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During the past three decades, sociolinguistics has developed as an autonomous and distinct discipline with its own objectives, aims and methods. The main concern of sociolinguistics has been the language problem in relation to society. Joshua A. Fishman who prefers to call it the 'Sociology of language' states: "the sociology of language focuses upon the entire gamut of topics related to the social organization of language behaviour, including not only language usage per se but also language attitudes, overt behaviour toward language and toward language users". (Fishman 1972:1).

Sociolinguistics undoubtedly provides an understanding of language behaviour with due regard to the context in which it is spoken. During the past decades, a wide variety of themes have developed under sociolinguistics such as language and culture, language and nationalities, language conflict and social change, language in multilingual setting, language maintenance and language shift, bilingualism and multilingualism, standardization and modernization of language, language variation, language use, language attitudes and language preferences etc.

The present study is a sociolinguistic investigation of languages use, language preferences and attitudes of the Kashmiri speech community. The first chapter deals with the sociolinguistic perspectives of the Kashmiri language. It provides numerical figures about the Kashmiri speakers in the state, as well as in the other states and Union Territories of India. It also provides details of the present situation and position of the Kashmiri language with respect to other languages known to the Kashmiri speakers. Besides Kashmiri, the sociolinguistic functions of Urdu and English, the two major languages of the state have also been discussed in this chapter.
In the second chapter we have discussed the research design and have mentioned the methods and the tools used for the present work.

In Chapter 3, the use of language(s) has been discussed in different domains. This chapter provides the percentage distribution for Kashmiri, Urdu and English in different considered domains.

The use of all these three languages have been discussed in seventeen different domains by taking into consideration four social variables, i.e., Age, Education, Occupation and Sex. The figures are given in various tables.

The Chapter 4 discusses the language preferences in twelve different situations. In this chapter the preferences of Kashmiri have been discussed with respect to other two languages, viz., Urdu and English with the help of four social variables (age, education, occupation and sex). The preferential use of Kashmiri has also been discussed in detail and results are produced through tables. The written and spoken aspects of all the three considered languages have also been discussed in detail, which are again provided with separate percentage table.

The attitudes of the respondents towards their mother tongue i.e., the Kashmiri language and Urdu and English have been discussed in Chapter 5. The evaluation of attitudes was made by providing different attributes like science and technology, sweet, harsh etc. Tables 5.1-5.4 give the detailed account of attitudinal results with respect to four social variables.

The data for this sociolinguistic investigation was collected through questionnaire and interviews during the summer of 1997 and 1998 when I visited the Kashmir valley. A good deal of time was devoted to the processing and the analysis of the data and presentation of the findings supported by numerous tables and figures.
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All the mistakes and errors are mine and mine alone.

Sharifa Bano

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