Chapter-2
Research Design
CHAPTER - 2

Research Design

2.1 The Problem

Language variation is a common phenomenon found almost in all widely used languages. The phenomenon of language choice on the other hand takes place in language contact situation. Both these phenomena are the dominant features of the Kashmiri language. These tendencies of the language, in general, have been the focus of attention of a number of scholars of linguistics and sociolinguistics. The present study deals with the investigation of variables which are found at various levels of the Kashmiri language. It also shows how the Kashmiri speakers switch over to other languages.

The research methodology adopted here follows almost the same pattern of methodology as adopted by other scholars and researchers while making such investigations. However, in the following lines efforts have been made to explain the objectives of the study and hypotheses framed in addition to discussing some other aspects of methodology like collection of data and its analysis.

2.2 Main Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are to investigate language variation and language choice found at various levels of linguistics of the Kashmiri language. There is no denying the fact that the Kashmiri is spoken in various domains and for
various purposes, including close-knit and open networks of communication of the Kashmiri speech community. It is also used in the formal and informal settings. The details of the objectives of the study are as follows:

(i) To investigate the linguistic variability of the Kashmiri language and to relate it to the social heterogeneity which is reflected in the structure of the language. As the Kashmiri speech community is heterogeneous it is stratified into different social groups on the basis of certain social variables such as religion, age, sex, education, occupation and region etc. On the basis of religion, the speech community can be broadly distinguished into Muslim Kashmiri speakers and Hindu Kashmiri speakers. On the basis of age, we have distinguished three age groups: A1 (15 to 35 years), A2 (36 to 50 years) and A3 (51 years and above). Similarly on the basis of sex the speech community can be divided into male and female speakers. Likewise the education has been categorised into three groups, viz., E1 (illiterate, having no education at all), E2 (semiliterate, having education up to intermediate or plus two level) and E3 (educated, having education from graduation onwards). In the same way the region covers two main groups of speakers, i.e. urban Kashmiri speakers and rural Kashmiri speakers. Moreover, on the basis of occupation, we have different occupational groups such as farmers, cobblers, potters and boatmen/fishermen etc. All these speakers from different social groups vary considerably in the use of their language at various levels of linguistics.

(ii) To study the language variation and language choice in terms of the use of language in various domains of social life of the Kashmiri speech community.
(iii) To study the variation in terms of utilization of language in mass communication networks, such as news broadcasting, news telecasting, advertising and entertainment in relation to social variables of age, sex, religion, education, occupation, etc.

(iv) To standardize the tools of data collection for the study of language variation and language choice in different situation of social spheres of the Kashmiri speech community.

2.3 Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a provisional formulation; a tentative solution of the problem posed by a researcher. The first and foremost step to conduct research is to establish a hypothesis, which forms the key point to be either proved or disproved. On the basis of objectives of the present study and exploratory discussion with the members of the speech community under study, the following hypotheses have been formulated for investigation and testing:

(i) The Kashmiri speech community is highly heterogeneous in structure. The different social groups of the said speech community vary considerably in the use of their language at various level of linguistics such as phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon in various domains such as family, friendship, marketing and other spheres of their everyday routine life.

(ii) As the structure of the Kashmiri language varies considerably at various levels of its organisation, the reason for this linguistic variability has been explained
in terms of social variability. This is because of the fact that linguistic variables are correlated with social variables. In other words it may be said that the language and society are closely related to each other.

(iii) To relate the linguistic variability to social heterogeneity in the Kashmiri speech community, and to show as how this linguistic variability is reflected in the structure of Kashmiri language at various levels of its organization.

(iv) The Kashmiri speakers not only show the variability within their speech, but they also cross their linguistic boundaries and make choice from other languages too. This interlingual behaviour of Kashmiri speech community has to be tested and verified.

Here it is very important to mention that all the hypotheses have not been listed and some of the hypotheses listed above consist of several sub hypotheses. Each of which has been tested separately for the purpose of analysis and interpretation of data.

2.4 Research Methodology

In the present study, we have followed the same pattern of methodology generally adopted by the researchers in such type of sociolinguistic investigations. The study is purely based on the data collection through various methods such as questionnaires, interviews, etc.
2.4.1 Selection of Sample

For any kind of sociolinguistic research, the first and the foremost step for an investigator is to select a sample of respondents. The respondents should be selected in such a way that they should represent the whole speech community. The respondents should come from various sections of the society. They should represent each social variable.

According to 1971 Census report the total number of Kashmiri speakers in India is 2,495,487. This number rises to 3,174,684 in 1981 Census. The language figures for 1991 are not available, as no Census was held in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991 due to the disturbed condition of the state. After I took up the work, the first thing I did was to make the selection of a sample of informants. The sample selected was such that all its members were the right representatives of different social groups of the Kashmiri speech community.

For the present study I decided to collect the data from a sample of 251 respondents belonging to different social groups of the Kashmiri speech community. The social variables which were taken into consideration are religion, age, sex, occupation, education and region.

2.4.2 Data Collection

For the present sociolinguistic study the following tools for data collection were adopted:
2.4.2.1 Questionnaire

The most important tool used in the collection of sociolinguistic data is questionnaire. As Bayer (1986:19) observes, “the use of the questionnaire has occupied an interior and remarkable position in any kind of sociolinguistic research”. After the sample of the respondents was selected the next step we took was to shape up an adequate questionnaire. The questionnaire in the present study was framed very carefully, keeping in view the relevance of both independent and dependent variables. As regards the independent variables we have focused attention on the social factors such as: age, sex, education, religion, occupation and region. From the point of view of the dependent variables the study of variation in different domains of social life of the speech community under study has been considered significant for our purpose. The language variation has been studied in terms of both close-knit and open networks of communication.

The questionnaire of the present study consists of four parts, viz. (i) Background information of the respondent, (ii) Lexicon, (iii) Self-evaluation test and (iv) Folklore. In the first part of our questionnaire, we got the maximum information about the characteristics of the social aspects of respondents such as: age, sex, education, religion, occupation and region. Thus in order to get linguistic data in our chalked out questionnaire, the suitable questions for the purpose have been formulated in its second three parts. While conducting the present study we also made the respondents to read out few passages. The respondents were also made to tell some folklores, folktales and stories of some Muslim and Hindu saints. The very purpose of this task was just to test the phonetic characteristics of vowels and diphthongs. In
doing so I was able to find out the variation in the use of language among the speakers of the Kashmiri speech community. I was also able to discover the choice of linguistic items at various levels of linguistics. Moreover, the purpose of recording the unstructured conversation was to collect the linguistic data for the analysis and to discover many structural or semantic features typical to the Kashmiri language.

2.4.2.2 Interviews

Besides collecting the data through the questionnaire, we also recorded interviews with some native speakers of the Kashmiri language. My aim was to get the speech in terms of data as natural as possible. In the present study interviews held with the members of the Kashmiri speech community were structured but informal. While interviewing the respondents, different questions were put to them to which they responded gladly. The respondents have also been self-evaluated by asking them to give the Kashmiri equivalents for a set of expressions and a list of lexical items. The questions asked were meant to elicit the data that helped in the investigation of variation in the Kashmiri language. Also to see how Kashmiri speakers make choice from other languages in course of communication.

It may be mentioned that the prior knowledge of the Kashmiri speech community and the Kashmiri language gave the investigator a better understanding of the problem. It is mainly on this basis that we sorted out the linguistic variables, which reflect social variation. It has been observed that the speakers of the Kashmiri speech community vary in their use of language and also switch over to other languages such as English and Urdu at various levels of linguistics.
The questionnaire framed by us covered the various aspects of the Kashmiri language such as phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax, modes of addresses and personal names. Gumperz (1972:12) holds the view that it is essential for an investigator to take those features of the language into account which carry the maximum amount of social information, while investigating that language from the sociolinguistic point of view. This also applies to the present study.

2.4.2.3 Places of Data Collection

The places for data collection were selected, keeping in view the concentration of Kashmiri speakers belonging to different social groups. For the collection of the data the investigator first distributed the chalked out questionnaires among different respondents. The questionnaires were very carefully distributed among the respondents from various social groups of Kashmiri speech community. The number of respondents has been carefully selected from each social group. Then the questionnaires were distributed accordingly.

The investigator also recorded many interviews with the help of a magnetic tape recorder in a very natural way. During the process of data collection the investigator also got him-self involved in various kinds of conversations, discussions and observation with the respondents, during the use of their language in various social domains.

Being a permanent resident of the region where the language under investigation i.e. Kashmiri is fairly used in various spheres of social activity such as talking to ones friends, family members and ones spouse, it was very easy for the
investigator to visit the places where the people of different social backgrounds were in a regular contact with each other and were easily available. These places generally include: parks, tourist spots, hostels, schools, colleges, bus stops, markets, shops, paddy fields, government offices, exhibition grounds and other such places. In addition to this the investigator also visited many villages, towns and common meeting places, where people from different social backgrounds were easily available and had oral communication about matters relating to their day-to-day life. Moreover, the investigator got different speakers involved in various kinds of discussions and conversations with him. The investigator also visited various shopkeepers and asked them about the price of various requirements of daily use. By doing so he made these shop keepers to respond in a quite natural way.

During the process of data collection, the investigator also visited various health centers and heard the doctors advising their patients. Different government offices and institutions such as schools and colleges were also visited by the investigator where he found the employees and teachers busy in communicating with people and students of different social background.

While conducting the field work for the present study, the investigator visited different occupational groups of the said speech community and put some questions to them relating to their occupations and recorded their responses in quite natureal way. In the same way the investigator also visited other social groups of the same speech community and interviewed them and recorded their responses. It may be pointed out that the data has been collected from the speakers of different social groups of said speech community without making them aware of it.
After recording the speech from various social groups of the Kashmiri speech community it has been concluded that all these groups vary considerably in their use of language at various levels of linguistics such as phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax. Besides, it has also been noticed that the speakers of the said speech community make a considerable choice in their use of language. They switch from their mother tongue to other languages and mix up the lexical items, and even full sentences from other languages into their mother tongue in various situations. Thus, it may be concluded that the linguistic variability and the language choice are the striking features of the Kashmiri language.

2.4.2.4 Editing of Data

In any study, the entire mass of data collected is not relevant and useful for the study of the research. The first thing what I did in this study was that I wedded out the weak and doubtful parts of the data. As mentioned earlier, in the present study, the data has been collected from various sources and several of its parts were weak, doubtful and unwanted for my purpose. Thus in order to arrive at the reliable findings and results, the data was properly handled. The weaknesses were rectified the doubtful and irrelevant portions of the data were wedded out.

2.4.2.5 Analysis and Interpretation of Data

After the editing was over, my next step was to analyse the data. This process involves the verification of the proposed hypothesis of the present study in order to arrive at the right conclusion and desired results. Here I have fitted my findings in the general theoretical framework, dealing with the structure of the language and its
relation to society and individuals. The analysis of the data falls under two main headings:

(i) Sociolinguistic investigation of variability found at various levels of the Kashmiri language such as phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax.

(ii) Switching from Kashmiri to other languages by the Kashmiri speech community.

2.4.2.6 Tabulation of the Data

After the analysis and interpretation of the data, the resultant data was tabulated, i.e. the writing of the data under various columns. Tabulation of the resultant data into various columns facilitated the understanding of the data and simplified its process of study.