

6 MAITHILI LANGUAGE ATTITUDES ASSESSMENT

The chapter aims to explore both institutional and speakers' attitudes towards Maithili language. First, factor seven will be discussed, where institutional attitude will be analysed based on participants' responses to questionnaire surveys and interviews. Later, factor eight has been explored in detail to fulfil one of the research questions: *How does inclusion affect the Maithili speakers' attitude towards their language?* Here, the attitude of the speakers has been analysed

6.1 FACTOR 7: OFFICIAL STATUS AND USE: GOVERNMENTAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LANGUAGE ATTITUDES AND POLICIES

The discussion is primarily organised around four aspects of language planning, i.e., status planning, which ascertain the role of a language in society and the domains of its use (Kloss, 1969); corpus planning, which includes measures taken to improve the structures and forms of a language (Kloss, 1969); acquisition planning that was originally included in status planning, deals with the measures undertaken to promote the knowledge of a language (Cooper, 1989), and, prestige planning includes measures to instigate positive attitudes towards a language (Haarman 1984, 1990). The focus will be on the impact of status, and acquisition planning on Maithili in the present study.

The provision of the Eighth Schedule under the Constitution of India (see chapter 2) is one of the most notable features of status planning in India, where the inclusion of a language in the ES bestows it with benefits such as,

1. Considered for promotion and development works done by various schemes of the Government of India:

- i.
- ii.
- iii. LDC-
- iv. NTS-I (National Testing Services -
- v. Taught as a second language under three-language formula policy as implemented by the Central Institute of Indian Languages

2. The language is considered as a subject (e.g. UPSC, UGC, Sahitya Akademi etc.)

3. Government promotes advertisement in Eighth Schedule language

4. It is eligible for grants under the promotion of Indian languages schemes of the Government of India (e.g. Grant-in-Aid scheme, as implemented by Central Institute of Indian Languages)

Besides, the language is supported by several schemes from state level language organisations and institutions. The Indian government recognises Maithili as an Eighth Scheduled language, which implies that the language is part of various government schemes to promote language at both Union and state levels. UNESCO's (2003) LVE framework identifies the institutional support and the attitude of the official organisation in its seventh factor. Based on the level of support that a language has, it can be graded on the following scale given below:

Degree of Support	Grade	Official Attitudes toward Language
Equal Support	5	All languages are protected.
Differential Support	4	Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.

Passive Assimilation	3	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.
Active Assimilation	2	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.
Forced Assimilation	1	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognised nor protected.
Prohibition	0	Minority languages are prohibited.

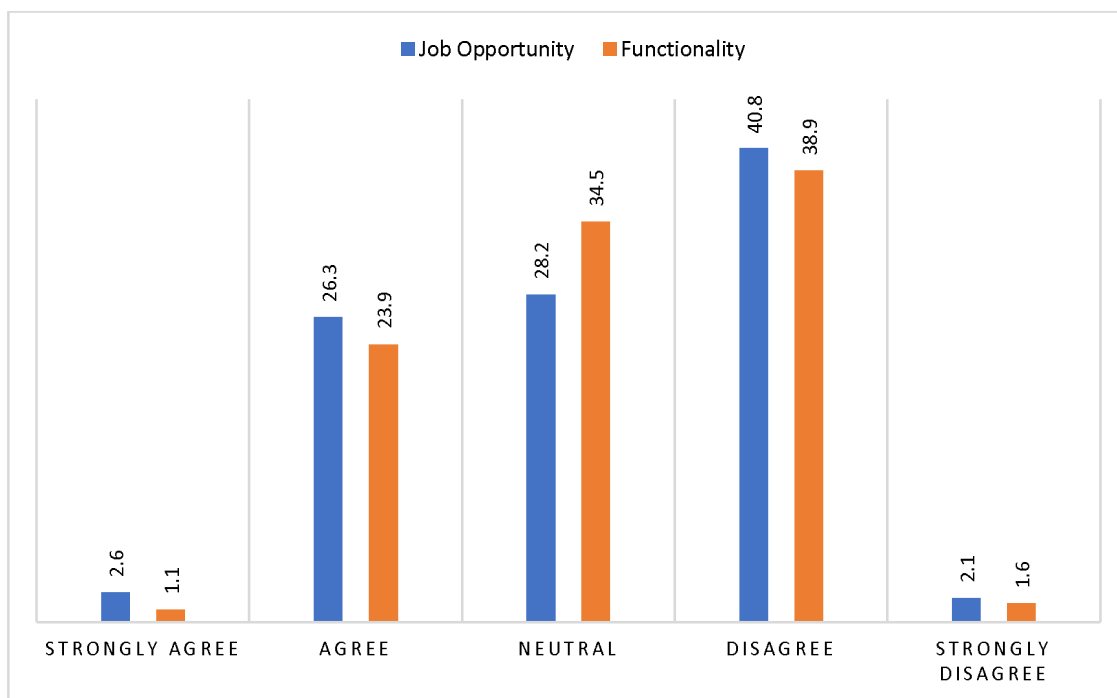
Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.14)

In order to understand the impact of ES inclusion on the situation of the Maithili language, the respondents were asked questions about the utility of Maithili in getting jobs and the increase of its functionality in various domains. The responses to the following questions have been represented in the graph below:

Q: Do you think job opportunities in Maithili has increased after its inclusion in the ES?

Q: Do you think the functionality of the Maithili language has increased after inclusion in the ES?

Figure 6.1 Responses to Job Opportunities and Functionality Questions



As shown in the figure above, there was a mixed response, where 26.3%, 28.2%, and 40.8% of the respondents agreed, stayed neutral, and disagreed, respectively, on whether the inclusion has improved the prospects of getting jobs in Maithili. The percentage of disagreeing respondents is relatively higher. This manifests the Maithili speakers' notion that the Maithili language is not linked with economic advancement. Due to the lack of relationship between economic growth and the Maithili language, the speakers see no motivation in learning the Maithili language. This is further evident in the interview excerpts given below.

When participants were asked, 'if they feel job opportunities have increased in Maithili?'. Similar responses were reiterated that are as follows:

P36: Employment will happen once you link this language to primary and secondary education. In order to earn, do not we learn French and other foreign languages? As one has to go and earn in other countries. Had there been any

environment here, people would gladly learn Maithili, and the whole city would speak this language like parrots.

P34: Yes, I did an MBA, and he did Engineering. We did not do anything in Maithili. There are no job opportunities in Maithili. We do not see any benefit in learning Maithili.

The above excerpts exemplify the opinion that there is a lack of job opportunities in Maithili. Interestingly, there is a shortage of teachers to teach Maithili, which exposes the inefficacy of acquisition planning. This is reflected from the following comment by P37, a schoolteacher by profession:

P37: Not even Maithili teachers are recruited to teach Maithili. Sanskrit teachers are teaching Maithili in Schools. I do not think so. Just now, we discussed that the number of Maithili teachers are not sufficient in schools. We all can see that. I do not feel that employment has increased in Maithili. If teachers are recruited, then naturally, job opportunities will increase.

The absence of a relationship between socioeconomic growth and a language, which is also evident in this case, may lead speakers to shift to the dominant language that guarantees better prospects (Bourdieu, 1991; Karan, 2011).

Coming to the response of speakers on the functionality of the Maithili language, it was again a mixed response with 23.9%, 34.5%, and 38.9% of the respondents agreed, stayed neutral, and disagreed, respectively, on whether the inclusion has improved the functionality of the Maithili language? The percentage of disagreeing respondents is relatively higher. This reflects the majority's opinion that inclusion has not helped increase the functional load (as defined by Pandharipande, 2002) of the Maithili Language. This is also suggested in the following excerpt:

P53: The usage of Maithili is shrinking to villages; even if you go to Darbhanga, you will rarely find people speaking in Maithili. Now, Maithili is not even used in Darbhanga. Mainly, Hindi is used everywhere.

It is evident from the speakers' responses that they do not feel the functional domains of Maithili have increased significantly after its inclusion. This point has been discussed in detail in sections 5.4 & 5.5.

Coming to language acquisition planning, the Constitution of India, under 350A, states that,

“Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage. It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.”

Although Indian language policy promotes multilingualism in its three-language policy and official language at the union and state levels, however, the poor implementation of the policy does not help in the acquisition of languages. The policy to use Maithili in the education system exists; however, it is poorly implemented. The country's language policy has a direct impact on the attitude of language communities towards their languages. Hindi is the official language of the state of Bihar. The use of Hindi is mandated in various domains. In practice, the responsibility to promote regional languages in educations lies with the state government. The education policy has also suppressed the Maithili language; Hindi is the official language of Bihar; for schooling, children feel difficulty in learning Hindi at school. Especially to understand the implementation of

Maithili education in school, teachers and students were interviewed during fieldwork. The following comments of teachers illustrate these points:

P3: No, it has not increased because of the government's passive attitude. You will be surprised to know that Maithili is not used as a medium of instruction, but it is taught as a subject. So Maithili teachers are not recruited. However, teachers for Bangla, Oriya subjects are recruited. Maithili is taught in a few schools and colleges. I mean that in the Mithila region, Maithili teachers should be recruited more than Hindi teachers who all can teach this language, but it is not implemented. There are so many unemployed people who have studied Maithili in college, and today if teachers are recruited to teach this subject, they will benefit from it. It will also alleviate unemployment, and more people will be motivated to study Maithili.

When asked if at any point in time Maithili was used as a medium of instruction in schools? The participant pointed out the indifferent attitude of the state government towards Maithili:

P3: In the beginning, it was started when we were kids but then it stopped. Even books were published both at government and non-government levels, but they ceased due to lack of government support. It was a high court decision that Maithili should be the medium of instruction, but it was never implemented.

A similar view is shared by P8, a teacher by profession, which is illustrated in the following excerpts:

SP: Do you think Maithili should also be introduced as a medium of instruction in schools of north Bihar?

P8: Three language policy is there in India, but in Bihar, it has not been implemented yet because students from 1st to 5th are taught Hindi and English, so

it would be better if they are taught Maithili along with it. We talk in Maithili, and respective subjects are taught in the specific language. Still, explanations are made in Maithili because our school is located in a rural area, and the students who come over their parents are illiterate. Hence, they are of the first generation who are being educated in their family, so they talk in the mother tongue. So we have to explain them in the mother tongue. If we teach them in the language of the book, then half of the students will not understand anything.

In the interviews, it was pointed out repeatedly that there is a dearth of textbooks in Maithili. In order to understand this, the participant was asked,

SP: Why has not there been a demand for textbooks of Maithili?

P8: Because teachers in Urdu, Bangla are recruited, but in Maithili, there has not been the case even Muslims of this region do speak Maithili well, but because of political reasons Maithili has been marginalised, so if there will be books and teachers Maithili will be used

Based on the observations that suggest differential support from the government and institution, the Maithili language can be classified at Grade 4 on factor 7 of the UNESCO scale.

6.2 FACTOR 8: COMMUNITY MEMBERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR OWN LANGUAGE

Attitudes can be categorised into three components: cognition, i.e., the beliefs regarding an attitude object; affect, i.e., the emotions evoked by the attitude objects; and conation, i.e., conduct towards the attitude object (Bohner, 2001). Language attitude has been defined by Ryan et al. (1982) as “any affective, cognitive or behavioural index of evaluative reactions toward different

language varieties or speakers” (p. 7). It is seen as an important factor that stimulates various types of linguistic behaviours (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Kircher & Fox, 2019). Language attitudes have been noted to influence the linguistic choice of parents, i.e., the language that they choose to use at home, and thus in the process, transmit to their children (De Houwer, 1999; 2015; Hamers & Blanc, 2000; Pearson, 2007).

Language attitudes can be evaluated on two aspects of status and solidarity (Genesee & Holobow, 1989). Any language which assures economic advancement and upward social mobility is perceived to have high status. The utility of a language determines its status aspect (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). While, the solidarity aspect of a language is associated with the feeling of attachment, loyalty and sense of belonging towards the language (Ryan et al., 1982). The solidarity aspect of the attitude can be perceived as a part of the speakers’ social identity. In the present study, these aspects have been explored to assess the speakers’ attitudes towards the Maithili language. The solidarity dimension is often linked with the social identities of the speakers. Under the solidarity dimension, the role of religion and caste have been analysed, as both the factors have been instrumental and worked as catalysts in various language movements across India. Whereas, under the status dimension, the speakers’ attitude has been analysed to understand whether inclusion has influenced the attitude of the Maithili speakers or not?

As mentioned in chapter 4, questionnaire surveys, interviews and focused group discussions have been used to assess the participants’ attitude towards Maithili, which is corroborated by field observations whenever required. Thematic analysis has been used to see the emerging themes and patterns

Grenoble and Whaley (1998) write, “subjective attitudes of a speech community towards its own

and other languages are paramount for predicting language shift” (p. 24). Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to gain in-depth insight into speakers’ language behaviour and their attitude towards the Maithili. Some of the recurring themes based on the interviews, which describe the reason for the shift of the Maithili speakers from Maithili to Hindi are as follows:

Figure 6.2 Themes Emerging from the Qualitative Data

Themes	Codes
Lack of Affinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack consensus about the mother tongue • Lack regional consciousness • Self-internalisation of Pure and Thethi Maithili
Low Prestige	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maithili is the language of household
Lack of motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward social mobility • Economic advancement
Lack of Institutional Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited media presence • Absence of formal education • Job opportunities • Passive attitude of the government

During fieldwork, it was observed that some groups of individuals were extremely dedicated for the maintenance of Maithili, some speakers deliberately chose not to pass Maithili to their children, and some individuals had little oral proficiency in Maithili and were not bothered

by it. In short, the variation in the attitude of the speakers encompassed a broad spectrum. It should be noted that the attitudinal shift is not taking place in the same trajectory across socio-cultural and demographic factors, which will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

The speakers' attitude has been analysed with respect to different demographic factors such as age, gender and socio-cultural factors such as caste and religion. In order to assess the attitude of Maithili speakers, the attitude index was created from 10 questions which were directed to measure the attitude of the respondents (see chapter 4 for detail). The table below presents the descriptive statistics of the attitude index.

Figure 6.3 Descriptive Statistics of Attitude Index

Main index	Attitude Index
N	380
Mean	0.74
Median	0.78
St. Deviation	0.14
Range	0.58
Minimum	0.40
Maximum	0.98

6.2.1 Attitudinal Shift across Age Cohorts

The relationship between the attitude index and age cohorts has been analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis test. The significance value for the test, i.e., the p-value = 0.000. The test results here imply that the distribution of attitude index varies across the age cohorts. The correlation test results suggest a strong relationship between the attitude of the speaker and the age cohorts. The correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) is 0.524 (at 99% confidence level) for the test. This value suggests a strong correlation between the attitude of the speaker and their age group. The correlation here is positive correlation. Thus, the inference can be drawn that the attitude index value increases across age cohorts. This implies that the older generation's attitude is more favourable towards Maithili than the younger generation. This trend is reflected in the mean score of the attitude index, which can be seen from the table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1 Mean Value of Attitude Index across Age Cohorts

Age cohort	Range of Age (years)	Mean value of Attitude Index
1	15-25	0.66
2	26-35	0.79
3	36-45	0.80
4	46-55	0.82
5	56 & above	0.84

Although, the speakers' attitude was relatively positive in the questionnaire survey, Maithili is a sweet and pleasant language than Hindi, negative attitudes were reported, especially in the qualitative data. This was underrepresented in the questionnaire survey, as it primarily delves

into the In qualitative data., the older generation reiterated their angst towards young Maithili speakers' lack of loyalty and pride towards their language. It is often repeated in the interview that the young speakers do not want to use Maithili in public as they fear being judged as uncouth and therefore refrain from using Maithili. The theme of Maithili speakers' lack of language loyalty and pride is often repeated in the interview.

In one of the focussed group discussions, when participants were asked about their language they use at home?

P29: At home, I make my folks speak my language. I will not lie that I speak in their language. My folks use their language outside (she is referring to Hindi). These kids go to work, where they speak in their language, but I use my language with them at home.

P30⁹: I use to mix up language, most of the time Hindi. I myself cannot speak good Maithili then; how will I teach my kids.

In another interview, P3 (teacher and writer by profession) expressed his angst towards the young generation for their lack of affinity towards the Maithili language:

P3: Bengalis, Tamils, and Telugu are all very loyal to their mother tongues, and they never forget their language. A few days back a report had come about India that Hindi is the most used language followed by Bengali after English. Now you

⁹ P30, she was youngest among all the participants in the focussed group discussion.

can imagine how loyal Bengalis are towards their language. Even though they are settled down abroad, they do not abandon their language like us. They pass it from one generation to another. But we Maithili speakers abandon our language the moment we step out of our houses. What do you call this mentality of ours?

Thus, it is evident that there is a shift in speakers' attitudes across the age cohorts. The speakers from the older generation have been found to have a more favourable attitude towards the Maithili language as compared to their younger counterparts.

6.2.2 Attitudinal Shift across Gender

In order to determine the relationship between the attitude index and the gender of the speakers, the Mann-Whitney test has been employed. The significance value for the test, i.e., the p-value = 0.013. The test results here imply that the distribution of attitude index varies across the gender category. The correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) is 0.127 (at 95% confidence level) for the test. This value suggests a weak correlation between the attitude of the speakers and their gender. Even though the correlation here is positive, it is only a weak correlation to draw any significant inference. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between attitude index and gender. Hence gender has not much influence on the attitude of the speakers towards the Maithili language.

In addition to this, it was found in the qualitative data that the degree of monolingualism is higher among women, especially in the older generation, i.e., they speak Maithili with some mixing of Hindi. The following comments illustrate this:

P54: Even if I can understand Hindi, I cannot speak properly. When I try to speak in Hindi, I cannot express myself well and then you people will only say, that see, she cannot even speak in Hindi properly.

P29: But I stay at home, and I do not know their language. I cannot use their language, and I use my language. His parents (Pointing at her grandchild, she said) are educated, so they use their (Hindi) language with them.

During the focused group discussions, the female participants, mainly housewives and had a lower level of education, primarily conversed in Maithili. One of the patterns that emerged during these discussions is that the women associate themselves with Maithili more, as their domain is mainly related to home, in most cases. Therefore, Maithili is often treated as the home language.

6.2.3 Attitudinal Shift across Religion

Now discussing data obtained from the questionnaire survey, the Mann-Whitney test has been used check the relationship between the attitude index and religion. The significance value for the test, i.e., the p-value = 0.452. The test results here imply that the distribution of attitude index is the same across religions. The correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) is -0.039 for the test. This value suggests a weak correlation between the speakers' attitude and their religion, and any significant inference cannot be drawn from it. Thus, statistically speaking, religion does not influence the attitude of the speaker towards the Maithili language.

Further, in the qualitative data, a self-internalised notion of pure Maithili was evident. It was observed that the Muslim speakers had a notion that their mother tongue is Urdu and not Maithili. However, some of the respondents considered their language a mixture of Maithili and Urdu. This is reflected in the following excerpts:

P56: Generally, we speak in Urdu at home, although it is not pure Urdu. We often mix Urdu and Maithili, which is the variety of Maithili we use as our everyday language.

P57: This is Muslim dominated village, go to Atihar (village). There you will find many Maithili speakers; you will also be able to understand their Maithili better because it is their language. You will find their Maithili skills to be more satisfactory, unlike us.

In many villages such as Atihar, especially Julaha community uses Maithili. Out of many villages inhabited by the majority of the Muslim population, Salempur and Dih Berai, were selected purposively to see the pattern of linguistic behaviour among speakers to understand how religious background affects linguistic behaviour. From the qualitative data, it was observed that language ideology shapes the linguistic identity of the speakers. Although many Muslim speakers refused that they speak Maithili, it was found that they could comprehend and speak Maithili. It was also observed that their usage of Maithili mainly depended on the interlocutors, i.e., with whom they are talking.

P32 admitted that he uses Maithili while talking to his Brahmin acquaintances and friends, or else he uses Urdu. However, when the respondents were asked how they differentiate between Urdu and Hindi languages, their responses were not convincing. They were primarily based on their belief that Urdu is the language of Muslims. In one of the incidents from the fieldwork, some children complained that their parents rebuke them for using Maithili at home and ask them to use Urdu.

Similarly, during a focused group discussion in Atihar village, one woman reported Urdu as her mother tongue. Other women of the group said no one in their village used Urdu; everyone was using Maithili. This observation is village specific; in Dih Berai village, speakers reported their language to be Urdu and not Maithili. This shows that the speakers in these villages associate themselves with Urdu because of their religion. However, it was not Urdu as well. Warsi (2014),

in his book, identifies a new variety of Maithili, which he has termed Mithilanchal Urdu. Since this study is not based on language variation. I shall not comment on this, but it can be taken up for future study.

6.2.4 Attitudinal Shift across Caste

The relationship between the attitude index and caste of the speakers' has been analysed using the Kruskal-Wallis test. The significance value for the test, $p = 0.000$. The test results here imply that the distribution of attitude index varies across the caste categories. The correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) is -0.343 (at 99% confidence level) for the test. This value suggests a moderate correlation between the attitude of the speakers and their caste. The correlation here is negative. Thus, the inference can be drawn here that the attitude index falls gradually with respect to the caste hierarchy starting from general to SC/ST, meaning that the attitude of the speakers belonging to the general caste category is more favourable towards Maithili as compared to the speakers belonging to other caste categories. This trend can be seen from the table below:

Table 6.2 Caste-Wise Mean Value of Attitude Index

Labels	Caste Categories	Mean value of Attitude Index
1	General	0.80
2	OBC	0.70
3	SC/ST	0.69

Additionally, the qualitative data revealed an underlying notion that the Maithili spoken by Brahmins is of the purest form. This is encapsulated in the following excerpts.

P53: The purest form of Maithili is spoken by Brahmins, whereas the people from other castes make mistakes while speaking. They do not speak correct Maithili like Brahmins.

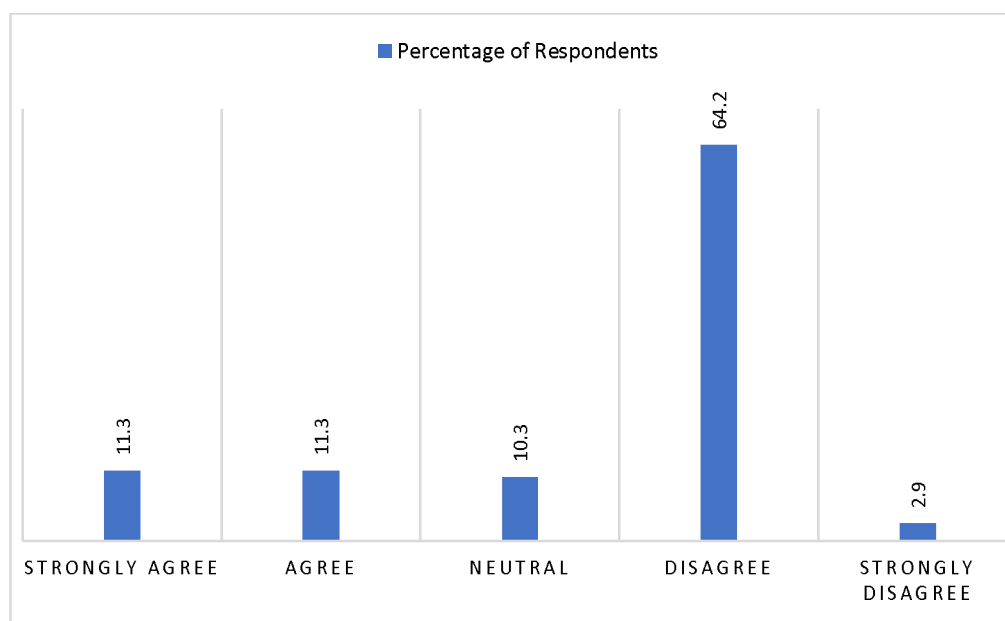
P62: Because we do not use pure language and even at home, we use ‘thethi’ language, not pure Maithili. When we speak, Brahmins do not understand our language and they think of us as uneducated and uncouth.

The above data presents a case of sociolect, where brahmins’ Maithili is considered the standard variety. This attitude of the speakers reflects how speakers have made a self-internalised distinction between right and wrong and thus rejecting the

6.3 OVERT AND COVERT PRESTIGE

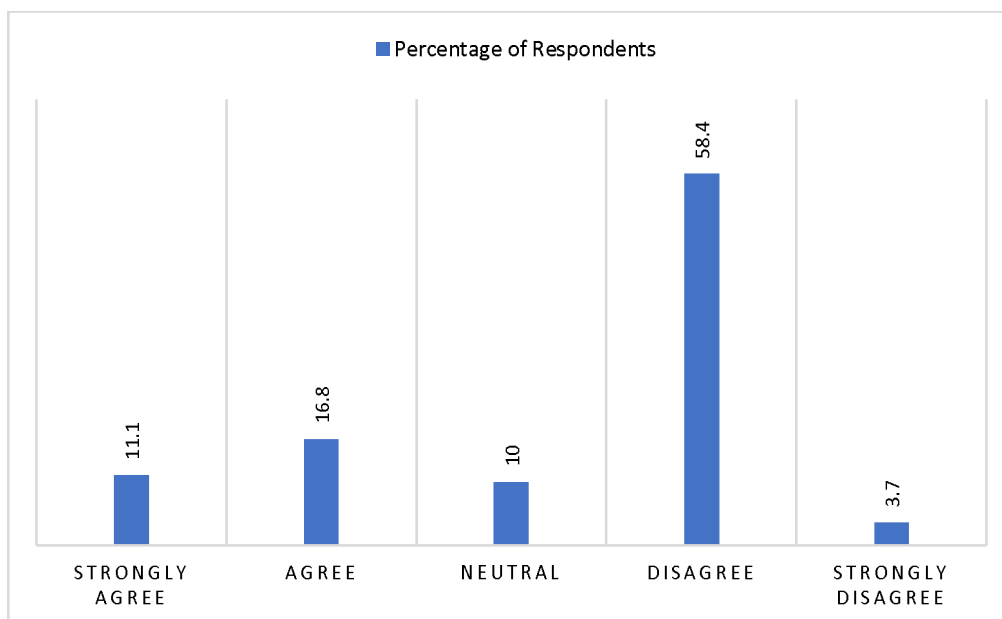
As discussed in chapter 3, the prestige associated with a language guides people’s choice of language (Karan, 2011). Prestige can be classified as ‘Overt’ and ‘Covert’, where the overt prestige refers to the trait to associate with the language of power or dominant language, and covert prestige refers to the association with a non-dominant or non-standard variety of dominant language for the purpose of group solidarity (Trudgill, 1972; Milroy, 1987; Eckert, 1989). In the Indian context, a language included in the ES is generally associated with higher prestige and status (Aggarwal, 1995; Bhattacharya, 2002; Sarangi, 2015). Maithili is an ES language, which was relegated to a dialect position for a long time.

in the questionnaire survey, when respondents were asked if they feel that “Hindi is more important than Maithili?”, 64.2% of the respondents reported in support of Maithili by denying that Hindi is more important than Maithili, while 22.6% of the respondents agreed to Hindi being more prestigious than Maithili. This can be seen from the response of the speakers, depicted in the figure below.

Figure 6.4 Percentage-W

When they were further asked, “Do they feel embarrassed to use Maithili outside Bihar?” Again, their response was favourable towards Maithili, where 58.4% of the total percentage responded that they do not feel any embarrassment using Maithili outside Bihar. In comparison, 27.9% agreed that they feel embarrassed to speak Maithili outside their home state. The figure below illustrates the response of the speakers.

Figure 6. Percentage-Wise Distribution of the Responses



On the contrary, the participants' response in the qualitative data revealed some inconsistency in the attitude of respondents projected by the survey data. Based on the qualitative data, it was observed that the responses favouring Maithili could have been influenced by peer pressures and were not adequate to get an in-depth insight into the situation. For instance, when P30 (an MNREGA worker) was asked does she use Maithili outside.

P30: If sir (her employer) uses Hindi with us and we will speak in Maithili with him, we would look like fools in front of him.

The above statement by P30 illustrates the common perception of participants that Maithili is a home language, not to be used in public, especially for formal use. Additionally, the majority

of the participants felt that Maithili is more of a ‘gharelu bhasa¹⁰’, and it is not to be used in public spaces. Moreover, participants associated Maithili with the language of illiterate people and Hindi as the language of literate people. It is exemplified in the following comment by P29 when asked what language she uses with her children:

P29: My language (Maithili), the language of illiterate, their language (Hindi) language of educated people.

Many participants shared this common notion that Maithili is the language of illiterate people, and educated people use Hindi. Often, in the interview, older generation people, mostly monolingual in Maithili, would refer to their language (Maithili) as the language of illiterate and would point out at their children or young generation speakers who know Hindi as the language of educated people. This notion is also exemplified in the following excerpts.

P11: Once we step out of Bihar, we do not use Maithili. People frown upon Maithili language usage.

P48: Yes, if you see, the number of people using the Maithili language is decreasing. If the other person responds to you in Hindi, then how can you reply in Maithili with them? Most of the time, people neglect the Maithili language if you talk to them in Maithili.

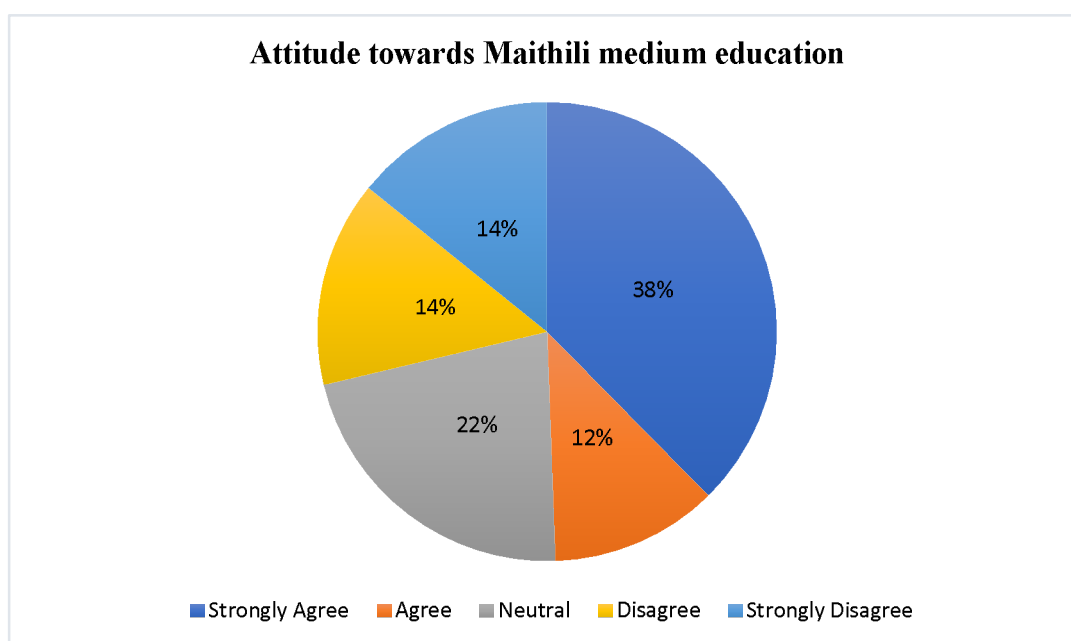
When asked about encouraging the younger children to use Maithili, P26 replied:

¹⁰ Gharelu Bhasa refers to household language. This term was reiterated, interchangeably for Maithili by many participants.

P26: Yes, gharelu bhasa, Maithili. It is the number one choice as the household language.

The above excerpt can be seen as a classic example, where the speakers project their pride and affection for Maithili, and at the same time, restrict it to the status of gharelu bhasa (household language). This was one of the common patterns that were seen during interaction with participants. This aligns with Karan's (2011) perceived benefit model of language which argues that economic factors drive the speakers' motivation to learn or leave a language. These all depends on what individual considers important for his socio-economic growth. It is also one of the factors that influences the parents' choice of language to transmit to their children (Chrisp, 2005; Karpava, 2018).

Figure 6.6 Percentage-Wise Distribution of the Responses



In the questionnaire survey, when asked, “Would you send your children to a Maithili medium school, given the choice and assurance of good standards, and right prospects (career-wise) in it, 50% of the respondents reported in favour of Maithili medium education, while 28%

were against it. About 22% of the respondents stayed neutral. This can be seen from the pie-chart given above. However, the attitude of the parents did not seem very favourable towards Maithili medium education. This could be due to the absence of good quality education in Maithili, and due to the lack of socio-economic prospects in Maithili. P11 voices this opinion:

P11: We want our children to learn Hindi. It's better for their growth. Suppose if they go out of Bihar and know only their home language (Maithili), they will not understand the language of the other city. People will not consider it good, and they

6.4 LINGUISTIC IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

A language with status is perceived to be interlinked with upward social mobility, economic advancement and power. Since the Independence of India, Hindi has reigned as the official language of the Union, the dominant language, especially in the North India belt. In contrast, other regional languages have often been marginalised and stigmatised. Often, indigenous language speakers of minority languages opt not to use their language in public settings. Hornberger (1988) has termed this tendency as linguistic shame. Also, the attitude of the Maithili speakers reflects this hierarchical relationship, where Maithili speakers choose not to use their language in many situations to avoid the stigma attached to speaking it.

The attitude of Maithili speakers reflects and reinforces the ideology of Hindi as a superior language. For instance, in interviews, the parents opposed the use of Maithili in the public domain, reasoning Maithili as a 'gharelu bhasa' as mentioned above. This is indicative of overt prestige factor (Trudgill, 1972), which emphasises the positive view for the dominant language for the socio-economic reasons. This was resonated repeatedly in the interviews by the respondents.

Although Maithili is generally stigmatised and assigned a low status, there are important variations in linguistic ideology across rural and urban contexts. For instance, in town, Maithili is devalued by speakers themselves. In addition, participants, especially young respondents, confessed to hiding their language identity due to their fear of being mocked or ridiculed.

P18: Yes, we feel embarrassed. We have this complex feeling that we do not want to be acknowledged as Biharis to the outside world. Unskilled people go outside as labour class, and that is why people have this feeling that Biharis are clumsy and Dirty.

The above excerpt shows the common perception deeply rooted in the speakers' minds, where they believe in a particular linguistic and social hierarchy. It is one of the key factors that makes the speakers refrain from associating their own language and identity. Instead, they seek to learn the language they perceive will get them acceptance in the outer world. This tendency has been referred to as linguistic shame (Hornberger, 1988, p. 82) or linguistic asphyxia (Lopez 1989, 105). It should be noted that often Maithili speakers who can speak both Hindi and Maithili opt for the dominant language, Hindi, over their mother tongue, Maithili, even if they are not fully proficient in Hindi, thus demonstrating a lack of language loyalty (Fishman, 1966), which is mostly guided by their inhibitions attached to this language.

In the qualitative data, it was also observed that many speakers value Maithili as part of their culture and identity and use it to communicate among themselves. The awareness of Maithili's status and attitude towards Maithili potentially vary from one community to another, based on various factors and dynamics of the cast, age, religion and gender. The respondents belonging to the brahmin caste overtly value Maithili as an identity marker of their culture and support the use and preservation of the language. In contrast, young respondents pay more

attention to acquiring Hindi and English than maintaining their own language, and it is not that they do not value Maithili. However, regional consciousness is absent among young speakers. There is evidence of linguistic ideologies that value a particular variety of Maithili and perceive it to be more prestigious than other varieties.

P61: not everyone speaks pure Maithili. People use thethi Maithili at home and neighbouring locality. How can you expect someone to understand pure Maithili when they do not use it?

P61: if you will ask anyone to speak pure Maithili, they would not be able to speak.

There is a tendency among speakers to perceive other varieties of Maithili that are even linguistically similar as low varieties. In the case of Maithili, the variety spoken by the Brahmin caste is considered to be the ‘pure’ Maithili, and often, the variety of Maithili spoken by speakers belonging to the non-brahmin caste is considered as ‘thethi’ Maithili. For instance, one of the respondents said that she teaches her children to use Hindi at home, as she herself is not proficient in the variety of Maithili (pure) spoken by Brahmins in her in-law’s village. She does not want her kid to use ‘thethi’ Maithili with their grandparents, as it is not considered polite. This distinction between varieties is exemplified in the following excerpt.

P30: My child gets confused and uses ‘Tum¹¹’ instead of ‘Aap¹²’ in Maithili. This is the reason; I chose to speak and teach Hindi to him. Instead of making mistakes

¹¹ Tum – refers to second pronoun (you) when speaking to someone younger or of similar age, in Hindi.

¹² Aap – refers to second pronoun (you) when speaking to an elder person, in Hindi.

in Maithili, he will at least be speaking correctly in Hindi. It is also convenient to speak in Hindi. Maithili is a bit difficult to speak than Hindi if you want to learn pure Maithili.

Maithili was considered as a dialect of Hindi, and speakers' identity of Maithili was subsumed under Hindi. This could be one of the reasons for the lack of clarity about mother tongue reflected during the focussed group discussions and interviews. In some cases, when the participants were asked about their mother tongue, they reported Hindi. However, in the follow-up question about what language they use at home, participants would say Maithili. As a result, speakers have developed self-internalisation about their variety of Maithili as a non-standard variety of Maithili, and therefore, they report Hindi instead of Maithili. This can be seen from the following excerpt of a focused group discussion.

SP: What is your mother tongue?

Participants: Hindi (unanimously).

SP: What language you use with your mother at home?

Participants: Maithili (unanimously).

Lately, Maithili speakers try to maintain their culture and language by organising literary and cultural events such as Janaki Divas, Vidyapati Parv, Mithila Vibhooti Parv, Maithili literary festival, etc. They try to awaken the regional consciousness by associating it with Goddess Sita, known as Janaki in Mithilanchal. Institutions like Maithili Sahitya Akademi, Vidyapati Bhawan, have been established. Every year the birth anniversary of poet Vidyapati is celebrated by felicitating the young writers and poets for their works in Maithili. Recently, the Maithili literary annual festival was also conducted in Bihar. However, these literary events are restricted to the elite and educated class, and they do not reach the illiterate population.

6.5 RURAL VS URBAN

Maithili speaking population is more vital in rural regions than in Hindi, especially in Madhubani. Language is the key marker of their identity, whereas, for others, Maithili means belonging to the Mithila region irrespective of what language they speak. Indeed, Maithili-speaking people often self-identify themselves on the basis of geographical region and local cultural traditions. There is a history of migration in Bihar, where the people, especially those depending on agriculture, migrate to cities seeking employment (Datta & Mishra, 2011; Datta, 2016). According to Dorian (2001), “pursuit of economic advancement has often been a factor favouring assimilation, but more information about the outside world has made it a still more potent factor in recent times” (p.3). The migration often leads to people shifting to the dominant language of the region for gaining socio-economic mobility. The literature suggests that the migration from rural to urban correlate with speakers declining ethnic identity, which weakens or leads to a shift away from their native language (Dorian, 1981; Kulick, 1997). However, in the case of migrants from north Bihar, people identify themselves as Maithils based on their place of origin. The study about the effect of migration on the situation of Maithili is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it can be taken up as a project in future. Brahmins consider language to be an identity marker of their ethnic identity. For other non-Brahmin castes, language in conjugation with geographical regions demarcates their ethnic identity. In contrast, Muslim speakers view their geographical and rural settings rather than language as a key to their ethnic identity, even though they are bilingual to some extent. This suggests that ethnic identities depend on the circumstances to some extent.

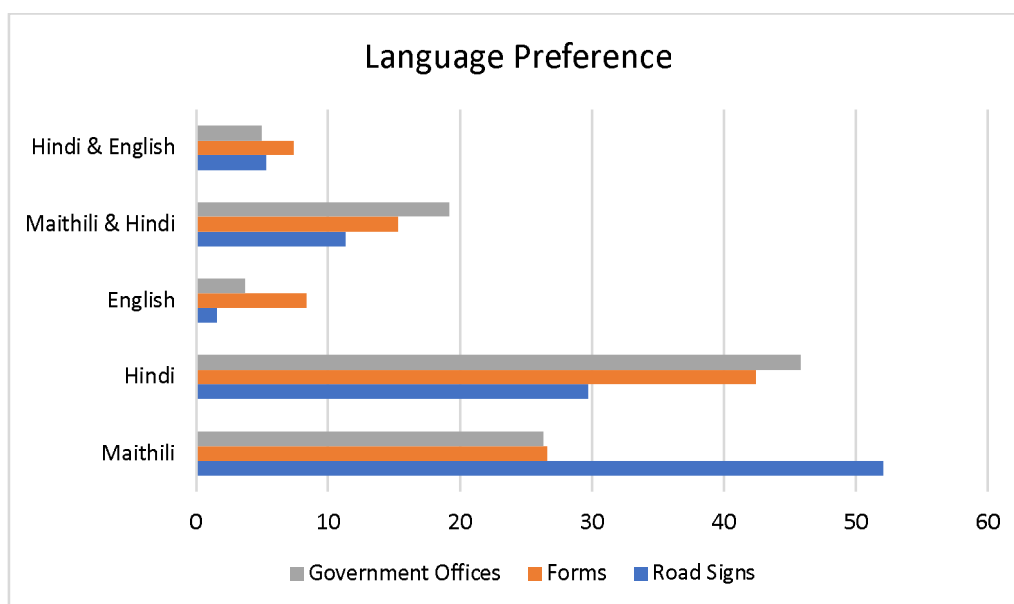
Other aspects such as gender and age also come into play and shape the language use patterns. For instance, in many rural areas, for instance, small children, women and older

generations continue speaking Maithili while other community members shift towards Hindi. In rural areas of Madhubani district, and Darbhanga, there is still a high degree of monolingualism among women with some mixing of Hindi. Young children are often monolingual Maithili speakers, however, as they grow up, they begin to learn Hindi in schools, and their proficiency in Maithili may decrease. Youth residing in towns in Darbhanga often prefer to speak Hindi with their friends in public. This is encapsulated by the following excerpt from a focussed group discussion.

Participants (unanimously): We use Hindi most of the time, and only with our close family we use Maithili.

Many college students opt to use Hindi for socialising and use English on social networking sites. This tendency is suggestive that the new generation is inclining towards Hindi and, to some extent English. Still, Hindi is dominant in these areas compared to English in the process of constructing a new identity for themselves. However, speakers want their language to be used in various domains to make it more mainstream and viable. This is illustrated in the graph below that depicts the response of speakers in the survey when asked about their language preference in various domains such as road signages, government offices, forms etc.

Figure 6.7 Percentage-Wise Distribution of the Responses



In the qualitative data, it was also observed that some participants feel that even though Bhojpuri is not an ES language, it has more viability as compared to Maithili in their region. Therefore, they feel that there should be more affinity from Maithili speakers towards Maithili, like Bhojpuri speakers. P58 expressed his concern in the following excerpt:

P58: You will hardly find Maithili songs being played in the neighbourhood. Instead, you will find Bhojpuri songs everywhere. The usage of Maithili has declined to such an extent that people barely speak good Maithili with their family members. People use a mixture of Maithili and Hindi in their homes and use Hindi outside.

Table 6.3 Community Members' Attitudes towards Language

Grade	Community Members' Attitudes toward Language
5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Most members support language maintenance.
3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.

Source: UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages (2003, p.15)

Based on the observations, it can be noted that the attitudinal shift of Maithili language is not taking place in the same trajectory for all the speakers, and it varies based on the factors discussed above. Thus, the Maithili language can be graded at 4 for this factor.

Summary: This chapter provides an overview of the language vitality of Maithili based on the seventh and eighth factors of UNESCO's LVE scale. From the analysis, it is conspicuous that the older generation of the speaker has more affinity towards the Maithili language. However, this chapter also sheds light on the indifferent attitudes of government towards the Maithili language. Although the attitude shift towards the Maithili language is not alarming at this stage, measures

should be taken to improve the condition of Maithili by increasing general awareness among speakers and by proper implementation of the existing policies.