

his speech (Labov, 1966 ; Trudgill, 1974 ; Wolfram and Fasold, 1973). Some of the studies on caste dialects in Tamilnadu have also indicated the influence of caste on the linguistic behaviour as a significant one. Mention may be made of some of the socio-linguistic studies which have brought out the influence of social variables like caste, age, education etc. on linguistic behaviour (Karunakaran, 1975; Irulappan, 1979; Gnanam, 1980; Sivashanmugam, 1981; Muthuswamy Pillai, 1981 and Vasanthakumari, 1987).

In the interactional level, language use may bring out the relationship that exists between the addresser and addressee. Based on the ethnographic model, Levinson (1982) has brought out the exchange of T/V pronoun usage to evaluate the caste rank order in the Tamil society.

The present research aims at studying the variations in the linguistic usages such as address terms, reference terms, etc. and the social parameters that constrain those usages. The influence of social variables over the choice of linguistic usages has been analysed in this study.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This dissertation is mainly concerned with the study of the linguistic variation found to occur in the use of expressions