

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF MAITHILI

A Dissertation

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By

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RECOMMENDATION LETTER

We hereby recommend that this dissertation entitled **A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF MAITHILI** prepared by **Mr. Surya Prasad Yadav** under our supervision and guidance be accepted by the research committee for the final examination in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of doctor of philosophy in linguistics.

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APPROVAL LETTER

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled **A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MAITHILI** submitted to the office of the Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, is an entirely original work prepared under the supervision of my supervisor and expert. I have made due acknowledgements to all ideas and information borrowed from different sources in the course of writing this dissertation. The result presented in this dissertation has not been presented or submitted anywhere else for the award of any degree or for any other purposes. No part of the contents of this dissertation has ever been published in any form before. I shall be solely responsible if any evidence is found against my dissertation.

Surya Prasad Yadav
Date: 2078/06/03

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a sociolinguistic description of Maithili in terms of its dialectal variations, language attitude, multilingualism, language choice and language contact. Maithili, belonging to Indo-Aryan language family, is a cross-border language spoken by a large number of people in the districts of south-eastern part of Nepal, viz., Morang, Sunsari, Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari and Saralahi and, also in India. The number of Maithili speakers in Nepal is approximately 30, 92,530, which constitutes 11.7% of the country's total population and ranks first in the Tarai and second (i.e., next to Nepali) in the national context (Census, 2011).

This is a field-based study. The main goal of this study is to analyze the sociolinguistic situation of the Maithili language spoken in Nepal. It is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 1 presents major objectives of the study, literature review, significance and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 deals with the research methodology of the study. Chapter 3 and 4 look at the regional and social variations, respectively. Chapter 5 discusses the attitudes of the Maithili community towards their mother tongue and other languages. Chapter 6 analyzes multilingualism and language choice in Maithili. Chapter 7 examines language contact situation in Maithili. Chapter 8 presents summary and conclusions of the study.

This study has revealed a number of interesting sociolinguistic features of the Maithili language. This language is extensively used in almost all the social domains in the Maithili speaking community. However, people sometimes switch to a language of wider communication according to their needs and contexts. Especially, they make mixed uses of Maithili, Nepali and Hindi in some contexts; however, educated speakers also tend to use English instead of mixed use of languages.

Maithili shows regional and social variations. Such variations may be attested in the domains of phonology, morphology, syntax and lexicon. In Maithili, there are mainly three regional dialects, viz., eastern, central and western. But in some contexts, this study has exhibited only two regional dialects, viz., eastern and western. There is 82% to 94% lexical similarity among the three dialects. Moreover, the lexical similarity percentages of the word list gleaned in the eastern dialect range from 84% to 90%. Such similarity percentages range from 83% to 90% in the central dialect whereas in the western dialect, the similarity percentages range from 86% to 93%. Similarly,

there are mainly two social varieties, viz., Brahmin and Non-Brahmin, in the language. However, in some contexts, this study has found three social varieties: Brahmin, Non-Brahmin1 and Non-Brahmin2 as well. The forms of the language spoken by the three major social groups are mutually intelligible to each other. There is 82% to 92% lexical similarity among these social groups. Language attitude is very positive in the speech community. Honorificity is very complex in the Maithili language. It is very often used in the Brahmin variety whereas it is rarely found in Non-Brahmin (except in some high educated people) variety of the language. However, this study has rarely found high honorificity in the Brahmin variety as well. In the multilingual context of the Tarai region, the findings of the study may serve as references for the long term planning and development of the Maithili language.

The annexes include map of Maithili speaking area of Nepal and India, distribution of Maithili speakers in Nepal, 405 wordlist, Basic Sentences, Sociolinguistic Questionnaire 'A', Sociolinguistic Questionnaire 'B', and the Maithili analyzed texts.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

I	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
ABL	Ablative
ABL _{CM}	Ablative case marker
ACC/DAT	Accusative-Dative
ADM	Accusative-Dative case marker
AUX	Auxiliary
B	Brahmin
C	Case
CLF	Classifier
CORD	Coordinator
FUT	Future tense
GEN	Genitive
GEN _{CM}	Genitive case marker
H	Honorific
HH	High honorific
HP	Honorific pronoun
IMP	Imperative
IMPF	Imperfective aspect
INS	Instrumental
INS _{CM}	Instrumental case marker
LOC	Locative
MH	Mid honorific
NB	Non-Brahmin
NH	Non honorific
NHP	Non honorific pronoun
NOM	Nominative
O	Object
PCPL	Participle
PL	Plural
PRS	Present Tense
PROG	Progressive aspect
PST	Past tense
PSTPCPL	Past participle
S	Subject
SG	Singular
V	Verb