

## **5 LANGUAGE VITALITY ASSESSMENT**

The aim of chapter 5 is to analyse and discuss the statistical and qualitative data drawn from the sociolinguistic survey and interviews, respectively. The present work adopted UNESCO's (2003) Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework for the analysis. As discussed in chapter 3, the UNESCO framework comprises nine factors, where first six factors assess the vitality of a language, the seventh and eighth factors assess the institutional and community attitudes towards a language, and the last and ninth factor provides amount and quality of documentation done in a language. For the present study, all eight factors have been used to assess the vitality of the Maithili

### **5.1 FACTOR 1: INTERGENERATIONAL LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION:**

Among all the nine factors, intergenerational language transmission is considered one of the most important factors by researchers (Fishman, 1991; Austin, 2008; Norris, 2010; Grenoble, 2011) to assess a language's vitality. Speakers' self-rated language proficiency among age cohorts have been analysed to evaluate the intergenerational transmission of Maithili speakers. For the present study, the notion of generation has been replaced by age cohorts, as suggested by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) with LVE's notional generations (i.e., children, parents, and grandparents). AIATSIS, in their survey of indigenous languages vitality status and resources, replaced actual age ranges (i.e., 0-19, 20-39, 40-59, 60+) with notional generations. The reason for choosing age cohorts is also motivated by the fact that there are other cultural factors such as caste and religion, which affects Maithili's transmission, which will be discussed in detail under factor 8.

The questions assessing the language proficiency of speakers are all self-rated and based on the speakers' perceptions. Thus, the respondents were asked to self-rate their proficiency skills on

a five-point Likert scale, such as one given below. It is to be noted that all questions in the survey related to language proficiency and attitude attempt to understand whether the inclusion of the Maithili in the ES has helped in improving its vitality or not. An important caveat here is that the survey data does not deal with the actual language competency of the speakers but their self-rated language proficiency. The distinction made in language acquisition studies between language ability (i.e., actual knowledge) and language proficiency (i.e., mastery of the linguistic code) is not used here (Wald 1981, as cited in Wei, 1992, p.141). The two questions 13a and 13b are on language proficiency in Maithili and Hindi, and they are further labelled into oracy skills and literacy skills for analysis. The reading and writing skills are labelled as literacy skills and speaking and understanding are noted as oracy skills (Lawson and Sachdev, 2004). The respondents were asked to rate their language skills in Maithili and Hindi on a scale of 5, such as one given below.

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Good	Medium	Low	No skill

A closer look at the above score shows that score 5 represents the best rating for a particular skill, and 1 represents no proficiency in that skill. For the evaluation of intergenerational transmission of Maithili, speakers' self-rated proficiency in Maithili and Hindi across age cohorts has been used. According to UNESCO's (2003) LVE framework, which has been used for the present study, a language is considered safe if it is on grade 5, implying an unbroken intergenerational transmission of a language. The following table (5.1) shows how UNESCO has graded a language based on factor 1:

*Table 5.1 Table Intergenerational Language Transmission*

Degree of endangerment	Grade	Speaker Population
Safe	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
Unsafe	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
Definitely endangered	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
Severely endangered	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
Critically endangered	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation.
Extinct	0	There exists no speaker.

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.8)

The transmission of Maithili is evaluated by looking at the age groups of respondents along with their language proficiency in Maithili, its use in different domains and with different interlocutors. Table (5.2) below provides descriptive data (mean, median, mode and standard deviation) of all 380 participants across all four skills in Maithili and Hindi. It is a common practice to use the median score for drawing a comparison between two ordinal variables. However, the median score of all ordinal questions for Maithili and Hindi is 5, except for reading and writing skills in Maithili. In such a case, the median is not useful in making a statistical comparison. Hence, the mean score has been used to explain the differences (Lund and Lund, 2013).

*Table 5.2 Descriptive Statistics of Self-Reported Hindi and Maithili Proficiency*

	Mean	Median	Mode	SD
MPI <sub>comprehension</sub>	4.70	5	5	0.59
MPI <sub>speaking</sub>	4.37	5	5	0.79
MPI <sub>reading</sub>	3.18	3	3	1.24
MPI <sub>writing</sub>	2.49	1	2	1.37
HPI <sub>comprehension</sub>	4.97	5	5	0.250
HPI <sub>reading</sub>	4.32	4	5	0.716
HPI <sub>speaking</sub>	4.85	5	5	0.470
HPI <sub>writing</sub>	4.32	4	5	0.719

A closer look at the above table reveals that the respondents claimed to have better comprehension and speaking skills, followed by reading and writing skills, which is almost passive. In LMLS studies, comprehension and speaking skills are often rated higher among all four skills (Papavalou & Pavlou, 2001; Hamind, 2005). Out of 380 respondents, 121 respondents reported no writing skills, and 43 reported no reading skills in Maithili. Unlike Maithili, speakers have rated their proficiency evenly across all four skills in Hindi. This finding raises a pertinent question why literacy skill in Maithili is lower than Hindi? One reason could be that Maithili is still not used as a medium of instruction in schools of Bihar. However, Maithili is taught as an optional subject in government high schools. The following table (5.3) shows the consolidated data of proficiency indices, which include mean score, median, mode, standard deviation, range,

minimum and maximum scores, and the correlation and significance value of both Maithili and Hindi indices.

*Table 5.3 Descriptive Statistics of Proficiency Indices*

Main indices	Maithili Proficiency Index (MPI)	Hindi Proficiency Index (HPI)
N	380	380
Mean	0.74	0.92
Median	0.75	0.90
St. Deviation	0.17	0.10
Range	0.70	0.55
Minimum	0.30	0.45
Maximum	1	1
Spearman Correlation co-efficient, $r = -0.050$		
Significance value, $p = 0.333$		

### 5.1.1 Maithili and Hindi Language Proficiency Indices (MPI vs HPI)

As discussed in chapter 4, the proficiency index is calculated by adding the four self-reported language skills, i.e., understanding, speaking, reading and writing. The above data shows that the mean score of the Hindi proficiency index (HPI = 0.92) is higher than that of Maithili (MPI = 0.74). Also, when the range is taken into consideration, the range for Hindi is 0.55, whereas, for Maithili, it is 0.70. This shows that there is a significant variation in reporting proficiency in

Maithili. Therefore, based on the proficiency indices and the variation, it can be said that the situation of bilingualism is not stable but transitional, leading to the shift of the Maithili language.

Spearman correlation has been used to determine the relationship between the proficiency index and age cohorts. The correlation test result suggests an almost strong correlation (moderate by value) between the speakers' proficiency across age cohorts they belong to. The correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) is 0.490 (at 99% confidence level) for the test, almost near 0.5, suggesting a strong correlation. Since the correlation here is positive, the inference can be drawn here that the speakers belonging to the older age cohort have better proficiency in Maithili than the young generation. Further, the Kruskal-Wallis test has been used as there are more than two groups. The significance value for the test, i.e., the p-value = 0.000. The test results here imply that the distribution of proficiency index varies across the age cohorts.

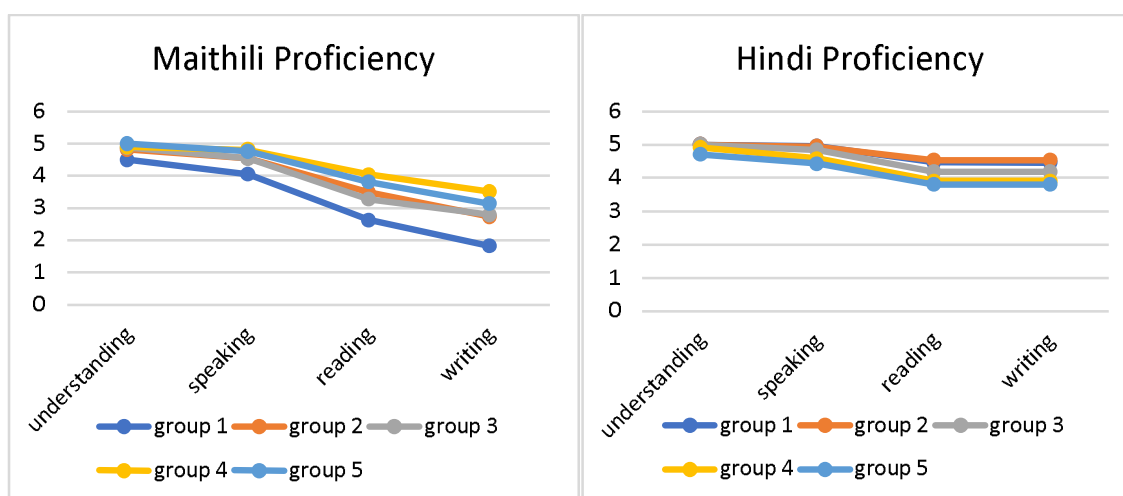
*Table 5.4 Oral and Literacy Proficiency in Maithili and Hindi*

Age cohort	Range for Age (years)	Mean PI (oral)		Mean PI (literacy)	
		Maithili	Hindi	Maithili	Hindi
1	15-25	0.85	1.00	0.44	0.89
2	26-35	0.94	1.00	0.62	0.91
3	36-45	0.94	0.98	0.61	0.84
4	46-55	0.97	0.95	0.75	0.78
5	56 & above	0.98	0.91	0.70	0.76

As mentioned earlier, the unbroken transmission of language is essential for language maintenance, and to recall Fishman's (1991) argument transmission of language is a crucial aspect

to consider. In the above table (5.4), it can be seen that for the speakers in age groups 4 and 5, the mean proficiency indices for Maithili are higher in both oral and literacy skills, than their younger counterparts. On the other hand, for the speakers in the age group 1 the mean proficiency indices for all the skills is the lowest among all groups. In contrast, it can be seen from the table that there is a rise in the mean literacy proficiency for Hindi in the age cohorts corresponding to the younger generation (age cohorts: 1, 2 &3). At the same time, there is a decline in their mean literacy proficiency index for Maithili. Also, the gap between the mean literacy proficiency for the two languages widens in the younger generations.

*Figure 5.1 Maithili and Hindi Skills across Age Cohorts*



This can also be seen from the above figure (5.1), where the average of all the four skills (understanding, speaking, reading and writing) for Hindi are almost similar; however, there is a spread in the skills across age cohorts for Maithili. The language skills' ratings for Maithili in age cohort 1 is the lowest, whereas it is highest for the Hindi language. This suggests passive bilingualism in the younger generation. Furthermore, speakers belonging to age cohort 1 are more

likely to experience the impact of Maithili's inclusion in the ES. Based on the above analysis, Maithili has been graded on scale 4

## 5.2 FACTOR 2: ABSOLUTE NUMBER OF SPEAKERS

In 1891, Grierson estimated the total number of Maithili speakers in Bihar to be 9,389,376 (Brass, 1974). The 1911 census estimated the total number of Maithili speakers as 164,556, i.e., 0.58% of the total population of Bihar. The 1921 census estimated the number of speakers to be 97,554, which was 0.35% of the then total population of Bihar, signalling a decline in the total number of speakers. Unfortunately, the data is not available for the 1931 census. The census estimates for 1951 and 1961 are 111,767 and 16,442,087, which are 0.29% and 35.39% of the total population corresponding to these years, respectively. The census data of the Maithili population for the following years are summarised in table 5.5.

*Table 5.5 Census Data of the Maithili Speakers*

<b>CENSUS</b>	<b>MAITHILI</b>
<b>1971</b>	6,130,026
<b>1981</b>	7,522,265
<b>1991</b>	7,766,921
<b>2001</b>	12,179,122
<b>2011</b>	13,583,464

Until 1991, Maithili was not reported as an independent language in the census reports, and it was subsumed under Hindi as one of its dialects. This fact is reflected by the surge evident



in the total number of Maithili speakers reported in 2001. The reporting of an actual number of Maithili speakers in the census report has been a matter of conflict between scholars and the census agency. The scholars such as Grierson, Brass and others claim that the number of total Maithili speakers in Bihar is far more than is reported by the latter (see chapter 2 for details). Table 5.6 below shows the estimated number of total Maithili speakers (estimated using Gait's computation by Brass, 1974) and census enumeration:

*Table 5.6 Estimated Census Data of Maithili Speakers*

Census Year	Maithili	
	Computed estimate	Census Enumeration
1891	9,207,131	..
1901	10,387,897	964
1911	10,580,838	..
1921	10,380,104	1,641
1931	11,361,011	..
1941	12,429,475	..
1951	13,621,538	87,674
1961	16,565,477	4,982,615

For the year 1911-1951, the figures for Bihari languages were also counted under Hindi.

During the field visit, it was observed that many respondents, especially from rural areas, reported Hindi as their mother tongue, although they used Maithili at home. The speakers have this implicit

notion of 'Thethi' and 'Pure' Maithili. Many speakers do not acknowledge Maithili as their mother tongue and claim Hindi to be their language since they believe their variety of Maithili (thethi) do not qualify as pure Maithili or the standard variety of Maithili. This observation shows how internal language variation can affect the demographic strength of a language in the census enumeration. Internal language variation conflict is also going on between Angika and Bajjika speakers, and they do not report themselves as Maithili speakers.

Scholars such as Grierson (1903) and Burghart (1993) grouped the first two languages as varieties of Maithili. However, these two varieties have not been mentioned under Census report 2011, either under Hindi or Maithili. However, Kashyap (2014), mentioned the above two varieties as different languages. This unawareness of speakers towards their mother tongue gives an insight into the census report. Interestingly, Jha (1994) reiterates the same observation based on his fieldwork that "respondents who speak a non-standard' variety of Maithili in Darbhanga may give Hindi as their mother tongue because, in their perception, the distance between the variety of the Maithili that they speak, and standard Maithili is no less than that between their variety and Hindi" (p. 393) This observation shows that the Maithili speakers' situation has not changed much, despite Maithili's ES inclusion.

There are various reasons why national census data tend to undermine or underestimate the numbers of Maithili speakers. Sometimes, because of the homogenising ideologies of government, linguistic data on other languages such as Bajjika, Angika, Surjapuri are not included in the national censuses. Moreover, the language information available is often based on self-reports which can be skewed because of speakers' unawareness about mother tongue definition or their linguistic attitudes towards Hindi and Maithili. Additionally, both historical and political factors that come into play. or instance, Maithili was subsumed under Hindi. Therefore, the reason for demographic

shift could be reporting of Bajika, Angika, conflict of dialectal variation apart from skewed self-reporting.

In summary, despite numerical strength, there is a lack of awareness among speakers about their mother tongue due to internal language variation. Apart from the inconsistent approach of the census, which leads to discrepancies in the census report, the above factors do affect the recorded absolute number of Maithili speakers. However, the present work is not focusing on the language

### 5.3 FACTOR 3: PROPORTION OF SPEAKERS WITHIN THE TOTAL POPULATION

This factor discusses the proportion of Maithili speakers within the total population of India. The decadal change percentages from 1971 to 2011 have been given in table 5.7.

*Table 5.7 Maithili Speakers' Percentage of Decadal Change within the Total Population*

	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Speakers' strength	6,130,026	7,522,265	7,766,921	12,179,122	13,583,464
Decadal % increase		22.71 (1971-81)	3.2 (1981-1991)	56.81 (1991-2001)	11.53 (2001-2011)

There is a fall of 19.51% of the total Maithili speakers from 1981 (22.71) to 1991 (3.2). On the contrary, there is a rise of 53.61% from 1991 (3.2) to 2001 (56.81). From 2001 (56.81) to 2011 (11.53), a downfall of 45.28% in the proportion of Maithili speakers within the total population can be observed in the above table. The fall in the proportion of Maithili speakers is also evident from 2001(before inclusion) to 2011(after inclusion) census data.

Based on the recent census data, Maithili can be classified at grade 4 of the UNESCO's scale for this factor, which hints that a majority of the speakers still use their mother tongue (Maithili) for communication but in a restricted domain.

*Table 5.8 Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population*

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Proportion of Speakers within the Total Reference Population
Safe	5	All speak the language.
Unsafe	4	Nearly all speak the language.
Definitely endangered	3	A majority speak the language.
Severely endangered	2	A minority speak the language.
Critically endangered	1	Very few speak the language.
Extinct	0	None speak the language.

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.9)

#### **5.4 FACTOR 4: TRENDS IN EXISTING LANGUAGE DOMAINS**

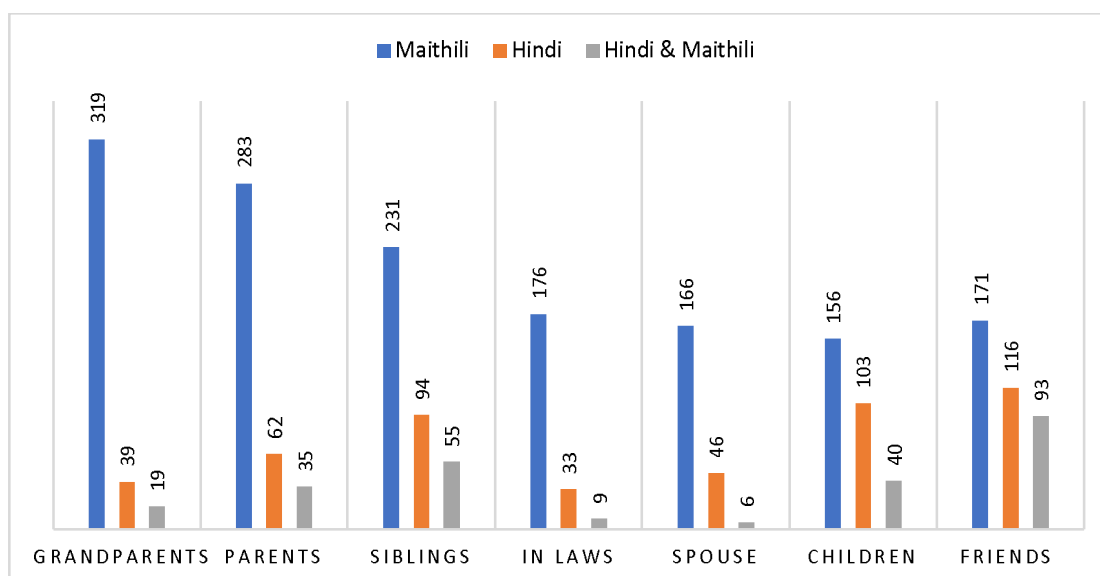
Under this section, language use in the speech domains, language exposure in writing, and reading, and media, patterns of language use with interlocutors are discussed. Language exposure in writing and reading is concerned with the use of language in these categories, not their ability in the respective language in proficiency variable. Here reading refers to their exposure in print media such as magazines, newspapers, and books. Similarly, writing refers to the participants' exposure to the use of script (Devanagari) as Kaithi and Mithilaksher are not in use. A handful of people are proficient in writing in these scripts of Maithili. However, the government has taken some steps. In the past few years, several workshops have been organised for teaching scripts of

Maithili. Participants were given multiple-choice options for these questions, unlike for proficiency and attitude variables, to keep the questionnaire concise as people were losing interest and were reluctant to fill up a lengthy questionnaire. The purpose was to understand the linguistic situation in the two districts.

#### 5.4.1 Language Use in the Home Domain

As illustrated in the figure below, the use of Maithili with grandparents and parents is high, whereas a downward trend can be seen in the language used with siblings, children and friends. Also, the number of respondents using only Hindi is high, suggesting that Hindi has completely replaced Maithili in these contexts. This shows the changing language pattern in successive generations. The figure below shows the pattern of language usage in the home domain.

*Figure 5.2 Language Use in the Home Domain*



It can be concluded that the function of Maithili is not very transparent in the home domain itself. The family domain is considered a stronghold for the use of minority or heritage languages (Fishman, 1991). In many cases, the transmission of the language to the successive generation

does not happen because of the lack of encouragement from their own families; they see it as a barrier to the socio-economic growth of their children. Based on the field observation, it was found that the respondents think of Maithili as a language for home and not for external use, as it does not help in social and economic mobility. The following excerpts from the interview encapsulate such a view:

SP: Do you want your children to learn Maithili?

P20: No, we want our children to learn Hindi. It is better for their growth. It is not just about their growth; if children go outside Bihar for work and use their home language, they will be frowned upon by the people. Suppose if we women go to Darbhanga, and use our home language in front of other people, it will be embarrassing. Others will look down upon us.

The above excerpt encapsulates how participants think of Maithili as inferior to Hindi, and they avoid the usage of Maithili in public or formal domains. It suggests that parents want their children to learn the language, which is seen vital for their career advancement, which Bourdieu has referred to as symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991). The participants see learning Hindi as related to economic and social mobility. Karan (2011), in his perceived benefit model, has discussed how language learning is driven by job-related economic motivation. According to this model, the individuals pick up or leave a language from their linguistic repertoire depending on their socio-economic progress. This reflects how speakers attach more value to Hindi, and they find it instrumental in their socio-economic progress. People perceive Hindi as more prestigious as compared to their mother tongue. Pandharipande (2002) argues that languages such as English and

Hindi have acquired a certain degree of linguistic capital as it helps in the upward socio-economic mobility of the speakers. A self-segregation in the choice of languages to be used in different domains can be observed amongst the speakers. This is also reflected in the following excerpt of the interview with P29:

P29: We say, “re baua kathi khaibe? Iee kho, ehmar aa” (which translates to, hey son! what will you eat? Eat this, come here)<sup>7</sup>.

Based on the above excerpts, it can be concluded that between Hindi and Maithili, the former is generally used for official purposes and the latter being the home language. This notion is deeply rooted in the mindset of the speakers. The shrinkage of the Maithili domain is more evident in the qualitative analysis compared to the quantitative survey. It is evident in the qualitative data that Maithili’s usage is more prevalent in the rural setting, which is clearly illustrated in the statement given by P48 to the question, how often they use Maithili:

P48: What happens is that when we go home to our village in the interior region, all of the older people and Brahmins staying there talk to us in Maithili. So, we would also try amongst ourselves to learn and speak in Maithili. But, since we have moved to town (Darbhanga) for our education, we seldom get a chance to speak in Maithili.

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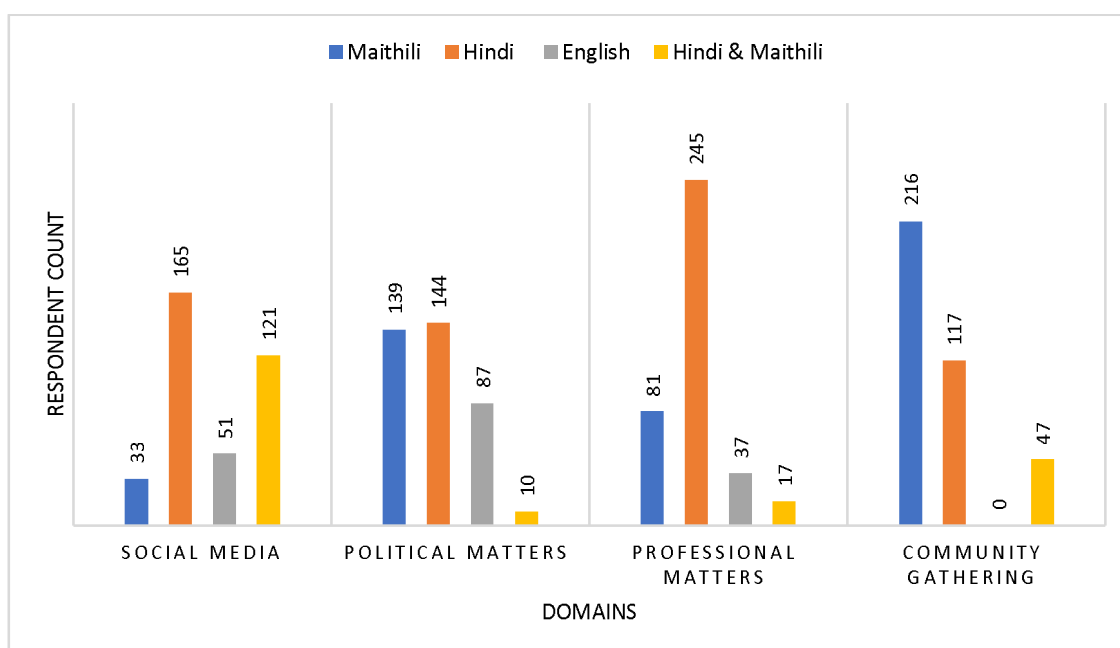
<sup>7</sup> The respondent did not mention the name of the language but demonstrated by giving an example of her speech.

### 5.4.2 Language Preference in Different Settings

Language preference of speakers is an essential indicator of the robustness of the language and speakers' bond towards their mother tongue. Though the two districts covered in the present study have the majority of Maithili speakers, Hindi and English are used at the school and university education system. Moreover, Hindi is also the official language of Bihar. In such a scenario, it is interesting to see how the native speakers behave in terms of language preference at different places of interlocution, including workplace, social media and community gatherings. As illustrated in Figure below, the language usage of respondents in professional matters and on social media is dominated by Hindi.

Additionally, a majority of respondents use Hindi in informal settings. Furthermore, while Maithil's usage is high in a community gathering, many respondents also use Hindi. Some respondents also reported using Hindi and Maithili alternatively.

*Figure 5.3 Language Preference in Different Settings*





The interview excerpts also support this that the speakers use Hindi in public domains, whereas Maithili is restricted to the home domain:

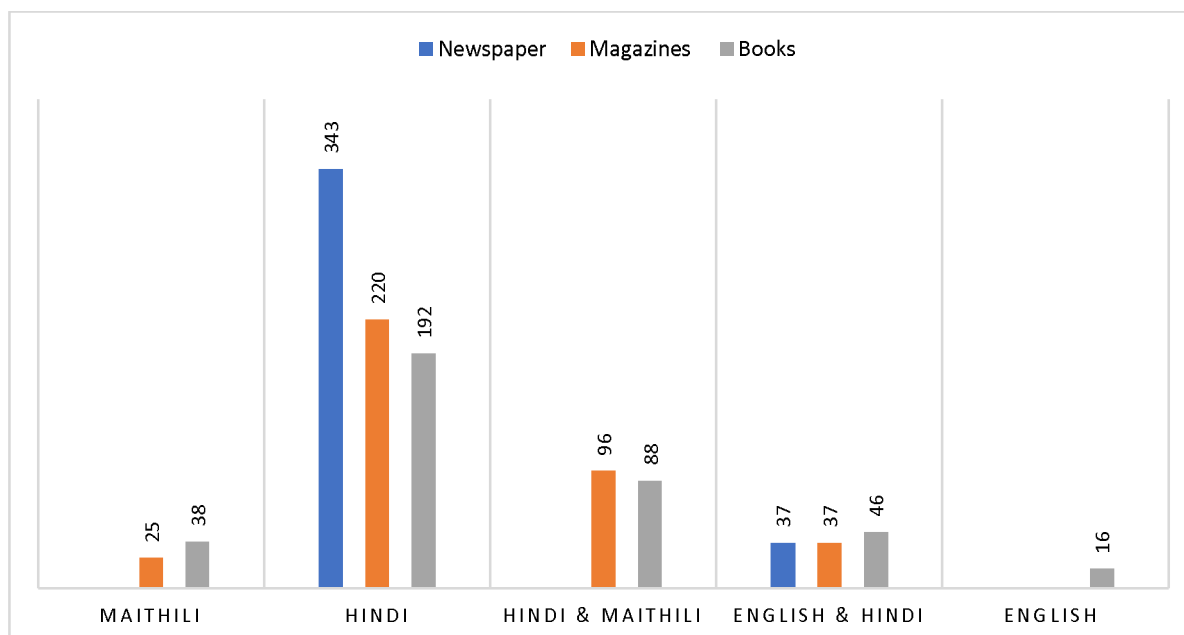
P17: I use Hindi, especially at school and for official work. I do not use Maithili outside.

### **5.4.3 Language Use in Print Media**

Figure 5.4 below illustrates the use of Maithili in print media. Data was collected by asking the respondents to report what they read in print media and tick all the languages they read the print media such as newspapers, magazines and books/booklets. As shown in the illustration below, a majority of the respondents read Hindi newspapers. It turned out that currently, no newspapers are being published in Maithili. A few Maithili leaders made an effort to publish a few newspapers but failed and discontinued eventually due to a shortage of readership and lack of financial support. There are literary magazines in Maithili, but these also lack readership, as very few respondents read Maithili magazines and books. The statement of P4 voices this opinion:

P4: When it comes to the newspaper, we are bound to read Hindi newspapers. Currently, there are no newspapers in Maithili. Earlier, I had started publishing a Maithili newspaper, 'Maithili Awaz' from Darbhanga. It was started with the help of CM Jha, and there was a big printing office. I was the CEO of that newspaper. Due to the financial crisis and some other reasons, the publication of the newspaper ceased.

Figure 5.4 Language Use in Print Media



Additionally, the following excerpts from the interview provide further insight into the consumption of printed content in Maithili and also the reasons for failure for such media:

SP: what do you think are the main reasons for the Maithili newspapers to cease?

P3: There are many reasons. First, nobody likes to read the newspapers these days as they get everything on a news channel on TV. Second, since the beginning, people are used to reading Hindi newspapers. So now, the readers do not feel any need for Maithili newspapers. I will give you one more example here. In Darbhanga, one newspaper had started called 'Dainik Mithila Aawaz', but it discontinued due to the lack of readership. They did not get many readers to read it. However, there could be any reason, but you can see the publishing house from where this newspaper

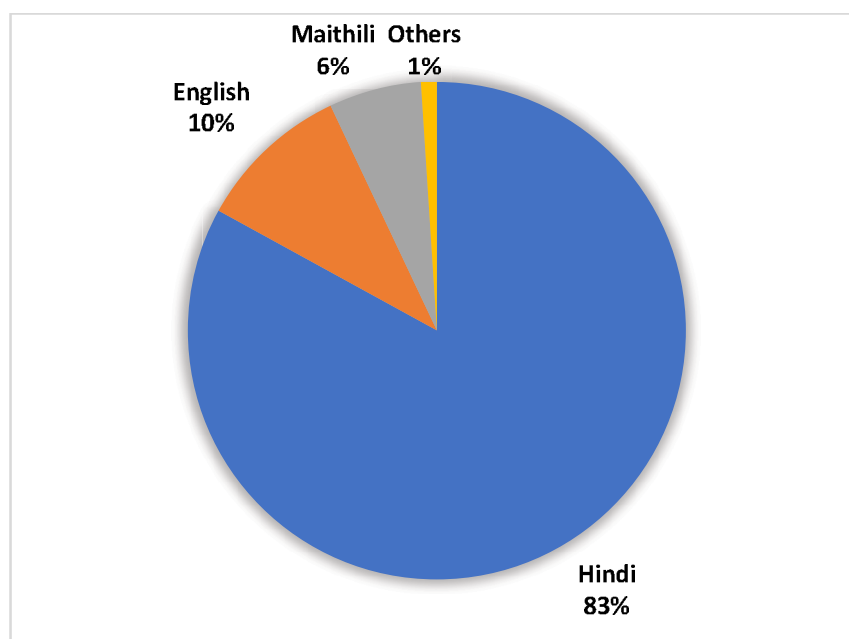
used to get published it is closed now. The common masses here did not show any interest, and they feel when they get all the news in a Hindi newspaper, what the point of reading a Maithili newspaper. Also, there was a lack of circulation; for example, the kind of circulation and advertisement Hindi newspapers have 'Mithila Aawaz' lacked that. It did not get a lot of advertisements, no newspapers or TV channels run without advertisements. It is necessary, but there was a dearth of advertisement in it. Although there are many affluent Maithili speaking businessmen, why would they give advertisements in a Maithili newspaper? They would want their advertisements to be seen by many people.

Interestingly, in Bihar, not even English has that position which Hindi occupies here. Hindi newspapers are too high in demand amongst the readers. Now every district in Bihar has its own Hindi newspaper edition. The above excerpts backed up by figure 5.4 suggest that Hindi publications have a wide readership. This is suggestive of the reason behind the low reading and writing skills of Maithili speakers.

#### **5.4.4 Language Use in Electronic Media**

Currently, there are no TV channels in Maithili. The last Maithili channel, Sobhagya Mithila, stopped broadcasting a few years ago due to a lack of institutional support. Thus, according to the respondents, there is a lack of Maithili content such as movies and serials to watch. The Maithili film industry is also not very developed, and only a handful of movies have been made so far. As figure 5.5 suggests, 83% of respondents watch Hindi news, TV serials, and films. Some Maithili serials are broadcast on local channels, but only 6% of respondents watch them. Hence, it can be concluded that Maithili's presence is negligible in the domain of media.

*Figure 5.5 Language Use in Electronic Media*



UNESCO's criteria for domains of language use are shown in Table 5.9. The scale primarily distinguishes between home domains and social (public) domains. This factor is comparatively challenging to assess for the Maithili language, as the domain of use for Maithili differs in each local speech community. Moreover, other important factors like the caste and religion of speakers also determine the variation in the use of Maithili in different domains. However, based on field observation it was observed that Maithili speakers always speak Maithili among themselves (apart from loanwords); younger people code-switch with Hindi and older people stick to Maithili; there are communities (people belonging to different caste) where everyone code-switches; and in communities mostly Muslim and caste categories other than Brahmins, some members could speak Maithili and others could not.

*Table 5.9 Patterns in Existing Language Domains*

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	Domains and Functions
Universal use	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions
Multilingual parity	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
Dwindling domains	3	The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
Limited or formal domains	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions
Highly limited domains	1	The language is used only in a very restricted domains and for a very few functions
Extinct	0	The language is not used in any domain and for any function.

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.10)

SP: Do you use Maithili with your children at home?

P37: (Primary teacher by profession) No, it's a mixed language that neither qualifies as Maithili nor Hindi<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Although, the study of language variety or variation is beyond the scope of the study, but this is an important observation; as many participants reiterated that a new variety of Maithili has emerged which neither qualifies as Maithili nor Hindi.

The analysis shows that Maithili is used in public domains, but its usage is restricted. Moreover, the function of Maithili is not very transparent in the home domain (Pandharipande, 2002), Hindi prevails alongside. Nevertheless, based on the analysis for trends in existing language domains, Maithili can be rated grade 3

### **5.5 FACTOR 5: RESPONSE TO NEW DOMAINS AND MEDIA**

Maithili has a negligible presence in local and national TV as well as radio stations. On the other hand, the electronic media is flooded with Hindi content, i.e., movies, and serials, which indicates a strong presence of Hindi media in Bihar. According to Baker and Jones (1998; p. 270), when the majority language mass media enters minority language home, the effect may be subtractive bilingualism (see chapter 3 for details). They give an example of England and North America, where English has made inroads into minority language speakers' homes. A similar situation can be seen in the case of Maithili, where due to the lack of media content in Maithili, the viewers are left with no choice but to watch Hindi channels. There are no Maithili channels lately. Earlier, there was one channel named Sobhagya Mithila, which was stopped due to government and financial crunch support. The following excerpts from the P4 interview exemplify this observation that Maithili's visibility has not increased much in both TV and radio, despite its inclusion in the ES:

P4: I have also worked on TV for Sobhagya Mithila (first Maithili channel). I was the producer of that channel. When the Sobhagya Mithila channel was functional at that time, I used to watch Maithili serials. Now that the Maithili channels have ceased and there are no Maithili channels anymore, I only watch Hindi channels. However, some Maithili serials are

broadcast on a national and local channels, but viewers mostly watch Hindi channels.

The above comment indicates that Hindi has a strong presence in media due to a lack of content in Maithili. At present, there are hardly any movies being made in Maithili, and only a handful of movies have been made so far. The following comment of P37 illustrates this point.

P37: One movie was released recently, and it was premiered in Supaul if I remember it correctly. Earlier, one movie named Sasta Zindagi Mehnga Sindoor was released. It enjoyed a good run at the box office, and people enjoyed it too. However, nowadays, nobody watches Maithili movies anymore.

There is no all India Radio station exclusively for Maithili in Bihar. Only Patna, Purnea, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur radio stations broadcast specific programmes in Maithili. As a result, the number of radio listeners has decreased over time, and on top of that, there is no Maithili radio channel in India. During interviews, it was also found that the majority of radio programmes are aired from Janakpur (Nepal) radio stations. When respondents were asked if inclusion has helped in increasing the visibility of Maithili in India, this is what P5 responded:

P5: Maithili has not benefited in the radio sector after inclusion. So far, there are more channels in Nepal. Maithili has been the second official language of Nepal even before it got constitutional recognition in India. So, the channels there have got nothing to do with the inclusion of Maithili in ES. It is an independent matter. The channel Sobhagya Mithila was aired in India after the inclusion of the Maithili language in ES, but it did

not get much support from the government. If it had got the support, it would not have ceased/discontinued.

The interview excerpts also indicate that the visibility of Maithili in media is better in Nepal as compared to India.

Lately, the social networking apps, namely Facebook and WhatsApp, have gained popularity among the common masses, and people are quite active on these social networks. Due to this growing popularity, the respondents were asked if they use Maithili on social media platforms. It was observed that the use of Hindi is more prevalent as compared to Maithili. This point is evident from the statement of P17 to the question, whether he uses Maithili on social networking platforms?

P17: No, I use Hindi, but there is one group on the WhatsApp group, where we exchange messages in Maithili. Otherwise, nobody uses it.

During interviews and focused group discussions, a majority of the participants across all age cohorts have reported using Hindi as their language on the social media platform. A limited number of participants that mostly belonged to the higher age group (older generation), who are also mostly monolingual, reported little use of social media platforms due to their limited capabilities in handling the social media apps. The respondents also reported a lack of predictive text options in Maithili as one reason that hinders communication through texts. Some of the respondents reported that the absence of Maithili script in typing (Unicode font technology) hinder their usage of Maithili in written communications. UNESCO's criteria for response to new media and domain are shown below in the table.



*Table 5.10 Response to New Domains and Media*

Degree of Endangerment	Grade	New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Languages
dynamic	5	The language is used in all new domains
robust/active	4	The language is used in most new domains
receptive	3	The language is used in many domains
coping	2	The language is used in some new domains
minimal	1	The language is used only in a few new domains
inactive	0	The language is not used in any new domains

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.11)

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that Maithili has a low presence in the new media. Since the use of Maithili is restricted in new media, Maithili can be classified at grade 1, i.e., the minimal category. The lack of institutional support, resources and infrastructure are some of the reasons

## **5.6 FACTOR 6: MATERIALS FOR LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND LITERACY**

In Bihar, Hindi is used as a medium of instruction in government schools and Maithili is introduced as an optional subject in High schools. Currently, the Devanagari script is used in schools and for other official purposes to write Maithili. As a result, the original scripts of Maithili, i.e., Mithilaksher and Kaithi, are on the verge of extinction. There are only a handful of people

who are skilled in using Mithilaksher scripts. Factor six is evaluated based on the focused group discussions and personal interviews with students and teachers at school and university levels. A significant part of the interviews was conducted during the Mithilaksher script training workshop organised in Darbhanga by CIIL, Mysuru. It was a ten-day workshop, which focused on teaching Mithilaksher and Kaithi scripts. It was specially organised for Maithili teachers and was attended by teachers and students from different regions of Mithilanchal (districts where Maithili is spoken). This workshop was an initiative towards the revitalisation of the Maithili language's scripts. At this workshop, I also got a chance to interact with teachers from other regions of Mithilanchal, such as Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur, and Samastipur, to gain a broader perspective on the state of the facilities and support provided by the government to support Maithili education in schools. As a part of my fieldwork, I also visited some schools and colleges in both the districts to get the first-hand experience on Maithili education in these institutes. Based on these interviews, the common theme that has emerged is the lack of formal support from the government, which includes (i) Dearth of textbooks (ii) Lack of Maithili teachers in schools (iii) Absence of foundation at primary level. These observations are encapsulated in the following interview excerpts by P6 (teacher by profession):

SP: Do you think that the literacy content is enough in Maithili?

P6: Of course, as per Mithilanchal's population, not much work has been done. There is a lack of Maithili teachers in school. Let us take my school's example, we have 1800 students in our school, out of which 1500 students have taken Maithili as an optional subject. There should be at least four teachers, but not a single teacher has been appointed.

SP: Do you feel that with the help of the Mithilaksher script, Maithili will develop more?

P6: See, the script does not help much in the development of a language. For example, Urdu can be written in Farsi or Devanagari, but it is a developed language. Moreover, suppose research is done on what measures should be taken for the development of Maithili, in that case, the fundamental point here is that the children who take Maithili as an optional subject in High school should be provided teachers from primary to High school. Furthermore, textbooks should be published in Maithili; ironically, books are not available in Maithili. In order to promote children's mother tongue education, the government should also provide material in it; for example, science and art books should be made available in Maithili.

SP: Do you think that more materials should be provided in Maithili?

P6: Of course, the way textbooks are available in Hindi, English and Urdu language. Similarly, the government should work on the publication of textbooks in Maithili. The government spends crores on the growth of English, and teachers are given training in it. English teachers are sent abroad on a foreign exchange programme. In the same way, the teacher training Centre should be opened/established, and audio-visual aids should be developed to make learning convenient. Unfortunately, these facilities are not available in Maithili

*Table 5.11 Sources Available for Language Education and Literacy*

Grade	Accessibility of Written Materials
5	There is an established orthography, literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; and for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.
0	No orthography available to the community.

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.12)

Based on the qualitative analysis and field observation, it can be concluded that Maithili falls on grade 3, as students are taught Maithili at High school. Nevertheless, due to a lack of infrastructure and proper implementation of education policy, the students cannot develop literacy skills in the language. The Maithili education is imparted just for the namesake, and the absence of resources makes it even more difficult. There are grammar books, dictionaries, and literary books available in the Maithili language, but they are generally inaccessible to the majority of the community members.

This chapter provides an overview of the language vitality of Maithili using the first six factors. The analysis shows that Maithili is predominantly used in the home domain and for community gatherings. However, Hindi overpowers Maithili in public domains such as education, administration and mass media. Hindi predominantly dominates Bihar's heterogenous language scenario, and north Bihar's language situation of north Bihar reflects more of a diglossic situation where Hindi is the language of prestige, education, employment, and Maithili is the language of home (community) and informal domains.