2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodology involved in the present study, and discusses the sample, tools and procedure employed in data collection and analysis.

2.2 Sample

Our study is based on spoken corpus. For this purpose data was collected from fifty native speakers, both male and female from different regions (urban and rural areas) of Kashmir. It is important to note here that the data taken for phonological variables like /w/ and /v/ was taken from those informants who spoke only Srinagar variety.

The final recorded data comprised of 60 pieces of discourse. The 60 discourse pieces were carefully checked for and finally 15 pieces were very carefully selected for this work because of problems with the speech of the informants and recording conditions. Care was taken to have a representative sample which included informants from different genders, denominations and other variables such as education, region, socioeconomic background, etc which seemed to be relevant.

The data involved both improptu narrations as well as pieces of read material. In the case of the latter, the informants were asked to read a random passage which normally comprised of different genres like ‘prose’ and ‘stories’.

2.3 Tools and Procedure

The spoken data was recorded. Zoom digital voice recorder (Handy Recorder–H4, Zoom corporation) was used to record the data with sampling rate 48 kHz and 16 bit. The recorded data was transcribed and analyzed. Each narrative was divided into sentences and each sentence was transcribed phonemically which reflected the words’ full forms. Phonemically transcribed words were then inspected and further transcribed in corresponding phonetic form. These transcribed phonetic realizations of sentences were supported by the visual inspection of the waveforms and spectrograms. The analysis software, Wave Surfer was used for phonetic analysis of sentences.
Sentences which showed interesting differences between word-level and phrase-level phonetics/phonology were broken into phrases. Many observations were found in the analysed portion. Care was taken to see in which environment a particular change occurs and what are the processes which apply to these changes.

2.4 Phonological Variables

This study also included the study of some phonological variables such as bilabial approximant /w/ and a labiodental fricative /v/. For analysing this distinction, informants were asked to give the Kashmiri equivalents of English words from a randomized list. The informants were not told that the difference between /w/ and /v/ was being tested through the word list. In this way data regarding the variables was elicited, which was further analysed from an acoustic perspective (see figure 3.1). Other variables which came up as the study progressed were /a/ and a half long [a*], /e/ and its allophonic variant [ɛ].

2.5 Representation of sounds

Sounds were represented in IPA. Phonemic chart of consonants and vowels is given in chapter 3 (word level phonetics and phonology: see table 3.1 and 3.8). Some new sounds were also observed in the phonetic analysis of sentences which are put in a separate table (table 6.1) in conclusion.