

MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE CONTACT IN MAITHILI: TRENDS, TRAITS AND IMPACT IN SOCIOLINGUISTIC SPACES

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This paper presents various trends, traits and impact of language contact in Maithili language spoken in the Kathmandu valley. The data were gathered through survey and key informant interviews with Maithili speakers and focused-language contact observations in the communities in various parts of the Kathmandu valley. Drawing on such data, this paper reports the expanding instances of language contact among the speakers of Maithili. It also illustrates causes and impacts of language contact in the rapidly emerging multilingual sociolinguistic spaces, especially in the Kathmandu valley. The findings showed that the Maithili native speakers living in Kathmandu had higher instances of language contact with Nepali and English, especially in the formal situations. Such practices were influenced and shaped by their ideological orientations towards globalization and willingness to attend to the emerging diverse contexts caused by the growing migration.

Keywords: Maithili, intergenerational shift, language use and attitude, language politics, multilingualism

1. Introduction

Maithili is one of the major Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Nepal and India by nearly 35 million people, comprising 3.09 million people in Nepal (11.7 % of Nepal's population (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012) and 31.90 million people in India (Epele et al. 2012). In Nepal's case, Maithili is the major language in Madhes province followed by Bhojpuri and Bajjika, among several other languages. In Mithila¹ several dialects of Maithili are in practice, which relates to (though indirectly) the social class/caste indicators. Looking back to the history, not only in the Mithila region, but this language has also been used in the Kathmandu valley, and was used as one of the languages of the court during Malla period² (Malla 2015:14). Maithili language is equally rich in its literature, as several literary works (especially dramas and songs) and inscriptions in Maithili are still preserved at the National Archives in Kathmandu.

¹ Mithila is a geographical and cultural space that is dwelled by majority Maithili speaking population. It is traditionally understood as a territory ruled by King Janak.

² Malla period is the time (1201-1779) during which Kathmandu was ruled by the Malla dynasty.

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Due to the expansion of migration of the Maithili-speaking people to the Kathmandu valley, there has been significant changes in language use, which shows rapidly emerging multilingual language contact spaces. After the establishment of multiparty democratic system in 1990, a huge number of Maithili-speaking population increased in the Kathmandu valley (hereafter Valley) as the capital city has become the center for internal migration. Although this study centers around language contact in Maithili, such scenario is equally observable in other languages as well caused by rapid migration. This migration is instigated by socioeconomic, political, educational and geographical reasons. Table 1 shows the increment of Maithili-speaking population in the Valley.

Table 1: Maithili population in Kathmandu valley in two censuses

	Districts	2001			2011			Increment Percentage
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	
1.	Kathmandu	5927	4351	1576	36929	24966	11963	72.04%
2.	Lalitpur	2290	1627	663	11905	7976	3929	67.70%
3.	Bhaktapur	569	401	168	3340	2214	1126	70%
Grand Total		8786	6379	2407	52176	35156	17018	71.11%

Source: CBS (2002) & CBS (2012)

The data in Table 1 shows the massive migration of Maithili people in the Valley in recent years. From 2001 to 2011 we can see a large number of people migrating to the Valley. For instance, Kathmandu had 72.04%, Lalitpur had 67.70% and Bhaktapur had 71.11% increase in Maithili speaking population. The average increment rate is 71.11% in the Valley between the two censuses (2001 & 2011). As language is an important part of people's life and identity, migration of Maithili-speaking population means migration of linguistic capital and resources that has significant impact in the linguistic and cultural situation of the Valley. Such migration of people speaking other languages such as Tamang, Tharu, Rai, Limbu and so on has made the Valley a truly multilingual space, making it a place that is cosmopolitan and complex sociolinguistic context. In such a context, contact among several languages is natural, and there is a likely chance that the languages influence each other in several respects, such as speakers' use and attitudes. Although there are a handful studies available reporting attitudes to native language use and attitudes (e.g., Gautam 2020; Gautam 2022; Poudel & Choi 2021), research on the impact of language contact among Maithili-speaking population has not been available yet. This research addresses this gap, reporting the trends, traits and impact of language contact in Maithili in the Valley.

2. Research methods

This research draws mainly on the quantitative and qualitative data collected through a survey questionnaire³, qualitative interviews and observation. The questionnaire was initially in English, which was translated into Nepali and administered to the informants in

³ Developed in 2014 by the first author in DDL (Dynamique du Langage), France.

the Kathmandu valley. The data were collected in 2016 and 2017 and were a part of the data collected for Faculty Research Grants supported by University Grants Commission, Nepal.

The questionnaire included 45 questions, including questions collecting metadata information and questions about language use and attitude. The informants were asked the languages they use except their mother tongue in different activities and situations such as cultural activities, casual communication. The data were analyzed and interpreted considering recent developments in language contact, pertinent ideologies and sociolinguistic studies. Following the survey in four community contexts, four key informant interviews (Henceforth, KII) were carried out covering at least one KII from each of the communities where the survey was conducted. They were asked their language use in several of their functions, and their attitudes regarding their mother tongue as well as other language use in their community.

The data were collected from the Maithili native speakers, who belonged to the different status of their familial and professional roles such as housewives, teachers/academicians, politicians/language activists, businessmen/shopkeepers, workers/vendors, and students. All the informants were categorized into three age groups: A1 (15-30), A2 (31-55), and A3 (56 and above) in order to find out the impact of language contact and shift between the various generations. The gender and the marital status of the participant was also taken into account while making a purposive selection. The names of the informants in KII have been anonymized for privacy, and pseudonyms are used. Table 3 briefly presents the demographic details of the informants. Among the 45 informants, there were 16 males, 29 females, of which 28 were married and 17 were unmarried. Similarly, 21 were of A1 age group, 18 were A2, and 6 were A3 age groups.

Table 2: Selection of informants

Particulars	Number of informants	Places they lived in
Kathmandu	22	Balkhu, Gaushala, Maitidevi, Kalimati
Lalitpur	12	Pulchok, Kupondol, Balkumari
Bhaktapur	11	Thimi, Suryabinayak

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are presented in thematic terms and are supplemented with the quantitative data in tables and figures which illustrate the key traits, trends and impacts of language contact in Maithili in the Kathmandu valley. These thematic findings were developed while coding the data iteratively by both authors.

3.1 Traits of language contact

By traits of language contact, we are referring to several features of the evolving nature of language use in the language contact situations. It also represents emerging patterns of language contact among the speakers of Maithili living in the Valley. The sub-sections below illustrate these concerns.

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3.1.1 Language use in informal situations and activities

Maithili speakers living in the Valley use various languages in various formal and informal situations which comprises several behavioural and personal activities. Behavioural activities in this research mean the activities which show the different behavior of the informants. These activities include the activities like making friends, different reading and writing activities, making telephone calls, talking with different people, shopping, attending exams and so on. Table 3 illustrates the patterns of language use in different behavioural activities.

Table 3: Patterns of language use in behavioural activities

Domains		Languages				
		Maithili	Nepali	English	Hindi	Others
1.	Making friends	77.77%	71.11%	24.44%	35.55%	2.22%
2.	Reading/ writing	17.77%	84.44%	57.77%	2.22%	
3.	Getting job	17.77%	73.33%	51.11%	4.44%	2.22%
4.	Making telephone calls	77.77%	75.55%	22.22%	28.88%	
5.	Shopping	60%	86.66%	6.66%	42.22%	2.22%
6.	Attending exams	2.44%	71.11%	44.44%	6.66%	
7.	Communicating with workers	66.66%	64.44%	1.11%	40%	
8.	Communicating with teachers/ professors	15.55%	82.22%	51.11%	4.44%	2.22%
9.	Communicating with academicians	26.66%	86.66%	44.44%	17.77%	2.22%

Source: Field study (2017)

Table 3 shows that Nepali language is used in most of the domains in comparison to Maithili, English and Hindi. The influence of English is much higher than that of Hindi because of education, globalization and tourism among the Maithili people living in the Valley. In contrast, Maithili is used widely for making friends, telephone calls and talking with workers rather than other activities. The use of English is very high for academic uses such as reading/writing, attempting exams, seeking/getting jobs and talking with teachers and academicians. These diverse uses of languages are linked with the status of these languages. For instance, English as a language of education has been expanding, followed by Nepali so the speakers used these two languages in such purposes more than their mother tongue Maithili. The data also shows that English is rarely used for informal activities such as joking, singing, praying, and telling stories, to name a few. This reflects the role of English as a foreign language situation. It is also to be noted that the language use choices are related to individual informants' personal and interpersonal activities. They include activities like joking, singing, praying, bargaining, abusing, telling stories and so on.

Figure 1 below illustrates further elaboration of some of the patterns of language use in various personal activities among the Maithili speaking community in the Valley.

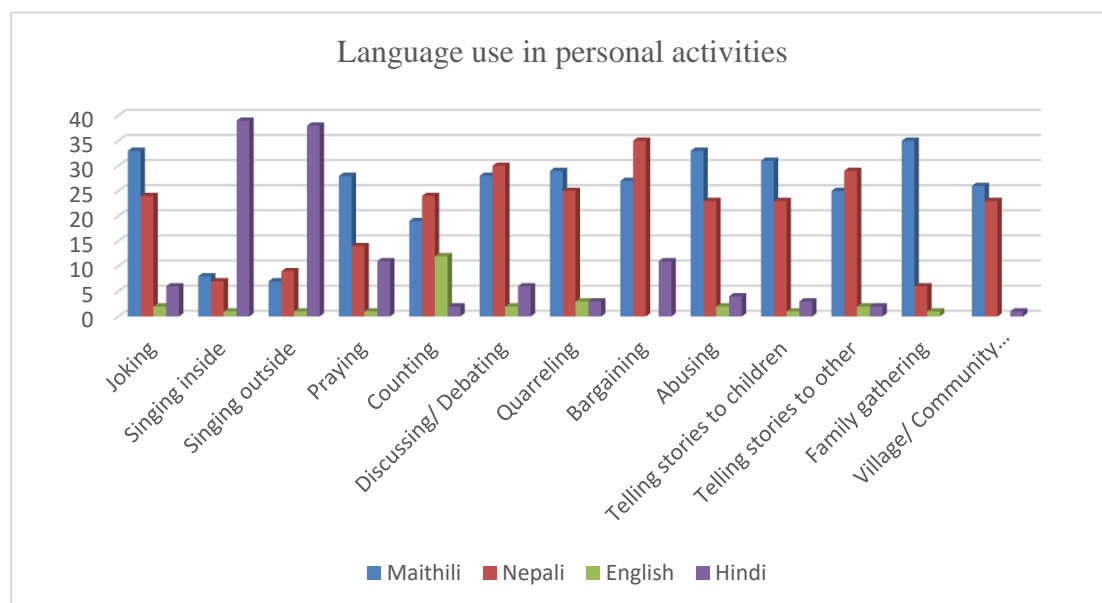


Figure 1: Language use in personal activities

Figure 1 shows that the use of Maithili, Nepali and Hindi languages are simultaneously used in most of the personal activities like singing, praying, telling stories, village gatherings and meetings which are similar to other studies in Kathmandu valley (Gautam 2017; Gautam 2021a; Gautam 2022).

3.1.2 Formal situations and activities

Language choice and use in formal spaces such as offices, educational institutions, business centers and so on differ from those of home and other informal situations and activities. Table 4 below shows Maithili native speakers' use of language(s) in the domain of formal situations/activities.

Table 4: Patterns of language use in formal activities

Activities		Languages			
		Maithili	Nepali	English	Hindi
1.	Office/ workplace	17.77%	77.77%	28.88%	4.44%
2.	Political/ social gathering	31.11%	73.33%	8.88%	15.55%
3.	Public activities/ fun fair	40%	75.55%	4.44%	11.11%
3.	Administration	4.44%	88.88%	6.66%	4.44%
5.	Dealing with strangers	37.77%	82.22%	6.66%	24.44%

Source: Field study (2017)

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As presented in Table 4, the use of the Nepali language dominated others in all the situations and activities. However, Maithili was also used minimally in the activities related to office/workplace, political/social gatherings and many public activities working places. Maithili is strong in public activities (40%) and social gatherings (31.11%), yet it occupies very little space in the activity of administrative works (4.44%). English is found more influential compared to Hindi in formal situations/activities (i.e., 28.88%), whereas Hindi was used more in communicating with strangers (i.e., 24.44%). These trends of language use indicate language shift pattern towards Nepali and other languages from Maithili in the city areas. We could see the highest level of the use of Nepali language in almost all the situations and expanding use of Hindi and English among the speakers, rather than Maithili.

3.1.3 Religious and cultural activities

Religious and cultural activities are those which are observed and performed by the Maithili people in order to demonstrate and preserve their religious and cultural values. These activities include birth ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, and religious and cultural festivals. Table 5 shows the language use among the Maithili native speakers in various religious and cultural activities.

Table 5: Patterns of language use in religious/cultural activities

Activities		Languages			
		Maithili	Nepali	Hindi	English
1.	Religious festival	84.44%	22.22%	2.22%	
2.	Cultural programs	66.66%	60%	11.11%	
3.	Death ceremonies	86.66%	22.22%	13.33%	2.22%
4.	Marriage ceremonies	86.66%	28.88%	11.11%	
5.	Birth ceremonies	86.66%	24.44%	8.88%	
6.	Cultural festivals	80%	44.44%	17.77%	

Source: Field study (2017)

Table 5 indicates that Maithili was dominantly used in religious and cultural activities. The highest use of Maithili was found in the birth, death and marriage ceremonies. Its use was relatively lower in the religious and cultural activities (i.e., 84.44% and 66.66% respectively). The Nepali language also occupies significant position in the activities related to the religious festivals, cultural programs, death rites and rituals, marriage, birth ceremonies and cultural festivals among the Maithili native speaking population. The data showed that highest use of the Nepali language was observed in cultural programs (60%) followed by its use in cultural festivals (44.44%). Although the influence of Hindi can be observed in their language use, it is minimum (less than 20%).

3.2 Language contact and intergenerational shift

Multilingualism, language contact and language shift are the inherent phenomena in every multilingual community context such as Kathmandu. Language shift is the process by which a speech community in a contact situation (i.e., consisting of bi/multilingual speakers) gradually stops using one of its two languages in favor of the other (Fishman 1991). The causal factors of language shift are generally considered to be social, cultural and geographical (Gautam 2019). In the Maithili speaking community living in the Valley, different patterns of language use were observed. Table 6 demonstrates the use of various languages among the Maithili mother tongue speakers while communicating with family and friends.

Table 6: Patterns of language use in family and friends

Family and friends		Languages					
		Maithili	Nepali	More Nepali than Maithili	More Maithili than Nepali	Maithili and English	Maithili and Hindi
1.	Father	82.22%	2.22%	2.22%	2.22%		2.22%
2.	Mother	84.44%	2.22%	2.22%			2.22%
3.	Brothers	68.88%	2.22%	8.88%	8.88%		2.22%
4.	Spouse	46.66%	2.22%	8.88%	6.66%		
5.	Friends at home	33.33%	13.33%	6.66%	24.44%	2.22%	2.22%
6.	Friends outside	8.88%	26.66%	8.88%	26.66%	2.22%	2.22%
7.	Neighbours at home	33.33%	15.55%	13.33%	17.77%	4.44%	2.22%
8.	Neighbours outside	20%	26.66%	4.44%	24.44%	4.44%	2.22%

Source: Field study (2017)

Table 6 indicates that the Maithili speakers used this language with family members, especially while communicating with parents, siblings and spouse. However, Nepali and Maithili are found in parallel use among the people of this language group while communicating with friends at home as well as outside home. This shows that Maithili and Nepali sidelined other languages such as Hindi and English in their family communication. The Nepali language is dominantly used among friends at home and outside as compared to other domains. This shows that there is language shift from Maithili to Nepali among the Maithili native speakers of the Valley.

Language shift, sometimes referred to as language transfer or language replacement or assimilation, is the process whereby a speech community of a language shifts to speak another language, usually over an extended period of time. The language shift may have different effects on language community, such as turning the community a highly multilingual. There may be cultural shift along with language shift; and some different

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language(s)/codes can emerge. Language shift is one of the effects of globalization that also enabled rapid labour migration inside and outside of the country, thereby generating complex multilingual sociolinguistic spaces. In such emerging contexts, one significant concern in the study of language contact is related to how people are transmitting languages from one generation to the next. In this regard, it would be relevant to see whether (and how far) the speakers of new generation are adopting their mother tongue or using another/additional language/s. The data from KIIs and informal observations in this study revealed that in Maithili speaking community, the members of older generation often use the Maithili language whereas it is less used by the members of younger generations. For example, a Maithili speaker (70) of Saptari living in Gaushala, while talking about intergenerational language shift said, '*ke chha ki sar, haami ta bolinchha ni tara aailekaa keṭakeṭiharu bolnai mandainan; ajjha borḍing paḍhneharu ta Englishma bolchha*' [The reason, we speak Maithili, but our children do not want to speak this language, even those who go to boarding school speak English instead of Maithili] (Interview, July 2017). This is evident in the quantitative analysis as well. For example, in the activities of telling stories to children as well as others, use of Maithili was found absent in the age group of 15-25 years – even though the old generations are still using these languages for the same purpose. However, we do not argue that this data erases the mother tongue use among young generation, rather we see a trend of sidelining the mother tongue by younger generation. In some cases, the younger generation (15-25 years youths) were found using the mother tongue in all the personal activities. Despite such use of Maithili, it was found that the mother tongue use among the new generation is gradually diminishing, and they are more inclined towards using the dominant languages such as Nepali and English in their daily and familial activities and events. Among many, some of the reasons for such trends are impact of globalization, business and communication as well as widespread use of English and Nepali in technology and the media.

3.3 Language attitudes and multilingualism

A set of open questions were asked in the survey to understand the informants' most favourite language. Figure 2 shows the responses of the informants in which about 69% of them replied that Maithili is the most favourite language. About 27% responded that Nepali is the most preferred language and only 4% responded that Hindi as their favourite language. This shows that Maithili is still popular language among the migrated Maithili speaking community in Kathmandu valley.

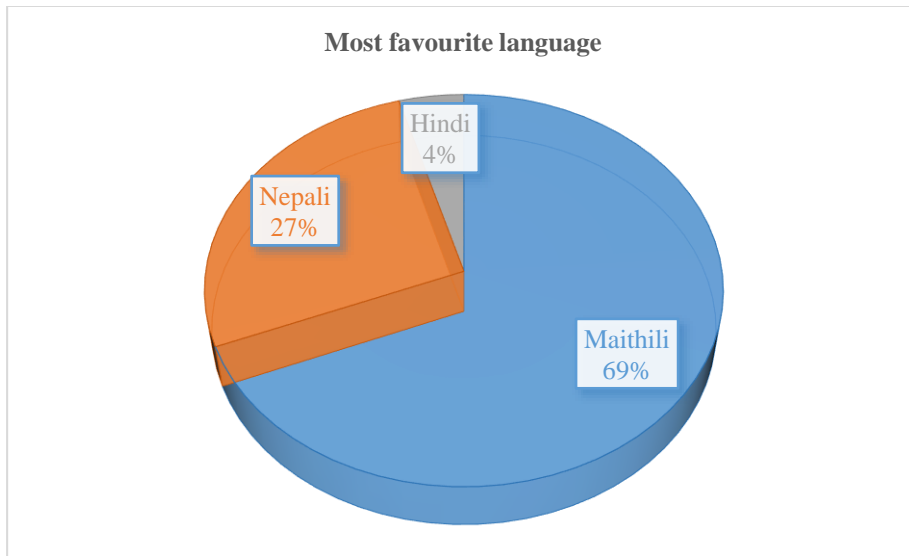


Figure 2: Language preferred the most

At the same time, the informants were asked the reasons for using Maithili. There are various responses from the different informants which are presented in Figure 3 below.

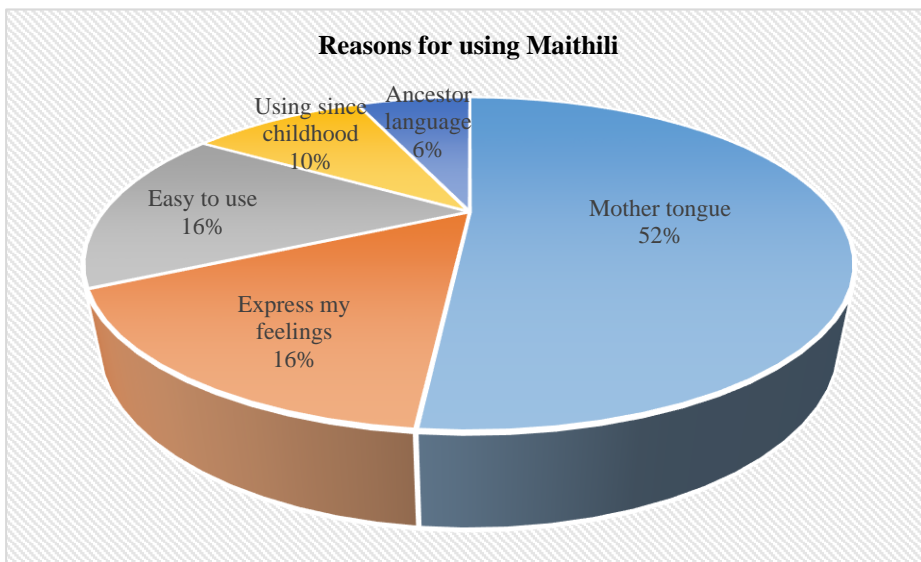


Figure 3: Reasons for preferring Maithili

Similarly, the informants were asked about their reasons for using Nepali, the official and contact language of Nepal. They responded differently. Figure 4 presents the responses to the question "Why do you like to use Nepali?"

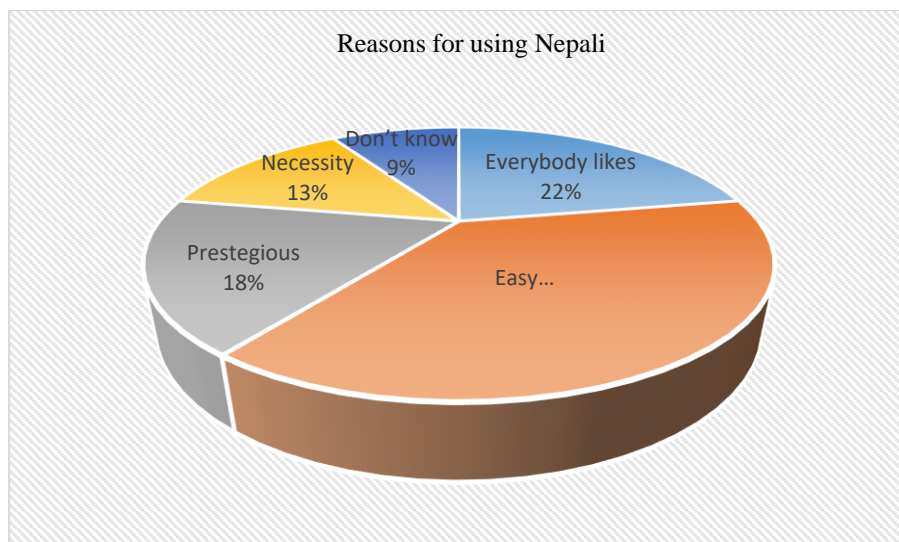


Figure 4: Reasons for using Nepali

Figure 4 indicates different orientations for using the Nepali language among the Maithili speakers. A total of 38% of the informants responded that Nepali language was very easy to use and understand while 18% of them responded that the prestigious position of Nepali, especially being an official language, was the reason for their motivation. Some (22%) replied that they choose Nepali because everybody uses it around them and its use in the official purposes such as writing applications for jobs.

3.4 Motivation

A set of questions were administered to the informants in order to understand the motivation towards Maithili and Nepali language. One of such questions was, "If there are two people coming to work at your place having same skills and experiences, one speaks Maithili and another speaks Nepali, whom would you choose?" More than half of the informants responded that they choose the one with the mother tongue whereas slightly more than one-third of the informants preferred either (Nepali or mother tongue). Regarding other reasons for language choice, the people who chose Maithili said that it is very easy for them to communicate and handle because of cultural and ethnic similarity. They also said that their mother tongue works as a tool to maintain social and cultural solidarity among the language users.

Besides, people are more motivated to learn the languages of wider communication (in terms of population and space) instead of the home language, especially in the workplaces. While using the mother tongue at home and family, the Maithili people have the feeling that their language is for regulating their own cultural and religious activities. Despite this, they raise question over the practical relevance of their mother tongue in formal, official and administrative situations as well. As the use of local language is found less in the case

of formal situations and activities, people have the tendency of thinking that Nepali occupies the higher position than their mother tongue. This sort of feeling can be found even though they use mother tongue at home and within the limited social surroundings. As it is observed in the interviews and KIIs, the growing shift to Nepali, Hindi and English language is because of their widespread use and applicability in the formal situations, media, education and other formal fields in the nation. The narratives of the respondents belonging to diverse socio-economic backgrounds demonstrate that their shifts to Nepali and English language are mostly related to fulfilling the pragmatic purposes.

3.5 Media, migration and marriage (M3)

Among the various impacts and causes of language contact in multilingual urban communities media, migration and marriage are the most influential in Nepalese context (Gautam, 2018).

3.5.1 Media

Media and entertainment activities are related to the activities used in listening to radio and music, reading newspapers and watching different programs in the television. Table 7 shows the use of language by the Maithili mother tongue speakers in the activities under the domain of media and entertainment.

Table 7: Patterns of language use in media and entertainment

Activities		Languages			
		Maithili	Nepali	English	Hindi
1.	Watching movie/ serial	15.55%	40%	22.22%	82.22%
2.	Watching news	17.77%	80%	15.55%	71.11%
3.	Listening to music	37.77%	40%	15.55%	84.44%
4.	Listening to news	44.44%	75.55%	4.44%	40%
5.	Listening to interviews	37.77%	77.77%	8.88%	37.77%
6.	Reading newspapers	19.99%	80%	22.22%	8.88%
7.	Reading horoscope	13.33%	71.11%	11.11%	19.99%

Source: Field study (2017)

In the activities under media and entertainment, Maithili, Nepali and Hindi have occupied space among the Maithili mother tongue speakers. Maithili is found to have occupied a notable space in listening to music, listening to news, and listening and watching interviews. However, in these domains as well, Nepali is found more dominant compared to Maithili. Table 7 also shows that Hindi occupies highest influential space in the activities of watching television serials and listening to music. Nepali is more influential in all the activities including reading newspapers and horoscopes. It is also important to note that the presence of English is noticeable to some extent among the Maithili speakers in the activities of watching television and reading newspapers among the Maithili informants in the Kathmandu valley. Figure 5 further elaborates this data.

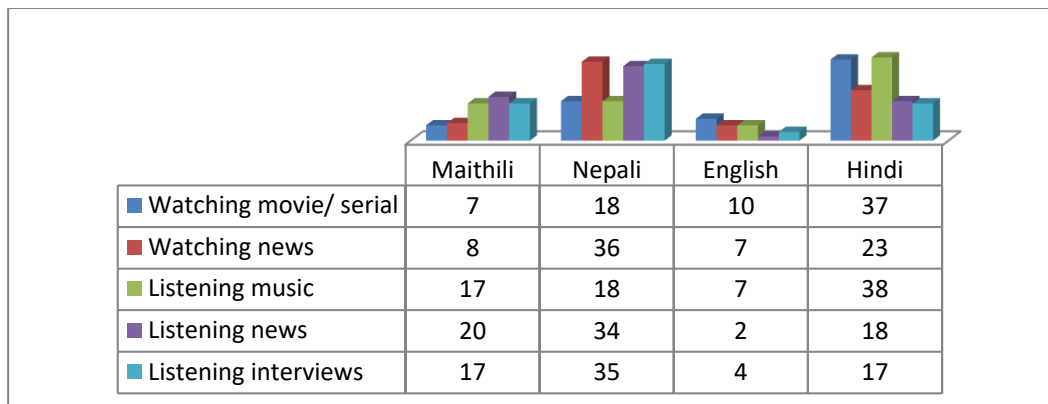


Figure 5: Patterns of language use in media and entertainment activities

Figure 5 indicates the massive use and shift towards Nepali and Hindi language among the Maithili speakers living in the Kathmandu valley in media and entertainment activities. The dominant influence of these two languages in Nepali and regional media is high among the people. If this trend continues, the Maithili speakers will lose many important domains within few decades. The survey data, KII and individual interviews showed that media, migration and marriage (M3) were the major factors impacting language contact (Gautam 2020). It is also found that growing number of media and its consumption among the people of different genres, no matter whether that be electronic or print, makes the local mother tongue speakers get exposed to the regional and global languages (Poudel & Baral 2021). As it is observed in the linguistic landscape of the Kathmandu valley, the seminal influence of Nepali, Hindi and English medium channels in televisions are contributory to such trends of language shift. Our understanding of multilingual spaces in the valley lies in this evidence showing multiple languages used for multiple purposes in everyday life. Such influence could be observed in people's growing consumption of the Nepali channels especially for news, entertainment and information of the various social, cultural and political aspects of the state; the Hindi channels especially for entertainment; and the English channels in order to get entertainment, sports and international/global exposure. Binita, a Maithili girl pursuing her university education at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu expressed her experience as:

You know, in this era of media and technology, I spend more time on watching news in Nepali channels, teleserials in Hindi Channels and when I want to know about the outer world, I watch BBC, CNN, the National Geography and Animal Planet...so I automatically learn English, Hindi and Nepali instead of Maithili... I like Maithili but does my language has such channels?

Binita's comment here indicates that how people speaking diverse mother tongues shift to other dominant languages not because they dislike their mother tongues, but because of the limited opportunities they have had in using and exposing themselves with their mother tongues. This also resonates the claims made by Gautam & Poudel (2022) that the linguistic diversity might not have been preserved by democratic social and political process that

allow freedom to individuals to make decisions regarding their language use (including their mother tongue). For the speakers of minority language backgrounds, shifts to dominant languages have been essential due to the changing social and linguistic contexts that provide stronger rationale to dominant languages and their use.

3.5.2 Migration

The migration for employment is one of such causes for people to learn a different language (may it be national or foreign language) (see, Poudel & Baral 2021; Poudel & Choi 2022). For such purposes, migration has been a reality. Therefore, the migration rate, the number of emigrants (out movers) per thousand population stands at 10.77, whereas the immigration rate is estimated to be 0.46 per thousand populations (CBS 2012). Some of the informants' personal narratives provide further illustrations in this regard. For example, a 26-year-old Maithili speaking girl said that she wished to learn Japanese and English languages in order to find her future career in Japan. She said, *my relatives especially those in Japan use English and Japanese, I also communicate with them in these languages. Since I am planning to go to Japan in my future, I am learning Japanese and using it with my relatives in Japan* (Interview, Deepa,). Such a situation could be observed in the narratives of Rajesh (42 years old), a Maithili speaking man who had been living in Qatar for the last eight years. He said, *"We don't find good jobs here, we have to leave for other countries for labor works, so I think we have to learn the languages, so we could adjust there"* (Interview, Rajesh). Here, Deepa and Rajesh's narratives as such are just some examples among the large-scale evidence from the respondents involved in this study. These stories, in one or another way, suggest how language shifts especially from local languages to regional or global languages deeply underpin migration, and how that affects individuals' choice of language use.

3.5.3 Marriage

Marriage is another important cause of migration that often encourages language shift. Marriage that occurs between the members of inter-lingual background is quite authoritative to understand how it promotes language shift. Kanchan Jha, a 33-year-old Maithili speaking woman's story is meaningful to reference here. Kanchan, a typical Maithili girl of Siraha district, married to a Newar speaking boy in Kathmandu some 7 years back. The early days of her married life remained quite inharmonious due to her unfamiliarity with the Newar language. The conflicts increased with her Newar monolingual mother-in-law and also with the other members of her family made her serious in the matter. Gradually, she started to learn Newar language by carefully observing how the Newar mother tongue users use Newar terms for the objects they point to. Now she understands the Newar language and culture. She speaks Nepali with her husband and other family members and sometimes Newar with older Newars. The story of Kanchan is one among many evidences that the researchers encountered in the field. Yet, Kanchan's case is important in the sense that language shift locates here from one local language (Maithili) to another local language (Newar) (Interview, Kanchan Jha, March 2017). Unlike Kanchan, Sony, a Maithili speaking woman's experience often demonstrates that how her marriage

to the Hindi native speaking man ultimately pushed her to shift from Maithili to Hindi. Thus, the data and the stories indicate that marriage has become an important cause of language shift mostly in the case of the female Maithili speakers in the context of Nepal, and this is likely to expand further as the inter-ethnic marriages which largely relate to inter-linguistic relations, are encouraged in the contemporary social contexts.

3.6 Ideological shift

The findings reported above reveal that individuals' and communities' prioritization of language use is largely influenced by the ideologies they form towards certain languages. Language ideology has played a significant role in individuals' language attitudes and choices, as they are the politically and morally loaded structures influencing linguistic processes on the ground (Woolard 2020). Language ideology is the linking element between individuals' knowledge of the world and their social practices and linguistic orientations, since it mediates individual thought and behavior (Simpson 2003). The data in this study reveals how the Maithili native speaking people in the Valley negotiate with multiple languages at an ideological level and continue to use one or the other languages through their ideological guidance. In other words, this study found that the informants used their language ideology as a means for their language control. Despite their higher motivation to use Maithili in the educational and social spaces, they could not do so because the other dominant languages had formed the dominant spaces that marginalized many of the minority languages including Maithili. However, it is not only the Maithili speakers as illustrated in this case, but this kind of domination has also been a global phenomenon and a point to be worried from the sociolinguistic perspective (Blommaert 2010; Gautam & Poudel 2022). As the data demonstrate, the use of mother tongues is more concentrated to household and the immediate surrounding in religious and cultural activities, these are the consequences of the language ideologies in the Nepali society. For example, the influence of such ideological structures can be well understood from the cases of the younger generation using Nepali, Hindi and English language more than their native language. Although there are some pragmatically justified reasons for their choice as they relate their shift to Hindi, Nepali and English language in order to attain more pragmatic/instrumental values including intercultural contacts, they are the results of broader ideological forces formed out of Nepal's historical practices of language use (Poudel & Choi 2022; Gautam 2021a).

4. Conclusion

We conclude that the use of Maithili is found more dominant in the family, cultural or religious activities, and has a reduced use for outside contact in the marketplace and business. It signifies that Maithili is used less in formal activities including education and administration, and the educational and formal spaces in the Valley were highly dominated by Nepali and English. This shows that although multilingual sociolinguistic spaces enable many languages to exist, in practice the tendency of embracing the dominant languages continues over time. In the case of immediate community or surroundings, tendency of using Maithili as well as the second language i.e., Nepali is found in the field – applicable

to the languages. Considering the trend across generations, however, indications of the reduced use of mother tongue is noticed among the new generation youths. Nonetheless, older generations are maintaining the use of mother tongue in several ways. This shows the various ideological impacts of language contact in Maithili language community in terms of language shift. There are some of the important implications arising from such contact situations. Some of such implications are threatening Nepal's linguistic diversity, with the creation of new linguistic ecologies (Gautam 2021a; Poudel 2019). Three important factors contributed to the increasing language contact among several linguistic groups including the Maithili community in the valley are media, migration, and marriage. As Nepali and English play the dominant roles in all these spaces, the use of mother tongues, e.g., Maithili in this study, is diminishing, and therefore language shift is emerging.

It is also to be noted that a shift in a language often brings about a shift in identity and there may be resistance to adopting a new language. The Maithili people who have migrated and living in the capital city have been influenced directly and indirectly by the national and international trends such as globalization, migration and interlingual contacts (Gautam 2012). Therefore, this study points towards the connection of language contact with the changing socio-political conditions (Gautam 2021b) and factors/variables that have affected every individual's motivation to choose one or the other language. All these processes have created diverse social spaces that languages meet, and therefore create language contacts and shifts. It is therefore important to identify the processes, traits and trends of language contacts and changes to promote and protect the ethnic/indigenous languages in the multilingual contexts so that one can contribute to the maintenance of Nepal's linguistic diversity.

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