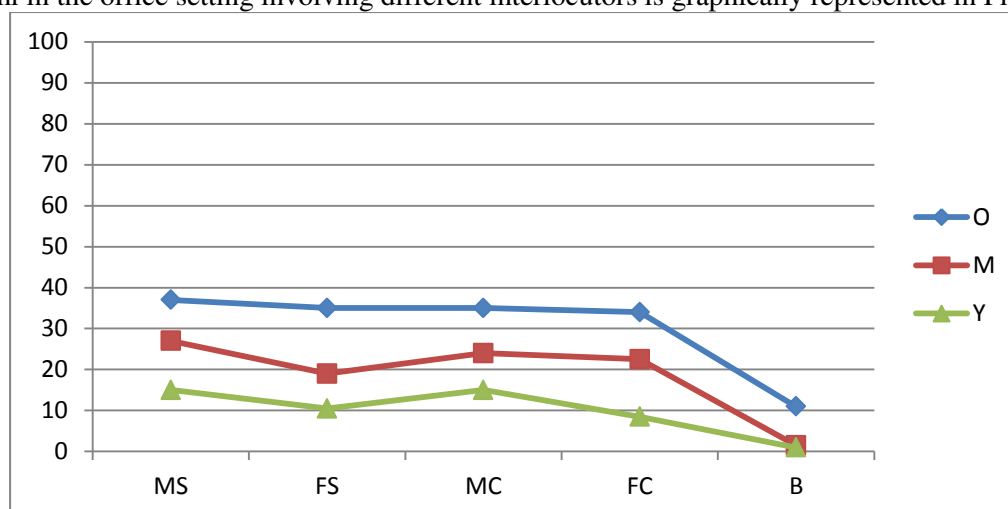
Fig 1.3: Use of 'Only Parmi' in the Office Domain

As seen in the above figure, all the curves are occupying the lower area of graph plot area, which asserts minimal use of Parmi at work places. It also indicates a sharp decline in the use of Parmi as we move from Subordinates to Superior. One of the reasons for such a decline may be that, Parmi being a minority language is not understood by everyone at the office. This decrease in the use of Parmi from Subordinates to Superior is shown by all the age groups with only Old ages showing some consistency till colleagues. Again, the decline in the use of Parmi from the subordinates to the superior is least in the old informants and maximum in the young informants.

Table 1.2 shows the use of languages with different interlocutors in the informal office domain across our six age and sex groups.

	MS			FS			MC			FC			B		
	P	PU/EP/EUKP	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUKP	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUKP	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUKP	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUKP	U/E/EU
OM	31	69	0	30	52	18	30	40	30	30	48	18	12	0	88
OF	43	57	0	40	55	5	40	35	25	38	49	13	10	6	84
MM	29	31	40	20	44	36	25	30	45	25	20	55	3	5	92
MF	25	30	45	18	33	49	23	28	49	20	35	45	0	0	100
YM	19	29	52	11	51	38	20	30	50	12	24	64	2	0	98
YF	11	25	64	10	32	58	10	22	68	5	20	75	0	0	100

Table 1.2: Language Use (%) in Office domain

From the above tabulated data it is clear that Urdu, English and mixed codes are dominant in office domain. The use of Parmi sharply drops in the office domain as compared to Home domain. In case of the young females the use of Parmi is very low in fact, its 0% with Superiors. This furthermore clears the attitude of Young females towards retention of their mother tongue. This indicates that young people strongly believe in the prestige attached to a particular language. The Youth strongly show an inclination towards languages other than Parmi with the interlocutor Boss, which indicates the importance of English and Urdu in the eyes of the youth as markers of formality and respect. The youth show the maximum amount of convergence in this domain and context. As, brought up earlier these results can be largely attributed to the fact that office domains has speakers of different languages. In such case the language that is common to all or is superior becomes the dominant code in the office. In case of Parmi, it is a minority language and is spoken by a smaller group of people as compared to Urdu which is spoken by everyone in the area. Overall Urdu and mixed code occupies the position of dominant code in office domain.

8. SOCIAL GATHERINGS:

The language preferences of the informants while interacting with their office members in the domain of Social gathering was also elicited. It was done in order to get a better idea about the effect of social settings on informants.
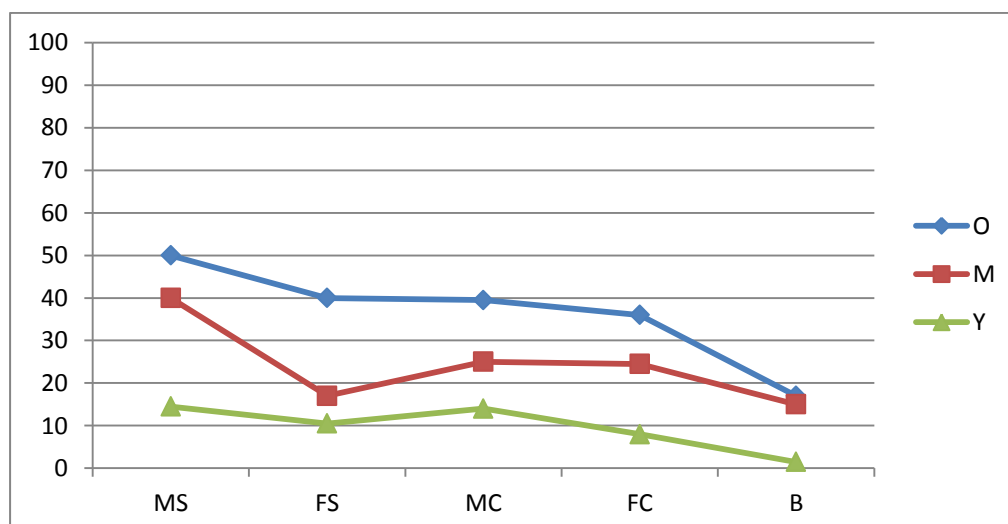

Fig 1.4: Use of Parmi in Social Gatherings

In Fig 1.5 one can see that the use of Parmi with office members in Social gatherings is slightly different than the use of Parmi with office members in office settings. As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for minimal use of Parmi in office domain and social setting is its minority language nature. Work place unlike home domain has speakers of different languages, so the language mutual to all becomes dominant in such setting.

Again, all the curves are places in the lower area of graph plot that indicates a drop in use of Parmi in office and social gathering. The highest point to which a curves goes is 50%. In table 1.3 a sharp decrease in the use of Parmi is evident as we move across from the Subordinates to the Superior. It is interesting to see that the amount of Parmi used for interaction with Female (subordinates and colleagues) by Middle aged and old aged males is low as compared to male counterparts.

It is observed that Old aged females and Middle aged females use more of 'only Parmi' in social gathering domain as compared to their male counter parts. The results obtained from tabulated data are not very different than those obtained in office domain. This preference in choice of language indicates that the social gatherings are equally affected by the social pressure exerted by official setting and society.

Table 1.3 shows tabular form of the use of only Parmi, Parmi with Urdu/English/Urdu-English and languages other than Parmi

	MS			FS			MC			FC			B		
	P	PU/EP/EUK P	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EU KP	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUK P	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUK P	U/E/EU	P	PU/EP/EUK P	U/E/EU
OM	45	75	0	33	47	20	38	50	12	32	40	28	22	0	78
OF	55	65	0	47	40	13	41	29	30	40	38	22	12	10	78
MM	39	22	40	18	32	50	22	25	53	20	25	55	5	12	83
MF	41	30	29	16	15	69	28	20	52	29	30	41	5	5	90
YM	20	20	60	12	20	68	18	17	65	10	16	74	3	5	92
YF	9	14	77	9	21	70	10	12	78	6	15	79	0	2	98

Table 1.3: Language Use (%) in Social gatherings

As, we move from Subordinates to the Superior a significant decline is seen in use of Parmi. The language used with Boss is mostly the language other than Parmi (Urdu, English) or mixed code. An important point to note here is that many informants said that there Boss was a 'Kashmiri' so they mostly use Kashmiri mixed with Urdu with him. But, even in the cases where Boss could understand Parmi, preference was given to Urdu over it. This is clearly because Urdu speakers are seen as more intelligent and polished. This indicates the interference of office restrictions to this domain as well.

Overall, it is observed that the Older aged group uses maximum amount (50%) of Parmi in social gatherings followed by Middle aged group. Again Young aged group show a similar pattern of language use with a little variation. The Young Females showed almost equal scores for Parmi with Male and Female office members except for Boss where it drops to no use of the language at all. Young Males like Old and Middle aged males, shows increased use of Parmi for Male office members. This indicates that the gender of interlocutors plays a vital role in determining the choice of language used for interaction. The simple reason for such preferences is the belief that using a prestigious language can impress the other gender and prove them to be better than their peer group.

The decline in use of Parmi in various linguistic situations throws light on the linguistic scenario of Limbar valley. The patterns emerged after tabulation of data indicates a steady shift toward languages other than Parmi. Though, informants stressed up on maintaining their language and identity in previous chapter but, there is no ground reality to this claim. The greater use of Urdu and mixed code right from the personal domains onwards indicate a clear decline in the use of Parmi.

9. CONCLUSION:
It is evident from the study that there appears a gradual shift in the language preferences of Parmi speakers towards Urdu and English. The domains which should have been occupied by Parmi are steadily being encroached up on by Urdu. The attitude of informants clearly shows the identity crisis in the community especially among youth. The linguistic scenario above refers literally to an institutional two-tier language classification where languages having certain value and prestige attached to them are encouraged and those languages of minority groups are perceived as useless. This divide plays into the marginalisation of minority groups and can be seen as damaging to their personal identity. This classification reflects a fault line that exists within society. The worldwide inclination that has been seen

over the previous decades is unmistakably towards smaller languages; especially the minority and indigenous languages which mostly cease to exist due to low prestige attached to them. Language misfortune ordinarily happens in multilingual connections, in which a dominant part language comes to supplant the extent and elements of a minority language, with the outcome that the speakers of the minority language begin to prefer the dominant language in out-group communication settings It will be interesting to see the language use in different domains in the formal and the informal context. Patterns of language use can act as important indicators of the linguistic situation in Limber valley

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