

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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A vast majority of languages worldwide are facing the crisis of language shift, which is the precursor of language endangerment. According to the *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* report (Eberhard et al., 2020), around 42% of the world's languages are endangered. Also, the report states that languages with institutional support are less prone to the risk of language endangerment. However, there are instances of languages such as Quechua (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004), Javanese (Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014), Catalan (Soler & Erdocia, 2020) and many others (Anderbeck, 2015; Berthele, 2020; Gholami, 2020) that are on the verge of endangerment despite official recognition and institutional support.

For the safeguard and promotion of languages, the Constitution of India has made special provisions in its Eighth Schedule (ES), which provides formal and Constitutional recognition to 22 dominant regional languages in the spheres of administration, education, economy and society (Sarangi, 2009). Language planning in India is done through the officialisation of languages by recognising a language as a scheduled language (Khuchandani, 1995). On the contrary, the non-scheduled languages are devoid of formal recognition and support. As a result, language communities want their respective languages to be included in the ES to ensure the benefits that come in the form of various institutional supports (Gupta & Abbi, 1995). This has led to many language movements for inclusion in the ES. For instance, initially, there were only 14 languages in the ES, which also shaped the linguistic reorganisation of Indian states (Benedikter, 2013). Over the years, several languages were added to the list as a result of their respective language movements (Annamalai, 1979; Mahapatra, 1979; Daswani, 1979; Brass, 2004; Sarangi, 2017). For instance, Sindhi was added in 1967 by 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment. After that, Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali

were added in 1992 by 71<sup>st</sup> Amendment. Similarly, Maithili, along with Bodo, Dogri and Santhali were added to the ES by 100<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 2003 (for further details, see chapter 2).

A substantial body of literature in the sociolinguistic context of India has focused on the debates over unfair treatment of unscheduled languages and the existing language hierarchy (Abbi; Gupta et al.; 1995; Sarangi 2009) in India. Hindi and English occupy the top position in the hierarchy, then ES languages followed by unscheduled languages. It is widely assumed that inclusion in the ES assures the increased status and development of a language. For instance, some of the privileges associated with the ES languages are that they are considered modern Indian languages. They are entitled to various benefits like assistance to authors, publishers for producing books to serve as textbooks, reading material related to various disciplines in education, and supplementary reading materials and reference books. These languages are also entitled to financial aids and support from the union ministry (Mallikarjun, 1995). With these benefits, the development of a language included in the ES seems quite apparent. However, it has been observed that some ES languages, especially non-territorial languages such as Sindhi (Daswani, 1972; Iyengar, 2013), Kashmiri (Bhatt & Mahboob, 2008), Santhali (Mohan, 2006), are shifting to the dominant language of their respective states. Thus, it becomes crucial to assess the effectiveness of the inclusion of languages in the ES. In literature, some studies explore the shift of languages using the approach of change in habitual language use in various domains (Krishnamurthy, 1982; Pandharipande, 1988; 1992; Srivastava, 1989; Ishtiaq, 1999; Mishra & Datta, 1999). However, the effectiveness of the inclusion has not been explored much from the perspective of vitality assessment and shift in the attitude of the speakers and their changed linguistic behaviour.

The present study aims to understand the vitality of the Maithili language after its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule (ES). It attempts to investigate the development of the Maithili language

on different parameters of vitality factors to understand the effectiveness of ES inclusion. Since Maithili was relegated to a dialect position of Hindi for a long time, so, it is interesting to explore whether inclusion has impacted the intergenerational transmission, the attitudinal shift of the Maithili speakers, and the usage of the Maithili language in different domains. For this purpose, fieldwork was conducted in the

### **1.1 GAP IN KNOWLEDGE**

At present, there are 38 languages in the queue for inclusion in the ES (Committee on Government Assurances, 2017<sup>1</sup>). In this scenario, it becomes essential to understand the current status of the ES languages, especially non-territorial ES languages that are already part of the list. With this kind of study, one can gain perspective about the effectiveness of inclusion in the ES, in the development and promotion of a language. Now coming to Maithili, which is a non-territorial ES language spoken mainly in North Bihar that has a fascinating history from being relegated to a dialect position of Hindi to establishing its identity as an independent language followed by the inclusion in the ES. The phenomenon of language shift of Maithili in North Bihar has been acknowledged in the literature (Boopathy 1992; Jha 1994; Kumar 2001). However, most of these studies have been conducted before the inclusion of the Maithili in the ES. Also, it has attracted the attention of anthropologists as well as political scientists interested in the complex caste-based identity of Maithili speakers in Bihar and marginalization of Maithili in the Hindi heartland, i.e., North India (Brass 1974; Khubchandani 1991; Bhurghart 1993; Dalmia 1997; Bhatia 2008; Abbi

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/65417/1/16\\_Government\\_Assurances\\_55.pdf](https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/65417/1/16_Government_Assurances_55.pdf)

2009). However, little work has been done from the perspective of sociolinguistic theory, particularly after its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Additionally, the effects of various socio-cultural factors such as caste and religion have not been explored in the context of language use in the literature. Also, the case of Maithili in the Indian context is scarcely mentioned in the international li

## **1.2 SCOPES AND OBJECTIVES**

The dialogue on language shift has focused chiefly on languages with minority status in terms of population size and unofficial status. Often small population size of a language community coupled with unofficial status is seen as the factor of language shift. A large volume of works in the Indian context address the shift of minority languages to dominant regional language at the state level, shift of minority languages to Hindi, particularly in North India, and shift of regional languages to English at the national level. The present research seeks to understand how far language policy in the form of inclusion of a language in ES helps affect speakers' attitudes towards their language. The attitude of the speakers is guided by the socio-historical status of the language in society. Maithili was marginalized as a dialect of Hindi for a long time. The Maithili speakers returned Hindi as their language in the census enumeration (S. Jha, 1994) as they considered Maithili as the colloquial form of Hindi and not a different language. The existing literature insinuates the negative attitude of the Maithili speakers towards their language for not being the language of economic advancement and high prestige. However, all these case studies are before the inclusion of the Maithili language in ES.

As mentioned earlier, many languages await that await their inclusion in the ES. In this context, the current work explores the status of the Maithili language and how well language policy in the form of inclusion in ES is reflected in practices. This study may serve as a model to understand

the factors contributing to increasing the vitality of a language and the predictors of language shift in the Indian context. The present research on the shift of Maithili language is among one of the few studies conducted in the context of indigenous languages with large speaker populations. The study also aligns with Anderbeck (2013) work in the context of Indonesian languages, where he challenges the common assumption of a language 'too big to fail'. The present study focuses on the factors such as the transmission of a language across generations, the attitude of the speakers and Maithili's usage in different domains contributing to the vitality of a language. The findings of this study can be used to enhance the effectiveness of ES inclusion further. It should be noted that an extensive study of the implementation of language policy is beyond the scope of the thesis. Based on this, the research objectives of the proposed study are:

1. To examine the transmission of the Maithili language across generations
2. To investigate the functionality of the Maithili language
- 3.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

A mixed-method approach based on UNESCO's (2003) Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework, as detailed in the next section, is used as an essential indicator to assess the status of a language. It indicates the direction of whether the language is being maintained or is heading towards shift. The study has undertaken the multi-dimensional approach to answer the following research questions:

1. Does inclusion in the ES affect the vitality of the Maithili language?
2. How inclusion affects the attitude of the Maithili speakers towards their language?
3. Does inclusion lead to a change in the linguistic behaviour of the Maithili speakers?

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

Studies in the Language Maintenance and Language Shift (LMLS) are based on Fishman's (1964) theoretical framework of habitual language use and domains of language use, which has influenced a large volume of work in the field in the past two decades (Dorian 1980; Paulstan 1994; Varhaeghe et al., 2019). The popular models for the status assessment of a language are Fishman's (1991) GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale), Brenzinger et al. (2003) LVE (Linguistic Vitality and Endangerment Scale), and Lewis & Simon's (2010) EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale). Fishman's GIDS is the first model of language status assessment, which focuses mainly on the intergenerational transmission as a key factor in the maintenance of a language (1991). Furthermore, it takes into account the level of disruption rather than the level of maintenance. This model was introduced almost three decades ago, and several shortcomings have surfaced in its application in the context of language development (see chapter 3 for details).

The latest framework in this series, EGIDS, which grades a language with a single rating taking into account all the factors of language assessment to classify the languages of Ethnologue (Lewis & Simons, 2010). Though the more objective perspective provided by EGIDS based on its 13 levels scale is to facilitate the generalisation of the language status, which are comparable across languages. However, it lacks the nuances of UNESCO's LVE framework that assess a language individually based on its nine distinct factors. According to UNESCO's LVE framework, a language has to be graded individually on each factor. However, it draws attention to the predictors that provide a clear understanding of the vitality of a language and helps identify the factors that are causing the shift of a language and need attention. This provides a more holistic picture of the situation of a language which is crucial to devising the measures to prevent shift. Thus, in the

present work, the process of shift has been studied using UNESCO's (2003) LVE framework, where the intergenerational transmission of a language is a key factor in assessing the direction of shift and maintenance of a language. The factor of intergenerational transmission of Maithili has been assessed using the concept of bilingualism to understand the direction of shift in the case of Maithili. Also, the study explores the attitude of the speakers across generations to understand the

### **1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

One of the significant methodological limitations of the present research is the restricted sample size which limits it to only two districts of Bihar, namely, Darbhanga and Madhubani. The study does not claim to generalize the results to the larger Maithili Speaking population living in the other parts of Bihar and also the Maithili speakers migrated from Bihar to other parts of India and abroad. However, the implications of the linguistic vitality framework for understanding the language maintenance and shift of Maithili and its outcomes about speakers' attitude towards their language, as a representative one with a large number of Maithili speakers. The limitations of the study are:

1. The sample selection method for the present research was simple random sampling for questionnaire survey and purposive sampling for interviews, which included focused group discussions (FGD) and unstructured interviews.
2. The present study was carried out among heterogeneous groups of the two selected districts for the present study.
3. The sample was limited to 380 participants for quantitative data collection and 62 for interviews, considering the effort and time needed to complete the project.

## 1.6 CHAPTERISATION

The research presented in this thesis aims to complement the current understanding of the language situation of Maithili. The subsequent discussion will mainly focus on the vitality of the Maithili language post ES inclusion and various factors affecting both shift and maintenance, in this case.

The outline of the thesis is as follows:

- Chapter 2 introduces the geographic, socio-historical, and political aspects of Maithili in the Indian context. It contains a review of the literature about the Eighth Schedule and situates the case of Maithili in the context of the sociolinguistic setting of India to give a comprehensive picture.
- Chapter 3 provides a review of the literature about the different approaches to LMLS study and provides the theoretical underpinning of the study.
- The methodology that has been employed, including both thematic and statistical tools used for the analysis, has been explained in Chapter 4. It also sets the contexts by providing all the statistical and demographic information required for the understanding of the subsequent analysis chapter.
- Chapter 5 summarises survey findings based on the concerning factors of the framework such as language proficiency, linguistic behaviour.
- Chapter 6 provides survey findings of institutional and speakers' attitudes towards the Maithili language.
- Chapter 7 concludes the study by providing an overall finding concerning research questions, interpretations derived from the analysis and other gaps, limitations of the study, and the future scope of the study.