CHAPTER II

THEORIES AND CONCEPTS IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

2.1 Preliminaries

The primary aim of this chapter is to illustrate the most important terms in Sociolinguistics with a view to know their utilitarian value in terms of analyzing the autobiographies under consideration. For this purpose, it becomes very important to explore the theoretical framework of Sociolinguistics. This chapter proposes to throw light on the sociolinguistic theory in general, and different concepts and terms related to it in particular. At the outset, an attempt is made to find out the meaning of the term ‘Sociolinguistics’.

2.2 What is Sociolinguistics?

Sociolinguistics, as a separate field of study, was developed in the last quarter of the 20th century. The word ‘Sociolinguistics’ was apparently coined already in 1939 in the title of an article by Thomas C. Hodson, ‘Sociolinguistics in India’ in Man in India (1939). It was first used in linguistics by Eugene Nida in the second edition of his Morphology (1949), but one often sees the term attributed to Haver Currie, who himself claimed to have invented it.

Let us see how and when Sociolinguistics becomes an important area of the language field in relation with society. Indian and Japanese linguists first studied the social aspects of language in the 1930s and by Gauchat in Switzerland in the early 1900s, but nobody paid much attention to this phase. In the west, Sociolinguistics first emerged in the 1960s and was pioneered by linguists such as Basil Bernstein in the U.K. and William Labov in the U. S.

Basil Bernstein, one of the greatest sociologists of the 20th century, makes a significant contribution to the study of Sociolinguistics. His theory of language codes
introduced the concepts of restricted and elaborated codes. This theory examined the relationships between social class, family and the reproduction of meaning systems (code refers to the principles regulating meaning systems). His sociolinguistic work was highly controversial as it discussed social class differences in language. He distinguished between the restricted code of the working class and the elaborated code of the middle class.

William Labov, an American linguist, is widely known as the founder of quantitative Sociolinguistics. He introduced the quantitative study of language variation and change. Labov’s difference hypothesis aimed at the explanation of all linguistic variations caused by the involvement of social factors. His study illustrated the relevance of social determinants of linguistic variations and their correlations with the social structure. He proposed a social approach to language through his sociolinguistic model in which the linguistic theorization was linked with the society.

The two linguistic ideologies, Bernstein’s ‘code theory’ and Labov’s ‘variability concept’, resulted in innovative methodological tools and theoretical as well as practical insights in Sociolinguistics. No doubt, Bernstein’s and Labov’s contributions in the field of Sociolinguistics widened the scope of study for next generation. Their works encouraged many scholars to study Sociolinguistics with new perspectives.

The term ‘Sociolinguistics’ is used for the study of the relationship between language and society. This is an interdisciplinary field of research which developed through the interaction of linguistics with a number of other academic disciplines. It has strong connections with culture through the study of language and with sociology through the study of the role language plays in the formation of social groups and institutions. Sociolinguistics covers a very broad area of research, which, as Meyerhoff (2006) puts it,

“can be confusing if you are coming new to the field.”

Hence, it is important to start by clarifying what Sociolinguistics is. There are various definitions of Sociolinguistics as given below: Sociolinguistics is-
1. the study of the link between language and society, of language variation, and of attitudes about language (Spolsky, 2010).

2. a branch of anthropological linguistics that examines how language and culture are related, and how language is used in different social contexts (Bell, 1976).

3. a study of the relationship between language and social factors such as class, age, gender and ethnicity (Hudson, 1996).

4. the study of stylistic and social variation of language, (Wardhaugh, 2010).

5. the study of language in relation to its socio-cultural context (Van Dijk, 2009).

6. the study of the effect of any and all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context on the way language is used (Trudgill, 2000).

All the above-mentioned definitions make it clear that Sociolinguistics is a discipline that links sociology with linguistics. As a concept it is concerned with how language use is a determinant of a given society’s linguistic requirements. Sociolinguistics focuses on language use, that is, on what can be said in a particular language, by whom, to whom, in whose presence, when and where, in what manner and under what social circumstances. The following views/opinions by various sociolinguists also help in better understanding of the nature of sociolinguistics.

Gumperz (1971) has observed:

“Sociolinguistics is an attempt to find correlations between social structure and linguistic structure and to observe any changes that occur.”

Holmes (1992) defines Sociolinguistics as the study of

“the relationship between language and society.”
Peter Trudgill emphasized that the sociolinguistic research helps in getting a better understanding of the nature of human language by studying language in its social context. It also provides a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between language and society. Peter Trudgill (2000) defines Sociolinguistics as follows:

“Sociolinguistics... is that part of linguistics which is concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the field of language and society and has close connections with the social sciences, especially social psychology, anthropology, human geography and sociology.”

Joshua A. Fishman (2001) thinks:

“Sociolinguistic perspective has enabled researchers to document and to measure a hereto overlooked type of variation in language use and language behavior.”

Chambers (2002) opines:

“Sociolinguistics is the study of the social uses of language, and the most productive studies in the four decades of sociolinguistic research have emanated from determining the social evaluation of linguistic variants. These are also areas most susceptible to scientific methods such as hypothesis-formation, logical inference, and statistical testing.”

The above definitions by the expert sociolinguists indicate that Sociolinguistics is known as a branch of study that assumes that human society is made up of many related patterns and behaviours.
2.3 Linguistics and Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is introduced by Peter Trudgill (1995) as “a relatively new sub-discipline within linguistics.” It may be considered as a new discipline because it deals with a relationship that has been neglected in the past linguistic studies i.e. the relationship between language and society. Since the emergence of the discipline of Sociolinguistics, the debate between linguists has centred on whether language should be studied as a closed or as an open system. On the one hand, theoretical linguists perceive language as a closed system that should be studied for its own sake. For them, emphasis should be put on studying the underlying structure of the linguistic system and “the concern of the theoretical linguist is to devise a theory of grammar.”

In order to achieve this goal, differences between speakers have to be overlooked. In this sense, Chomsky (1965) says:

“Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors.”

Sociolinguists approach language as an open system interacting with a variety of factors. According to R.A. Hudson (1996):

“Since speech is (obviously) social behaviour, to study it without reference to society would be like studying courtship behaviour without relating the behaviour of one partner to that of another.”

Hudson believes that there is a close connection between language and society because one cannot segregate language from society. He is of the opinion that
language should be studied in the cultural context. The users of language come from various social classes. Therefore, their language is influenced by the social norms and cultural patterns.

Theoretical linguists recognise the relationship between language and society. They just ignore it to have a deeper insight into the system itself; and their concentration on competence was “a necessary simplification that led to several theoretical advances.” 11

On the other hand, sociolinguists recognise the importance of studying language as a system, as Saville-Troike (2003) stated while introducing the ethnography of communication:

“The ethnography of communication takes language first and foremost as a socially situated cultural form, while recognising the necessity to analyse the code itself and the cognitive processes of its speakers and hearers.” 12

As Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language use and the structure of society, it considers factors such as the social background of both the addresser and the addressee; their age, gender, social class, ethnic background and the context and manner of the communication. Sociolinguistics being a quickly developing branch of linguistics, explores the individual and social difference of language. Just as regional variation of language can provide a lot of information about the place of the speaker, social variation represents the roles fulfilled by a given speaker within one speech community.

The social background of both the speaker and the listener; their social class, education, geographic origin, ethnic background, gender and age are necessary factors to be studied in order to understand the language. These factors influence the language of the speakers. In view of this, an attempt is made to throw light on the study of these factors as below:
Social class:

Social class is one of the important factors in the interpretation of the literary discourse. One can understand the social class of a person on the basis of the social class. Two main groups of language users, mainly those performing non-manual work and those with more years of education are the ‘upper class’, while those who perform some kind of manual work are ‘lower class’. The terms ‘lower’ and ‘upper’ are frequently used in order to subdivide the social classes. Therefore, differences between upper class can be compared with lower class. It is notable that people are acutely aware of the differences in speech patterns that mark their social class and are often able to adjust their style to the interlocutor.

Age:

The effect of age in sociolinguistic patterns is very evident when comparing the speech of adults with that of children. It is known that the differences in anatomy and physiology or biological age are largely responsible for these differences, but socially–oriented variation also occurs in the course of life. In discussing such variations, at least three stages- childhood, adolescence and adulthood are supposed to give significant results.

In the early childhood period, relatively immature verbal patterns are seen because of ongoing language learning and incomplete growth of the child’s vocal anatomy. However, local forms of pronunciation begin from this stage of the acquisition process. Children, from their earliest stages of speech, develop sociolinguistic competence, and they engage themselves in complex register variation and become acutely aware of the relation between social roles and language variability. They learn the social functions of variables before they develop linguistic constraints and use the variables on occasion perhaps as conscious markers in particular lexical items.

In the adolescent period, the peer group linguistically influences the speaker and sometimes its role can overtake the domestic influence. By the age of twelve, the pressure to be conventional to peers’ standards is great enough to eliminate most of the initially acquired linguistic difference. This brings about a noticeably standardized
local accent. It is the time when linguistic change from below is advanced. In some societies, adolescents engage in constructing identities in opposition to their elders, though sometimes they may be conventional to the social class norms of their parents.

In the old age, the speaker is supposed to be firm with the phonological structure of the language. The speaker uses standard language due to personal ambitions or the circumstances of the speaker. Some sociolinguistic variants can be marked during the period of adulthood. It is also seen that adults after retirement change and their linguistic behaviour. The above discussion makes it clear that age difference marks the characteristics of language change throughout the life.

**Education**

Education is one of the important factors in the sociolinguistic interpretation of the literary discourse. The level of education influences the language of the speaker. More highly educated speaker and often, those belonging to a higher social class tend to use more features belonging to the standard language, whereas the original dialect of the region is better preserved in the speech of the lower and less educated classes. The language one uses often reflects one’s social identity and education. Dialects are distinguished according to standard and substandard/nonstandard varieties within different ranges of education. The standard language is generally considered as a language of an educated people; non-standard language has usually been regarded as language used by an uneducated and unsophisticated people.

**Gender:**

Gender plays a pivotal role in the study of linguistic expressions used by the interlocutors. It is observed that the language of the female members is different from the way their male counterparts. There has been an inherent relation between the language and the gender. In other words, the patterns of language use of men are different from those of women in terms of quantity of speech and the intonation patterns. Although men and women, from a given social class, belong to the same speech community, they may use different linguistic forms. The linguistic forms used by women and men contrast to some extent in all speech communities. For example,
Holmes (1993) mentions the Amazon Indians’ language as an extreme example, where the language used by a child’s mother is different from that used by her father and each tribe is distinguished by a different language. In this community, males and females speak different languages.

Generally, Labov and Trudgill established similar frameworks for characterising gender differences. Labov tries to resolve two slightly contradictory questions as to why men use more non-standard varieties and why women lead in language change. Labov (1990) iterates that “women … are said to be more expressive than men or use expressive symbols more than men or rely more on such symbols to assert their position” and “women are said to rely more on symbolic capital than men because they possess less material power”.

However, Trudgill’s (1972, 1983) approach is not very different to Labov’s. In his work in Norwich, he observed that men use more non-standard forms than women. As to why working class men (and young women in his study) stick to non-standard forms, Trudgill uses Labov’s notion of ‘covert prestige’ to explain that men’s non-standard variants serve as solidarity markers which highlight certain group values like masculinity. Like Labov, Trudgill (1972) states that “the social position of women in the society is less securing than that of men… It may be… that it is more necessary for women to secure and signal their social status linguistically.”

These factors are taken into account while analyzing the linguistic expressions of the characters in the autobiographies written by Indian Dalit and African American writers.

2.4 Language and Society

There is a profound relationship between language and society. It is in society that man acquires and uses language. In a social context, the study of language tells about how people organize their social relationship within a particular speech community. According to Wardhaugh (2010):

“*There are some possible relationships between language and society.*”

13
There are probably three possible relationships between language and society. First, the social structures may either influence or determine linguistic structure and/or behaviour. Second, linguistic structure and/or behaviour may either influence or determine social structure. Third, language and society may influence each other.

In Sociolinguistics study, one has to do with the interaction of language and society. In other words, it studies how all aspects of society have an effect on language, and how language has an effect on society. The field of Sociolinguistics can be described as a mixture of sociology and linguistics, or of anthropology and linguistics.

The human society will be lifeless without language and so will be the language without its users. This means that language and society are inseparable from each other. This idea was developed by Ferdinand de Saussure in his work The Course in General Linguistics published posthumously in 1916 where he stated that ‘language is primarily a social activity’ and ‘language is socialized at every level, from the production of phonemes to the interpretation of complex meaning.

Elaine Chaika (1989) states:

“Language and society are so intertwined that it is impossible to understand the one without the other. There is no human society that does not depend upon, is not shaped by, and does not itself shape language.” ¹⁴

The use of language is not only linguistic behaviour but also a social activity. Without a language understandable to all the members of a group of people, the community could by no means exist and not to speak of its development. Therefore, language is indispensable to the existence and development of a society. On the other hand, language would never earn into existence without society which is the essential conditions on which language relies for its existence. It is clear that neither language nor society could exist without the existence of the each other.
People of various social groups speak language in different ways. Therefore, language often socially varies in use with various social factors. There are two approaches to the relation between language and society. One approach is that society is taken as a whole, how language functions in it and how it reflects various social differentiations, and the other is that society is studied from the point of view of an individual social member. Sociolinguists are more concerned with how language functions in communication between members of a society.

Language and society are related in many ways. If we look back at the history of linguistics, we rarely found investigations of any language which are completely cut off from contemporary investigations of its regional and social distributions. That is why we must accept that a language is essentially a set of items, what Hudson calls ‘linguistic items’, such entities as sounds, words, grammatical structures, and so on. To understand how societies are structured, sociologists use such concepts as ‘identity,’ ‘power,’ ‘class,’ ‘status,’ ‘solidarity,’ ‘accommodation,’ ‘face,’ ‘gender,’ ‘politeness,’ etc. A major concern of this study is to examine possible relationships between ‘linguistic items’ on the one hand and concepts such as ‘class,’ ‘gender,’ ‘politeness,’ ‘power,’ ‘solidarity,’ etc. on the other.

2.5 Sociolinguistics and Sociology of Language

Sociolinguistics and sociology of language are two distinct concepts in the study of language. Sociolinguistics is a field of study which investigates the relationship between language and society with the objective of a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication whereas in the sociology of language the goal is to discover how social structure can be understood through the study of language.

The differences between the two concepts can be described as follows:

According to Hudson, Sociolinguistics is the study of language in relation to society whereas sociology of language is the study of society in relation to language. Therefore, we can say that in Sociolinguistics, we study society in order to find out as
much as we can understand about what kind of thing language is while in sociology of language we reverse direction of our interest.

Sociolinguistics throws light on the effect of the society on language while sociology of language focuses on the society. Sociolinguistics helps to understand the structure of language and its function in society. Sociology of language tries to discover how social structure can be better understood through the study of language.

R. A. Hudson, (1996) describes the difference between Sociolinguistics and sociology of language as follows:

“Sociolinguistics is ‘the study of language in relation to society,’ whereas the sociology of language is ‘the study of society in relation to language.’”  

Sociolinguistics examines the influence of social structure on the way people use language. It also concentrates on how language varieties and patterns of language use correlate with social attributes such as social class, gender/sex and age. On the other hand, sociology of language is a study of what societies do with their languages. According to Joshua Fishman (1997):

“Sociology of language examines the interaction between the use of language and the social organisation of behaviour. He further comments that the sociology of language focuses upon the entire gamut of topics related to the social organisation of language behaviour, including not only language usage per se but also language attitudes and overt behaviours toward language and toward language users.”  

Coulmas (1997) expressed his views as follows:

“There is no sharp dividing line between the two, but a large area of common concern. Although sociolinguistic research centres about a number of different
key issues, any rigid micro–macro compartmentalization seems quite contrived and unnecessary in the present state of knowledge about the complex interrelationships between linguistic and social structures. Contributions to a better understanding of language as a necessary condition and product of social life will continue to come from both quarters. ”  

Therefore, both Sociolinguistics and sociology of language suggest a bi-disciplinary approach. However, this study helps in analyzing the selected Indian Dalit and African autobiographies by applying the analytical phase of sociolinguistic investigation.

2.6 Language and Social Class

Language is an outcome of class situations in a given society. In most countries of the world, language use in society is distinguishable based on certain sociological parameters; the key issue among which is the class. Most varieties of any language are an outcome of certain social situations, which resulted in language types. This makes a given class to use language to create linguistic boundaries that isolate them from the general linguistic forms used by the society. In this study, an attempt is made to examine social language codes in order to reveal language use in relation to social class. Ash (2002) says:

“Social class is a central concept in sociolinguistic research…. It is ironic, then, that social class is often defined in an ad hoc way in studies of linguistic variation and change, ... and individuals are placed in a social hierarchy despite the lack of a consensus as to what concrete, quantifiable independent variables contribute to determining social class. ... Thus, this variable is universally used and extremely productive, although linguists can lay little claim to understanding it.”
As Ash suggests, sociolinguists fail to understand social class as an important variable. Moreover, no measures to categorize speakers on social class dimensions are available to determine its correlation with language variation. In this regard, Rickford (2001) recommends:

“To adequately account for the quantitative distributions by social class that we observe in local surveys of language use, we need to turn to sociological and anthropological models of social stratification and life mode, but these are quite unfamiliar to the average sociolinguists.”

Rickford also remarks at sociolinguists’ unawareness about referring to sociological and anthropological models of social stratification to explain the factors of social class.

2.7 Language and Humanity

The way we use language makes us distinguished persons in the society. We have grown up along with the language. Our humaneness is expressed through the language we use. The humanity is a common factor for all of us but the languages are different from one another. We should admire all the available languages as humaneness is inseparable from the language. All human beings have the right to use and practice their languages.

Sociolinguistics examines correlations between languages and societies, or certain linguistic and social phenomena. It also attempts to reinvent accepted categories and assumptions of linguistic practices and the place of language in human life.

Language is one of the characteristics of human being that sets him apart from all other creatures. Every known human society has had a language. Some nonhumans may be able to communicate with one another but their communication systems is different than language. The transmission of complex and varied information is an integral part of the everyday lives of other creatures. Other communication systems do not share many of the characteristic features of human language such as the ability
to communicate about events. It is difficult to conceive of a human society without a language.

2.8 Power and Solidarity

The dynamics of power and solidarity are fundamental to sociolinguistic theory. In Brown and Gilman’s system, power is associated with nonreciprocal use of pronouns; in English the parallel would be a situation in which one speaker addresses the other by first name but is addressed by title - last name (for example, doctor and patient, teacher and student, boss and secretary, building resident and elevator operator). Solidarity is associated with reciprocal pronoun use or symmetrical forms of address: both speakers address each other by title-last name or by first name. Power governs asymmetrical relationships where one is subordinate to another; solidarity governs symmetrical relationships characterized by social equality and similarity.

The relationship between power and solidarity as it emerges in conversational discourse is paradoxical in nature. This means that though power and solidarity seem at first to be opposites, each also involve the other. Any incident of solidarity inevitably involves power, in that the requirement of similarity and closeness limits freedom and independence. At the same time, any incident of power entails solidarity by involving participants in relation to each other. This creates a closeness that can be contrasted with the, distance of individuals who have no relation to each other at all.

Brown and Gilman (1968) are explicit in their assumption that power is associated with asymmetrical relationships in which the power is held by the person in the one-up position. This is stated in their definition:

“One person may be said to have power over another to the degree that he is able to control the behavior of the other. Power is a relationship between at least two persons, and it is non-reciprocal in the sense that both cannot have power in the same area of behavior.”
A speaker not only expresses but also represents himself/herself with the language he/she uses to communicate with the other person. Some speakers are very dominating in their communication. The dominating speaker holds the power in the speech event. There are many personal as well as social attributes (class/age/sex/profession) which are potential bases of power in interpersonal communication. These attributes of power indicate unequal communication.

Solidarity is another significant relationship in sociolinguistic communication. In contrast to power, common linguistic forms are used to express and create the relationship of solidarity. Non-solidary forms express distance and formality, while solidary forms express intimacy and familiarity. Solidarity can be achieved in interactions where interlocutors share some common attribute – for instance, attendance at the same school, work in the same profession, membership in the same family, etc.

2.9 Language Variation

Sociolinguists differentiate a set of types of variation that covers most factors for language variation. The most general distinction is that between variation in the individual, so-called idiolects, variation related to social factors, sociolects, regional variation, dialects and variation due to functional aspects, so-called registers or styles. Sociolinguists are more interested in studying social variation in language than regional variation. However, to understand various procedures used in the studies of social variation, it is necessary to look at the types of regional variation. Studies of social variation in language grew out of studies of regional variation.

Regional Variation

Regional variation is the most extensive type of language variation. This variation grows up as various geographical barriers such as mountain ranges and rivers restricted communication between different communities. Under such conditions, language of a community settled in the particular region does not spread to different places. As a result, people start devising their own variety of language, which is different from the language of the neighbouring region. Such distinctive varieties are
called regional varieties of the language. From this explanation, we can say that regional variation is varieties of a language, which is spoken by the people living in different geographical area.

Social Variation

Another type of language variation is social variation. John Gumperz advocated the relationship between linguistic variation and social variation. He was studying a society, which was rigidly stratified on the basis of caste membership. Gumperz shows how a little difference in speech can discriminate sub-groups in society from one another. His investigation of linguistic usage in the village of Khalapur, eighty miles north of Delhi in India, can be served as the best example in this kind of work. The social structure of the village is governed by Hindu Varna system. It consists of Brahmans at the top, then Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras (several groups of artisans and labourers). At the bottom of social stratification, i.e., in Shudras, there are three untouchable castes: Chamars (landless labourers), Jatia Chamars (leather workers and shoe makers), and Bhangis (sweepers). Their life is controlled by the upper caste people. They live out of the village boundary in certain neighbourhoods. They are not allowed to move in the village like the members of the upper castes. Ten percent of the population is Muslims; they are outside the caste system. So far as language is concerned, Khalapur village dialect with its certain characteristics clearly typifies social-group membership. For example, Bhangis, Chamars and Jatia Chamars are deficient in certain phonological contrasts made by all others. Some members, in attempting to make such a contrast, actually *hypercorrect*; that is, they over-extend a particular usage in trying to imitate others. Jatia Chamars have a characteristic pronunciation of words that end in [æ] in all other village varieties. Each of the three untouchable castes, therefore, has speech characteristics that clearly set it off both from the other two untouchable castes and from the touchable castes in the village. Muslim speech resembles that of the touchable classes. The variety of village speech spoken by the Bhangis is very close to the dialect of the region in which Khalapur is situated. The upper caste people hesitate to use this regional dialect as using it would make them sound like untouchables. Therefore, they have to go for a new regional variety. In their linguistic usage, untouchables apparently try to follow the touchables. As a result, the direction of innovation for all
groups in Khalapur is away from the regional variety which needs to signal their clear distinction from the untouchables. This study quite clearly shows a direct relationship between linguistic variation and caste membership.

**Dialect, Idiolect and Sociolect**

The present study intends to analyze the selected autobiographical works on the ground of sociolinguistic variations. The language of the characters is influenced by several sociolinguistic factors. It is, therefore, assumed that the study of the language of the characters in the autobiographies under consideration needs to be done. An attempt is made, on this line, to explore the terms: Dialect, Idiolect and Sociolect.

There are variations on any language i.e. different people from different parts of the world speak language in their own way. Sapir (1921) opines:

> “Everyone knows that language is variable.”

Variations in language include Dialect, Idiolect and Sociolect. Sociolinguistics investigates the way in which language changes depending on the region in which it is used. Dialect, Idiolect and Sociolect are clearly understood by the study based on how they differ from what is considered as the standard language.

**Dialect:**

The term ‘Dialect’ refers to a variety of language that is characteristic of a particular group of the language speakers. It also refers to a language socially subordinate to a regional or national language. Dialect includes variety within a language with peculiar differences in the features of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation from the standard language. A practical variation between language and dialect is that a dialect is a different form of the same language. It has the same alphabet and grammar as the language but the pronunciation and usage differs from the language. In addition, every individual of the community has a unique way of speaking with life experience, education and age.
Idiolect:

Idiolect is a variety of a language unique to an individual. Everyone has his own language variation or his own idiolect. It concerns with quality of voice, choice of words, language style and sentence order. Every person uses a language and speaks in a particular way as a part of socio-cultural act. This act socializes an individual. The language he speaks differs from other. This personal variation of language use is called idiolect. To put in another way, an idiolect is the speech habits of a particular person. Every individual has some characteristic linguistic features in his or her use of language. Such personal linguistic features are known as Idiolect. David Crystal (1986) defines Idiolect as:

“the linguistic system of an individual speaker. Idiolects are personal dialects, arising from the way people have learned slightly different usages in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and style.”

The above definition makes it clear that an idiolect is a variety of language used by one single speaker. It has its own peculiarities of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and style.

Sociolect:

The term is a blend (socio- + dialect) that first appeared in the 1970s. What differentiates a sociolect from the standard variety is above all its lexical range, which is activated in group-specific contexts. The most important requirement for a sociolect is the existence of a social group whose members maintain strong relationship (professional, social or cultural) established through regular meetings with each other. In other words, it is the language spoken by a particular social group, class or subculture, whose determinants include such factors as: gender, age, occupation, and possibly a few others. Sociolect is a dialect that is concerning with the social status and class. It is often used interchangeably with social dialect. P. Trudgill (2000) defines it concisely as:
“a variety or lect which is thought of as being related to its speakers’ social background rather geographical background.”

Petra Jesenska (2010) defines the term Sociolect or Social Dialect as:

“Sociolect is a significant term in Sociolinguistics and it refers to a variety of a language (a social dialect) used by people belonging to a particular social class.”

2.10 Code Mixing and Code Switching

Sociolinguistics regards code switching and code mixing as the offshoot of bilingualism. Bilingualism or multilingualism has become the mode of communication for many people in this modern world. In many situations, a fluent bilingual changes the language by using words from other language that is mixes codes even within very short utterances. This is called code mixing. In Code Switching, any bilingual/multilingual who speaks two or more than two languages chooses between them according to situations. In this way, the person creates a new code in a process known as code-switching.

Code-switching is a key aspect of a group of speakers which communicates in more than one language. There are two kinds of code-switching: situational and metaphorical. Situational code-switching means the change in language according to the situation. In this type, the speakers find themselves speaking in one language in one situation and another in a different one. In metaphorical code-switching, topic change is involved. When a change of topic requires a change in the language used is called metaphorical code-switching.

R. A. Hudson (1996) says:

“In code-switching the point at which languages change corresponds to a point where the situation changes, either on its own or precisely because the language changes. There are other cases, however, where a fluent bilingual talking to another fluent bilingual changes language without any change at all
in the situation. This kind of alternation is called Code-Mixing. The purpose of Code-Mixing seems to symbolize a somewhat ambiguous situation for which neither language on its own would be quite right.”

It clearly suggests that in code-mixing we find the case that a bilingual or multilingual person usually adds in phrases or words from other languages whenever he/she gets into a conversation. Most of the time people mix a language with the other language.

2.11 Sociolinguistic Expressions

There are various linguistic expressions, which can be studied in the light of Sociolinguistics. These expressions are used by the characters according to different situations, which reflect social reality, and portrays interpersonal relationships of the characters involved in the event. Some of such expressions can be described as address terms and greetings, blessings and curses, abusive terms, honorific terms and kinship terms.

Address Terms and Greetings

Address terms is an important feature of social interaction, which can provide valuable information about the interlocutors, their relationship and their circumstances. Since the address terms play a crucial role in communication and maintaining social relationships between members of a society, they need to be studied in every language and culture.

Some sociolinguists defined address terms in their own way. According to Yule (2006), address term is a word or phrase for the person in the context. Oyetade (1995) defines address terms as words or expressions used in interactive, dyadic and face-to-face situations to designate the person being talked to. Leech (1999) considers that terms of address are an important formulaic verbal behavior well recognized in the sociolinguistic literature as they signal transactional, interpersonal and deictic ramifications in human relationships.

Earlier the terms used for addressing one another may not seem worthy of so much attention.
However, in the past few decades, sociolinguists have shown great interest in studying address terms as they reflect the social relationships between members of a specific speech community. They are not static but vary according to the social contexts. Some social factors such as class, education, occupation, age, gender, power, solidarity, politeness, race and ethnicity, religious and thoughts of both addressers and addresses influence the use of address terms. This variation creates obscurity while translating these terms between two languages with two different cultures. Above all, culture is a determining factor in the use of terms of address since members of a speech community utilize various address terms according to their socio-cultural relationship. In the selected autobiographies, one comes across address practices observed in Indian Dalit and African American cultures.

Terms of address to be investigated in this study comprise proper names, nicknames, titles, pronouns, prefixes and other referent terms with semantic significance. The way in which the characters from the selected autobiographies address one another is crucial in marking social relations.

Greetings

Greetings are an exchange of cheerful expressions or good wishes between two people or a group of people. These greetings, like address terms, help people in establishing interpersonal relationship. On several occasions, greeting can be used as an introductory remark to begin of a proper conversation. Greeting is an expression that may occur on the road, at work, shopping, at the coffee shop, at the drinking bar, at meetings, at home, at social functions, and so on.

The selected Indian Dalit and African American autobiographies depict the culture of Dalit and Black communities. As greeting is one of the means of developing interpersonal relationships, it is worth studying from sociolinguistic point of view.

Blessings and Curses

Blessing and cursing expressions are common in almost various languages spoken all over the world. They are social and culture specific expressions which play an important role in communication. Blessing and cursing are very diverse in nature and
serve several functions in social interactions. They reflect the speaker’s emotional attitude to the topic of conversation. Blessings are expressions of gratitude or wishes for others. Generally, elders use blessing expressions for the person who helps them in difficult situations. On the contrary, cursing is considered as verbal act of threatening through which the speaker wishes evil or misfortune to befall on others. Cursing expressions consists of harsh words which are used to blame others.

**Abusive Expressions**

The abusive expressions are vulgar or contemptuous remarks used to hurt the feelings or lower the self-esteem of someone. Abusing is considered as a bad act or taboo by social etiquette and religious customs. However, abusive expressions can be interpreted differently depending on the context and the relationship of the interlocutors involved. This suggests that abuse is an act which emphasizes the social status and hierarchy of the speakers and listeners. The use of abusive language reveals the character of the speaker which has a great socio-cultural importance. Therefore, a good person tries to refrain from it as he/she does not wish to violate the rules of conduct that are expected of him/her.

**Honorific Terms**

The honorific terms are the expressions used to show respect for others. The usage of honorific terms in everyday social interactions is inevitable. They are considered as status difference markers in many communities. In other words, we can say that the use of honorific terms is governed by the social status of persons to whom respect is shown. Honorific terms are affixes, words and standard phrases that follow linguistic and sociolinguistic rules and that are believed to mark a speaker’s politeness toward an addressee or another referenced person. The structure of honorific terms is different as accustomed by language. In Marathi, honorific terms are expressed via several linguistic markers including the use of plural pronoun and plural verbal inflections. This feature is not available in a African American language in a similar way. Therefore, analyzing these terms with the sociolinguistic point of view is worth studying.
Kinship Terms

Kinship terms are the set of terms used to name relationships in particular society. Each society has its own kinship terms, which reflect the culture of that society. The meanings of kinship terms reflect the relationships among kith and kin in each particular society. The use of kinship terms in social interactions invoke social meanings associated with it. Various kinship terms are used in the various social environments. However, it has been found that kinship terms may be differentiated by various features like sex (father, mother or son, daughter), generation (mother and daughter) and collateral kinship distance (uncle and aunt). The sociolinguistic study of the kinship terms is required to understand the social meanings associated to them.

Diminutive Expressions

The use of diminutives in everyday social interactions is a common phenomenon of people in the modern society. There is a wide range of diminutives available for the interlocutors. Diminutives are the words or expressions that communicate smallness and connote affection and endearment. The term ‘diminutive’ derives from Latin déminuere meaning ‘diminish, decrease, lessen, reduce or impair’ leading to conceptual meanings concerning dimension, e.g. small size, approximation, as well as evaluative or expressive and stylistic connotative meaning, e.g. affection, intensification. Thus, diminutives denote the diminishing of animate or inanimate objects, events, properties and relations and/or convey affection on the part of the speaker and personal assessment, that is, they can express admiring or derogative, or humorous meanings.

Unusual Spellings

The use of unusual spellings is nothing but the inclusion of non-standard spellings in the text. It is said that the use of unusual spellings has become the feature of marginalized writings as the character/speaker in the text is represented as demoted in social status, intelligence and sophistication. The writers use semi-phonological spellings to represent aspects of non-standard varieties. It is conceived as a social practice in which spelling choices are the result of an author’s meaningful decisions.
Therefore, such unusual spellings need to be understood in the light of sociolinguistics.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter throws light on the sociolinguistic theory in general and different concepts and terms related to it in particular. In the beginning, an attempt is made to define and explain the term ‘Sociolinguistics’. The chapter discusses the major sociolinguistic concepts and terms in view of the research objectives. The concepts such as Sociolinguistics and linguistics, language and society, Sociolinguistics and sociology of language, language and social class, language and humanity, power and solidarity, language variations, code mixing and code switching are discussed in detail. As the research aims at studying the selected autobiographies in general and the language of the characters in particular, this chapter lays the foundation for further study.

The next chapter focuses on sociological background of the characters in the selected Indian Dalit and African American autobiographies as it plays an important role in the development of the autobiographies under study.
REFERENCES


