1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the gradual shift of Maithili speakers to Hindi. The use of Hindi by Maithili speakers in most of the functional domains facilitates the formal shift from Maithili to Hindi. So far as the present study is concerned, it does not view the shift from Maithili to Hindi as evidence for the danger of losing Maithili or losing respect for the mother tongue by its speakers. The phenomenon of shift from Maithili to Hindi, as discussed in the subsequent sections of this paper, can always be argued for as evidence of code switching. On the basis of the fact that the domains of Maithili use are getting reduced day by day, I argue that the phenomenon observed in this study is evidence of language shift.

Maithili and Hindi form part of the Indo-Aryan family of languages. Hindi is the first official language of the Republic of India and is the major Indo-Aryan language. As per the available details from the 1991 census, it was the mother tongue of 37% of the total population of India. Hindi, being the first official language of India, is understood by nearly 55% of the total Indian population. Hindi is spoken by nearly 55% of the Indian population in most of the functional domains. This includes the native speakers of Hindi (according to the official census report) and the native speakers of most of the Indo-Aryan languages, such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Bajjika, Angika, Oriya, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Haryanvi, Gujarati, Marathi, etc. Khubchandani (1983) is of the opinion that Hindi is spoken for all practical purposes (i.e., in functional domains) by all whose mother tongue is any of the Indo-Aryan languages. Maithili, as the name indicates, is mainly the language of the residents of Mithila. According to modern geography, the entire
Mithila region is part of North Bihar. Bihar is one of the twenty-five states of India. Maithili is spoken by more than 16 million speakers in Bihar in the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Samastipur, Saharsa, Sitamarhi Supaul, Monger and Deoghar, and by more than 2 million speakers in Nepal. The current trends in the Maithili-speaking districts of Bihar show that Hindi is gradually replacing Maithili in formal (outside/functional) domains such as schools, offices, and even in the informal (home) domain such as family and informal communications.

Language shifts, taking place in various sociolinguistic contexts in India, vary in their nature and function. The first category includes the cases in which shift is from minority languages to the dominant majority language, for example, the shift from Maithili (a minority language) in India to Hindi. The second category includes the cases of the shift of immigrants’ languages to the regional languages of the place to which migration has taken place. For example, if a speaker of language A migrates to the place where language B is spoken, in this situation, the speaker of language A has to shift to language B.

This paper discusses the gradual shift of Maithili speakers from Maithili to Hindi. Maithili is a minority language, and Hindi the dominant language in India. This paper will attempt to establish certain sociolinguistic factors motivated by psychology and culture responsible for shift. The discussion is organized in two parts. The first discusses the earlier works done in the field of language shift, whereas the second part discusses the functional and formal dimension of reasons for shift from Maithili to Hindi.

2. Background
Recent work in the field of the study of language shift and language maintenance shows new trends that may reformulate the entire domain of the study. However, there are many questions that still require explanation. They are: what is meant by the terms language shift and language maintenance, and when is language shift believed to have taken place?

Pandharipande (1992) observes language shift as a process by which language A is replaced (partially or completely) by language B to the extent that the former becomes dysfunctional in one or more domains of its use. The concept of ‘domain’ is very helpful in explaining the phenomenon of language maintenance and language shift. Domains can be classified broadly as ‘home’ domain and ‘outside’ domain (i.e., when two different linguistic communities are in effective contact). The language of the larger domain is not in immediate danger of shift. It is usually the language of the restricted domain that is threatened. In contact situations it is difficult to maintain the language of the restricted domain if this is in effective contact with the language of the larger domain. Aima (1998) claims that the process of language shift cannot be thought to have taken place in this context because this kind of domain redistribution is a compulsion for the language in danger. The speakers of minority languages (particularly in case of migration) have no option but to shift to the language of the host community. We can say that language shift has taken place only when the shift is in the home
domain, which is usually impervious to language shift. Aima (Forthcoming), in his studies of Kashmiri migrants in Delhi, claims that socio-psychological factors are effective to the extent that the shift (from Kashmiri to Hindi) also takes place in the home domain.

There are two established paradigms of language maintenance and shift. Weinreich (1953) emphasizes maintenance and shift as a purely contact phenomenon, whereas on the other hand Fishman (1968) believes that the issue is deeply connected to social as well as psychological factors. Weinrich (1953) suggests three dimensions for the study of language maintenance/shift:

(a) A group may switch to a new language in certain functions but not in others. Therefore, it is important to consider the order in which this shift takes place.

(b) The order of shift should be studied in a contact situation where the mother tongue division is congruent with various other nonlinguistic divisions in order to allow for a differentiated response to the new language among various groups.

(c) Shifts, like interference, should be studied against time across generations.

Weinrich (1953) did not incorporate these suggestions into his studies and barely touched upon the problems of language maintenance and language shift, considering the matter of language shift as entirely extrastructural. Haugen (1953) shows a keen awareness of the socio-cultural setting of Norwegian-English contact, yet his study is primarily concerned with the analysis of the different aspects of borrowing and changes in the structures of the languages involved in contact.

Fishman (1972a) formulated a comprehensive model for a systematic inquiry into the field of language maintenance and language shift. He proposed three major topical subdivisions, namely:

(a) Habitual language use at more than one point in time or space under conditions of intergroup contact.

(b) Antecedent, concurrent, or consequent psychological, social, and cultural processes, and their relationship to stability or change in habitual language use: and

(c) Behavior toward language in the contact setting, including directed maintenance or shift efforts.

The first topical subdivision that concerns habitual language use at different points in time or space necessitates the location and measurement of bilingualism. This makes linguistic analysis of the speech of bilinguals an integral part of Fishman’s model. The second subdivision focuses on the past, and presents experiences of the speakers of the language of restricted domain and their relationship to language use. The last subdivision is concerned with attitudes toward and stereotypes of languages in contact.
In the case of habitual language use, the consequences that are of primary concern to the student of language maintenance and language shift are not interference phenomena per se, rather there are degrees of maintenance or displacement in conjunction with several sources and domains of variance in language behavior. The variety a speaker may choose at a given point of time depends on the medium (reading, writing, speaking), the interlocutor (male, female or old, young), the situation (formal, informal, or intimate), and the domain. Fishman (1968) defined domains as 'institutional contexts' and their congruent behavioral co-occurrences. It is a technique to categorize the major clusters of interactions and the language varieties used therein in complex multilingual settings. They enable us to understand that language choice and topic reflect socio-cultural norms and expectations. To quote Dittmar (1976:208): 'The construction of the domains is based on the following (macrolevel) consideration: if the stability of two language varieties depends on two complementary value systems being kept stable, then the latter must themselves be manifested in two complementary sets of domains in which one or other variety is clearly predominant.'

The domains to be investigated vary from community to community, and so does the role and relations within each community. The domains generally recognized for the study of language maintenance or shift are: family, playground, neighborhood, school, workplace, place of worship, literature, press, army, and government bureaucracies. An analysis of language use in different domains helps us in determining the dominance configuration. The analysis also indicates the direction of shift. The frequency and density of of the analysis indicates the direction of shift. The frequency and density of contact in different domains, and the desire to retain role-specificity, may sometimes act in opposite directions. Gumperz (1964a) shows how the Punjabis in Delhi still continue to retain their identity in spite of regular and frequent interaction with Hindi speakers. Though a code-switching style is emerging as a result of contact, Punjabi is kept sufficiently distinct from Hindi, which may be used in domains like public speeches when Hindi identity is called for. Gal (1979) points out that this aspect of language maintenance and shift has not received proper attention. Its merits, and the social processes responsible for the reallocation of linguistic variance to new speakers and new social contexts have generally been ignored. For instance, Rubin (1981) has shown how under changing social conditions, the same Paraguayan speaker used Guarani at home and Spanish in the courts.

The second major topical subdivision of Fishman's model is concerned with the study of social, psychological, and cultural processes related to language maintenance and language shift. The antecedent, concurrent, and subsequent variables will acquire significance according to the specific nature of the study. Weinrich (1953) lists the following ten variables: geographic obstacles, indigenousness, cultural or group membership, religion, sex, age, political/social status, occupation, and rural vs. urban residence. Haugen (1956) adds: family, neighborhood, political affiliation, and education. The duration of contact, frequency of contact, and pressures of contact derived from economic, administrative, cultural, political, military, historical, religious or demographic sources are also mentioned.
in the literature, Kloss (1966) isolates six factors favorable to language maintenance and language shift. Of these the first, religious-societal insulation is powerful enough to be a sufficient solitary factor assuring language maintenance. As in the case of minorities, a small religious group withdraws itself from the world around it and creates its own self-sufficient world, sometimes at a greater cost. Other important factors include time of immigration, existence of language islands, parochial schools, and pre-immigration experience. Kloss (1966) also lists several ambivalent factors. He emphasizes factors like population composition, residential segregation and isolation, occupational pressures, and age differences. Karunakaran (1983), who is interested in explaining language maintenance in some pockets of Kerala, suggests eight parameters. He shows how lack of job contact, education through the mother tongue, endogamous marriages, group living, non-migration, lack of competitiveness, preserving business secrets, and caste identity encourage language maintenance.

In almost all studies of language maintenance and language shift, it is extremely important to study the demographic patterns of the speakers of the language in danger. The social, cultural, religious, and historical background of the speakers of the language in danger will require careful investigation. A group may be illiterate or semi-illiterate without any tradition of education behind it. Its members might have migrated for purely economic reasons. In order to climb the economic ladder and join better professions, they have to learn the language of the host community. The moment their children enter educational institutions, the children learn not only the language of the host community but also their social and cultural patterns. Khubchandani (1983), in his study of the Sindhis in Poona, points out that Sindhis of the younger generation are shifting from Sindhi to Hindi and Marathi, the official language of the state of Maharashtra. They no longer recognize the difference in the different dialects of Sindhi. They speak less or no Sindhi in different domains, and their attitude toward Sindhi has become less positive than that of the Sindhis of the older generation. A similar kind of language-shift situation prevails in the case of migrants from Bihar to Delhi. Their children too hardly speak languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Magahi. In the case of the migrant community in Delhi from Bihar, the shift is not only from Maithili, Bhojpuri, or Magahi to Hindi, but also from the social and cultural patterns of Mithila, Bhojpuri, and Magadh. There is a huge difference between the attitude of the migrants and their children toward language and social and cultural patterns of their native place. So far as language identity is concerned, the children of the migrants have identified themselves with Hindi.

The patterns of marriage, the policy of the government, frequency and density of contact, etc., need to be examined in the context of the functional distribution of languages in contact. If the migrating group comes from a bi/multilingual background, it may not find it difficult to add one more language to its verbal repertoire. Processes of assimilation are not necessarily at the cost of losing the mother tongue. Whereas the minority group may acquire the language of the majority for getting employment, it may still use the native language in family and neighborhood. The way the host society reacts to the expectations of the immi-
grants sometimes becomes a powerful factor in the processes of language maintenance.

The impact of any of these factors on language maintenance or language shift is not unidirectional and constant. In fact, they overlap and interact with each other in a very complex manner. Their importance and the nature of the impact vary from community to community. For instance, Gal (1979) points out how generalization concerning the macrosociological causes of shift, e.g., industrialization, urbanization, loss of isolation, loss of national self-consciousness, loss of group loyalty, and several others as essential factors, fails to account for large numbers of cases, and many are too broadly defined and illusionist to be of value at all. For example, geographical proximity is generally said to reinforce language maintenance, since the group in contact can easily maintain social, political, cultural, and religious ties with its place of origin. Geographical distance may also reinforce language maintenance to the extent that it may increase group loyalty. Aima (Forthcoming) points out the importance of religious encapsulation in measuring language maintenance. On the other hand, group loyalty may continue with or without language, and does not enjoy the status of a symbol crucial to group identity. The vestiges of cultural ethnicity may remain for a long time even after the mother tongue is lost. Gal (1979) believes that to study the process of language shift, it is extremely important to find out answers to questions such as (1) how industrialization as a social factor affects language shift, and (2) how it affects the communicative strategies of speakers so that individuals are motivated to radically change their choice of language in different contexts of social interactions so that eventually they lose respect for their languages altogether? This paper does not view the shift from one language to another as a loss of respect for the mother tongue.

The third major topical subdivision of Fishman's model is concerned with behavior toward language, particularly with more focused and conscious behavior on behalf of either maintenance or shift per se. This involves investigation of linguistic and social stereotypes, and collecting systematic data about language consciousness and language-related perceptions of group-membership. The relationship between subjective and objective language behavior will vary from situation to situation.

3. Language shift: Dimensions, types, and motivation

Sociolinguists and sociologists have studied language shift from a variety of perspectives. The present study will present the two-fold dimension of language shift, i.e., the functional and formal dimensions. It is the formal dimension of language shift that gives birth to phenomena such as code mixing and switching, and it is the functional dimension that motivates such phenomena. It is important to understand the multilingual context of India in order to understand the nature and function of language shift. India is a multilingual country with 18 official languages. Linguists unanimously agree that two-thirds of the languages of the world are spoken in India. The languages spoken in India belong to four major language families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burman. Ty-
pollogically, these languages can be divided into two groups: verb final (SOV) and verb medial (SVO). The languages considered in this study, Maithili and Hindi, belong to the Indo-Aryan family. Both languages are verb-final (SOV) languages. India's multilingualism lies not only in the number of languages but also in the fact that the verbal repertoire of most of the speech communities consists of at least two languages. Of the 512 districts of India, there is hardly any in which only one language is used in all sociolinguistic contexts.

Language shift in India is taking place in various sociolinguistic contexts. The shifts are of different kinds. They vary in their nature and function. The different types of language shifts in India can be divided in two major categories. The first category includes those in which the shift is from minority languages to a dominant/majority language, e.g., the shift from Maithili to Hindi. The second category includes the cases of the shifts of migrants' languages to the regional languages of the place to which migration has taken place.

4. Analysis

4.1 Functional dimensions of the shift from Maithili to Hindi

Hindi is the official language of Bihar and also the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. In spite of being the mother tongue of more than 16 million people, the use of Maithili is confined to a restricted domain. The domains of language use can be broadly divided into two, i.e., formal situations and informal situations. Formal situations include school, office, public speeches, meeting with strangers, etc., whereas informal situations include religious gatherings, family meetings, meeting with a friend. The use of Maithili is restricted to informal situations only. The distinction between the two domains is such that in a formal situation even two Maithili speakers will switch over to Hindi. Hindi enjoys the same position in the Maithili-Hindi relationship that English enjoys in the Hindi-English relationship in India.

In almost all formal situations, native speakers of Maithili use Hindi. After a careful observation of all the formal domains, I have come to the conclusion that two Maithili speakers discussing politics, business, or any topic that would normally take place in formal situations invariably shift to Hindi or English (if they know English). That is to say, Hindi, being the marker of prestige, is unconsciously replacing Maithili even in some informal domains. Native speakers of Maithili do not consciously take part in this shift. Although even today they demand the inclusion of Maithili in the 8th schedule (a section dealing with languages) of the Constitution of India, at the same time there is no resistance against Hindi. One can even go so far as to say that native speakers of Maithili want education in Hindi or English rather than in Maithili, and still they demand the status of a national official language for Maithili. Maithili is their identity-marker. This is the language that reflects their culture in their speech. The reason why the speakers of Maithili want education in Hindi or English is that they do not want to be separated from the mainstream. Apart from the facts discussed above, mass migration to the cities, urbanization, and industrialization are playing
an effective role in the shift from Maithili to Hindi. These factors are very effective in restricting the domains of the use of Maithili. Hindi interferes even in informal domains like family (home) and meeting with friends, but native speakers still use uncontaminated Maithili in religious gatherings. The reason this is so is that religion is a very strong aspect of the society and culture of Maithili speakers.

I will discuss two types of Maithili to show the ongoing shift to Hindi. They are uncontaminated Maithili and the shifted variety of Maithili. People who are not in effective contact with Hindi, that is to say the people who do not take part in the formal domains, use uncontaminated Maithili. Even those who are in effective and regular contact with Hindi can use uncontaminated Maithili, but that would be a deliberate attempt on their part. Otherwise, people who are in effective and regular contact with Hindi will always use the shifted variety of Maithili. In my opinion, and in the opinion of some native speakers too, the shifted variety of Maithili is more natural to the native speakers of Maithili. The situation of Maithili in the Maithili speaking region is not the situation of the languages of the migrated communities. Maithili speakers do not have to shift to Hindi. Even in cases of migration, Maithili speakers feel at home with Hindi because that is not new for them, and they do not have to shift to Hindi in spite of Aima’s (Forthcoming) claim that the migrated community has no option but to shift to the language of the host community. Maithili speakers shift to Hindi in case of migration. To some extent this comes close to the observations of Aima, because for all practical purposes Maithili speakers speak Hindi in Delhi. Where I differ from Aima is that Maithili speakers still have an option to choose their language. They are not forced to speak Hindi. The only factor that motivates the selection of Hindi is again the use of Hindi in most of the functional domains. The situation of Maithili speakers in case of migration is totally different because Hindi is already there in certain domains.

Media, too, play a great role in accelerating the shift from Maithili to Hindi. It could be used as an argument in favor of the effective contact of Maithili speakers with Hindi. There are very few newspapers and journals in Maithili. If there are some, they are either weekly, fortnightly, or monthly. Similarly, there are not many radio and television programs in Maithili. The only radio station in the Maithili-speaking area is located in Darbhanga, the city which is known as the heart of Mithila, and it broadcasts in Maithili only 30 minutes daily and 60 minutes weekly. There is no news program available in Maithili. The nearest TV-transmission center is located in Patna, the state capital, and this center does not transmit a single minute in Maithili. Radio and television are very popular entertainment media. Thus, the newspapers and magazines that Maithili speakers get to read are in Hindi. The news and entertainment programs available for them on radio and television are in Hindi. That is how Maithili is gradually shifting toward Hindi. The domains of the use of Maithili are being reduced. The shift in the outside (formal) domain is quite obvious. The interference of Hindi in the home (informal) domain can also be felt. The very high frequency of occurrence of the shifted variety of Maithili, the low frequency of the occurrence of the uncontami-
nated Maithili, on the other hand, and the nonavailability of publications in Maithili are influencing the shift from Maithili to Hindi to a great extent.

4.2 Formal dimensions of the shift from Maithili to Hindi

The functional dimensions of the shift from Maithili to Hindi have influenced phenomena such as code mixing and code switching. The structures discussed below maintain the differences between language shift and code switching and mixing. On the basis of the data presented in this paper, one can argue that the phenomenon could always be called code switching. However, on the basis of arguments such as high frequency of occurrence of the shifted variety of Maithili, and very low frequency of occurrence of the uncontaminated Maithili, and unconstrained convergence, this is an ideal case of language shift. The shift has taken place at almost all levels of grammar. This paper discusses the shift only at the different syntactic levels. The following examples show the shift from Maithili to Hindi. The shifted variety of Maithili is termed Maithili-Hindi, and uncontaminated Maithili is called Maithili. The items in focus are in italics.

Examples (1-4) show that Maithili speakers use Hindi adverbs kahā ‘where’ and dhīre-dhīre ‘slowly’ instead of the uncontaminated Maithili forms kataya ‘where’ and game-game ‘slowly’.

Maithili:
(1) āhā kataya jāi chī
       you where go PRS
   ‘Where are you going?’

Maithili-Hindi:
(2) āhā kahā jāi chī
       you where go PRS
   ‘Where are you going?’

Maithili:
(3) game-game chal- u
   slowly walk IMP (formal)
   ‘Please walk slowly.’

Maithili-Hindi:
(4) -dhīre-dhīre chal- u
   slowly walk IMP (formal)
   ‘Please walk slowly.’

In the Maithili-Hindi examples (2) and (4), Maithili adverbs kataya ‘where’ and game-game ‘slowly’ are expected in place of the Hindi adverbs kahā ‘where’ and dhīre-dhīre ‘slowly’. The Maithili examples in (1) and (3) are illustrative. Adverbs are not easily borrowed into a language from guest code. The very presence of the Hindi adverbs kahā ‘where’ and dhīre-dhīre ‘slowly’ in place of Maithili adverbs kataya ‘where’ and game-game ‘slowly’ in the normal speech of Maithili speakers shows the shift in progress. The shift is purely the result of contact by native Maithili speakers with Hindi.
Examples (5-6) demonstrate that the Hindi verb stem baith 'sit' is used by Maithili speakers instead of Maithili bais 'sit', whereas the system morpheme is still from Maithili.

**Maithili:**

(5) āhā bais-u
you sit IMP (formal)
‘Please be seated.’

**Maithili-Hindi:**

(6) āhā baith-u
you sit IMP (formal)
‘Please be seated.’

Note that in examples (5) and (6) the effect of contact of Maithili speakers with Hindi is such that lexical items are being replaced. The same phenomenon is demonstrated by examples (7-8), in which the Hindi verb stems bol 'tell' and bhej 'send' are used in place of Maithili bāj 'tell' and pāThā 'send', respectively.

**Maithili:**

(7) bāj- u kdkā pāthā -u
say IMP (formal) who send IMP (formal)
‘Tell me please, whom should I send.’

**Maithili-Hindi:**

(8) bol- u kdkā bhej- -u
say IMP (formal) who send IMP (formal)
‘Tell me please, whom should I send.’

Maithili speakers in effective contact with Hindi in their day-to-day life in formal domains shift at the phrasal level, too. Instead of Maithili ām-ak pāt 'mango leaf' as in example (9), Maithili speakers use Hindi ām-ke pattā 'mango leaf' as in example (10).

**Maithili:**

(9) ek tā ām-a- k pāt lā- u
one classifier mango GEN leaf bring IMP (formal)
‘Please bring a mango leaf.’

**Maithili-Hindi:**

(10) ek tā ām- ke patta lā- u
one classifier mango GEN leaf bringIMP (formal)
‘Please bring a mango leaf.’

Examples (11-12) illustrate similar cases in which the Maithili phrases bad kāl 'long time' and bāt johā 'to wait', as in (11), are replaced by Hindi bahut samaya 'long time' and rastā dekhā 'to wait', as in (12).

**Maithili:**

(11) bad kāl tak ham āhā-k baṭ joh-al-aun
very time until I your GEN wait PST-ISG
‘I waited for you for a long time.’
Maithili-Hindi:

(12) bahut samaya tak ham āhā-ke rastā dekh-al-aunān very time until I your GEN wait PST-1SG(HON)

‘I waited for you for a long time.’

Note that the genitive case marker in Maithili is k, while the same markers in Hindi are ka/ke/ki which vary in agreement with the number and gender of the following noun. We have Maithili genitive k in examples (9-11) but in the shifted variety of Maithili we have the Hindi genitive ke. So far as genitive agreement is concerned, Maithili speakers consider patā ‘leaf’ in (10) and rastā dekhā ‘wait’ in (12) as complete and subsequently plural. This is why in the shifted variety of Maithili the genitive ke is always masculine plural.

The shift can also be seen at the level of functional categories like relative pronouns. Maithili does not have relative pronouns as in example (13). The regular contact of its speaker with Hindi has influenced the shift at the level of functional category too. In the shifted variety of Maithili, speakers use a relative pronoun such as je ‘who’ as illustrated in example in (14).

Maithili:

(13) ek ṭā baccā nab angā pahirne sojhā āy -al one classifier boy new shirt wearing front come PST

‘A boy who was wearing a new shirt appeared.’

Maithili-Hindi:

(14) ek ṭā baccā je nayā kamīz pahirne ch-al, one classifier boy who new shirt wearing be PST

sāmne āy -al appear PST

‘A boy who was wearing a new shirt appeared.’

It is difficult to predict at this stage of research whether the use of je ‘who’ in Maithili is influenced by the Hindi relative pronoun jo ‘who’ or is just the functional extension of the complimentizer je ‘that’, which is already there in Maithili. The Hindi complimentizer is ki ‘that’.

Let us consider some more evidence in favor of the shift from Maithili to Hindi in the following examples.

In (15) we have Maithili taregan ‘stars’, whereas in (16) we have Hindi tārā ‘star’. I would like to mention specifically in support of my claim of shift from Maithili to Hindi that Mishra (1990), who is a native speaker of Maithili, uses the shifted variety of Maithili in examples (16) and (18). The use of the shifted variety of Maithili in Mishra (1990) is evidence of the shift from Maithili to Hindi and is the result of regular and frequent contact of Maithili with Hindi.

Maithili:

(15) hamar -ā taregan dekhāi delak I DAT stars visible gave

‘I saw stars’ (Lit- I happened to see stars.)
Maithili-Hindi:

(16) hamar -ā tārā dekhai delak
1 DAT stars visible gave
‘I saw stars’ (Lit- I happened to see stars.)

(Mishra 1990:107)

Again, the Maithili phrase bar nīk ‘very beautiful’ has been partially replaced by a Hindi phrase bar sundar ‘very beautiful’ in (17-19). The gradual shift is obvious here. First it was replaced by bar sundar ‘very beautiful’, as in (18), and later by bahūt sundar ‘very beautiful’, as in (19).

Maithili:

(17) bar nīk phūl chai
very beautiful flower is
‘It’s a beautiful flower’

Maithili-Hindi:

(18) bar sundar phūl chai
very beautiful flower is
‘It’s a beautiful flower’

(Mishra 1990: 113)

Maithili-Hindi:

(19) bahūt sundar phūl chai
very beautiful flower is
‘It’s a beautiful flower’

Note that in (18) the phrase bar sundar ‘very beautiful’ consists of two lexical items: bar ‘very’ and sundar ‘beautiful’. Here bar ‘very’ is a Maithili item, whereas sundar ‘beautiful’ is Hindi. In (19), the whole phrase bahūt sundar ‘very beautiful’ is Hindi.

In (21) we have hae ‘is’, the Hindi auxiliary verb in the present tense, in place of the Maithili present auxiliary ai ‘is’, as in (20).

Maithili:

(20) hamar -ā ek bīghā zamīn ai
1 DAT one big piece land have
‘I have a big piece of land’

Maithili-Hindi:

(21) hamar -ā ek bīghā zamīn hae
1 DAT one big piece land have
‘I have a big piece of land’

In example (21) the Maithili present auxiliary ai ‘is’ as in (20) is replaced by the Hindi hai ‘is’. Note that the use of the Hindi present auxiliary verb in the shifted variety of Maithili is evidence of shift at the level of auxiliaries.

The data presented for the discussion of the shift from Maithili to Hindi show the difference between the uncontaminated Maithili and the shifted variety. They demonstrate the gradual shift from Maithili to Hindi at the formal (structural)
level. The difference between the structures of uncontaminated Maithili and the shifted variety could be taken to represent the phenomenon of mixed/switched code in which Maithili speakers are mixing Hindi. But in the literature on code mixing/switching, it has been argued that mixing/switching does not take place at the level of adverbs, case markers, relative pronouns, and auxiliaries. The data presented in this paper for discussion show that in the shifted variety of Maithili, speakers are shifting at the level of adverbs, case markers, relative pronouns, and auxiliaries. On the other hand, the functional dimensions of the shift from Maithili to Hindi show that the domains of Maithili use are being reduced. Hindi is used by Maithili speakers in functional domains (formal situations). It has also been argued that Hindi is sometimes used also in informal communications. That is to say, the frequent and regular interaction of Maithili speakers with Hindi is influencing the shift from Maithili to Hindi. Thus, on the basis of arguments like limited domains of Maithili use, day-by-day reduction of the domains of Maithili use, and the influence of these at the formal (structural) level, I argue that Maithili is shifting toward Hindi and the phenomenon is not simply code mixing/switching.

5. Conclusion

The shift from Maithili to Hindi is unintentional and purely the result of contact. Maithili speakers are not deliberately shifting to Hindi. Rather their regular and frequent interaction with Hindi is influencing the shift at the formal level. Hindi is used by Maithili speakers in all functional domains, as it is the first official language of India and the official language of the state of Bihar (the native place of Maithili speakers). The use of Hindi in functional domains provides a suitable environment for the shift at the formal level, which cannot be viewed as a case of code mixing/switching, since the shift is taking place at different levels of grammar at which code mixing/switching either does not take place at all or is not common.

NOTES

1 Apart from English, Khasi, which is spoken in the state of Meghalaya and genetically belongs to the Austro-Asiatic family, is the only SVO language of India.

2 By ‘people who are not in effective contact with Hindi’, I mean the people who do not move out of their villages. In other words, even when the world is marching toward the 21st century, there are people in Maithili-speaking areas who generally do not visit cities where the other domains are located. They are generally the poor and/or the religious priests. To investigate the reason why they do not move to the cities requires further research. To mention a few reasons, poverty and illiteracy are prominent ones.
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