

## 7 CONCLUSION

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One of the goals of this study was to understand the vitality of the Maithili language after its inclusion in the ES, as described in chapter 5. Previous accounts of the status of Maithili have been discussed in the context of the shift and the attitude of speakers towards the language before its inclusion. This study has also been intended to assess the vitality of the Maithili language along UNESCO's LVE framework to understand the effectiveness of ES inclusion of the Maithili language. Therefore, this study assesses the status of Maithili on different parameters to understand the factors which lead to shift or maintenance. Additionally, the goal was to understand how inclusion in ES helps a language in its development. Here, development is assessed based on its vitality and other parameters stated in the LVE framework of UNESCO.

The analysis of data based on the self-reported language proficiency indicates that the intergenerational transmission of Maithili is broken, which is reflected from the decline in the language proficiency in the age cohort (see chapter 5) that correspond to relatively younger respondents (15–25-year age group). Specifically, literacy transmission is declining at an alarming rate, which indicates the state of transitional bilingualism among the speakers. Factors 1, 4, and 8 have received the most nuanced treatment, and results are discussed in detail in chapters 5 and 6. The concept of intergenerational transmission is extended to the attitude and beliefs of the community members to understand the beliefs and opinions of the Maithili speakers towards their language. A generational shift in the attitude of the respondents (the second component of the research question was to investigate the role of attitude) is perhaps the most crucial factor affecting language shift in Bihar districts. Based on the analysis, there is a strong correlation between the factors of caste and religion and the speakers' attitude, which is also reflected in their linguistic behaviour.

Coming to Maithili's usage in different domains, findings indicate that Maithili is mainly used in the home domain by speakers of almost all age groups (see chapter 5). Apart from this, the usage of Maithili is marred by Hindi in other domains such as administration, mass media and education. Although Maithili is a constitutionally recognised language, the shift of Maithili speakers towards Hindi suggests that inclusion into the ES has so far been of not much help in maintaining the language. Constitutional recognition may help enhance the status of a language, but if a language is not associated with economic opportunities and school education, speakers get discouraged in maintaining it.

Further, the present study observes that bilingualism with Hindi has become apparent among Maithili speakers in Bihar. Some Maithili speakers have shifted to only speaking Hindi that is indicative of an unstable state of bilingualism. Maithili might not be at risk of mass shift or endangerment at present, but if necessary steps are not taken then, Maithili might experience endangerment in future. Maintenance of Maithili in the future is not possible without an active effort and the proper implementation of language policy and educational policy. The present study can serve as a model to understand that status planning in the form of inclusion is not effective until acquisition planning is taken into consideration.

## 7.1 THE CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The study has provided an insight into the case of Maithili, which is undergoing a shift despite its inclusion in ES. The study can be used to carry studies of language shift and maintenance on the other non-territorial ES languages that are succumbing to a similar fate. Considering that there are other language communities as well which are striving to get their languages included in the list, the study helps to understand that without proper acquisition planning and its implementation, the inclusion might not get the desired result of language

maintenance. The concept of intergenerational transmission can be extended to the attitude of the speakers as well, especially in the context of South Asian countries, where the ethnicity of speakers plays such a vital role in shaping speakers' language ideologies (Mitchell, 2010).

The study explores the concept of intergenerational transmission, which is primarily used in the field of language endangerment and revitalisation for languages with a large population size. Often, languages with large speaker strength are overlooked as safe and are supposed to be less likely to face endangerment. However, it has been suggested that it is not entirely true (Anderbeck 2013). Thus, taking this into account, the study has used the concept of intergenerational transmission for the case of Maithili language, which has a large speaker size to understand the process of shift, especially in multilingual contexts, where children are growing up learning their parents' language and learn another language in schools. Based on the results, it can be recommended that the maintenance of the Maithili language can be enhanced by improving the acquisition of Maithili in schools. Most importantly, Maithili is facing the broken transmission due to absence of proper acquisition planning which entails a lack of teaching materials, aid and teachers. This is one of the reasons for speakers' low literacy proficiency. Also, measures should be taken to work on the standardisation of language, making it easier to incorporate in the school and college syllabuses that will improve the literacy transmission of the language. As to the initiatives that the government should undertake, the study's findings can be extended in the light of NEP 2020 to encourage enrolment and generate more interest in the language and literature, which can result in holistic child development.

## 7.2 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPES

Any form of survey method does not adequately deal with the unawareness of speakers' definition of mother tongue, especially in a multilingually diverse society. In the case of Maithili,

many of the respondents reported Hindi as their mother tongue when asked about it. This was one of the reasons that interviewer-administered questionnaires along with interviews (FGD and unstructured interview) were employed to get a comprehensive picture of the situation of Maithili. The ideology of Hindi with nationalism is so deeply embedded in the minds of speakers, especially in the Hindi belt (i.e., Hindi speaking regions) people are more inclined to Hindi instead of their mother tongues (see Dalmia 1997; Rai 2003 for a detailed account). Moreover, it gives a perspective on how the socio-historical status of a language affects the speakers' attitude and language loyalty. In another instance, some Muslim speakers reported Urdu as their language due to the ideology of language and religion. Although they use Maithili or Hindi most of the time, they refrained from associating with either language. An instance from one of the focused group discussions, where a participant reported Urdu as their mother tongue, was refuted by the fellow participants, leading to a discussion (see chapter 5).

In a way, this helped in understanding the language ideology, which plays a vital role in the social identification of speakers. However, the common problem in sociolinguistic studies is over-and underreporting by participants, which can be taken care of by employing the participant observation method. Furthermore, the participant observation may help understand the nuances of social, cultural and political factors that affect the speakers' attitude and the dialectal variation of these languages, which might have been neglected (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004; Roses Labrada 2015).

The speakers develop the self-internalisation about the correct variety of a language. This is also one of the factors that hinder the transmission of Maithili. For instance, during fieldwork, the speakers belonging to non-Brahmin communities refrained from using Maithili due to inhibitions of making mistakes or not speaking the correct variety. These inhibitions have given

way to the acceptance and frequent use of Hindi in their households. The work can be refined by incorporating participant observation rather than using the self-reported questionnaire to get a comprehensive picture of the process of shift or maintenance, especially in rural settings that have a low literacy level. Along with the speakers' proficiency, the other factors can also be considered to improve the understanding of language transmission further.

Further studies can be done to compare language retention and intergenerational transference of the mother tongue rates between major demographic groups split by gender, age, education, occupation, caste and generation of immigration, etc., with a broader population sample size. In addition, the present study has not covered the impact of migration on the shift of the Maithili language, which can be taken up as a future project in continuation to the current study. Another promising direction for research would involve comparisons of results obtained in this research with data obtained for other regional languages such as Bhojpuri in Bihar or other non-territorial ES languages.

### 7.3 FINAL REMARKS

The above discussion does not make it easy to summarise the situation of Maithili and comment and generalise the result. However, it considers all these factors to give a comprehensive picture of the situation of the Maithili language. It is evident that Maithili is undergoing a shift, but it is not at risk of disappearing. Research on the Maithili language, one of India's ES languages, fills a gap in our knowledge that mere policymaking in the form of status planning does not help in the vitality of a language.