A Comparative Identity of Maithili and English Language through Linguistics Approach

Deepesh Kr. Thakur¹ & Ragini Thakur²

¹*Assistant Professor (English), School of Liberal Arts & Management, DIT University, Dehradun, Dehradun, Uttarakhand-248009, India. E-mail: deepesh1november@gmail.com*
²*MA (Education) from Kanpur University, UP & BEd from MD University, Haryana*

Abstract: The present paper aims to discuss the vowels, consonants and diphthongs of Maithili and English. It also explains some supra segmental features of English which causes problem for Maithili speakers of English and makes their speech unintelligible. Besides this it also tries to explain the interference of Maithili in the speech of Maithili speakers of English in Bihar and find out the growing trend of Maithili and English even in work place because of Maithili speakers loyalty to their language.

Keywords: Phonology, Mithila-Maithili, English, Interference, Consonants, Vowels, pronunciation, intelligible

Introduction

Maithili (/ˈmaɪtɪli/; Maithilī [ˈməɪ̯t̪ʰɪli]) is an Indo-Aryan language native to the Indian subcontinent, mainly spoken in India and Nepal. In India, it is spoken in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand and is one of the 22 recognised Indian languages. In Nepal, it is spoken in the eastern Terai and is the second most prevalent language of Nepal. Tirhuta was formerly the primary script for written Maithili. Less commonly, it was also written in the local variant of Kaithi. Today it is written in the Tirhuta script.

Maithili English

Maithili English is a term restricted to that variety of Indian English or to be more precise Bihari English which is spoken by people whose mother tongue (L1) is

Maithili. Maithili is the richest of all the dialects in Bihar and has the tone and temper of its own. In tone, temper and script, it is very near to Bengali and the heavy interference of Maithili is also observed in their speech. Naturally it is desirable to study the sound system and the phonology of Maithili both in the historical as well as the phonological context.

Language

Languages are born out of dialects. As such the connection between the two is as clear as crystal, however, these are entirely different things in essence defining the oral and written traditions. The sound is any noise available in the nature. After refinement these sounds takemeaningful form of the dialects. This is an approach that never try to impose mastery on the nature. The repetition is possible in the written tradition, but the same is impossible in the oral one. It cannot avoid relationship with the time and nature in every effort of the repeatation. The process ofwriting is empowered to eliminate this relationship. The dialect turns into alanguage with the help of script and rules of grammar. In fact, this is apolitical change. It's very difficult to cultivate thetribes of oral tradition in its absence. The difference in expression of dialects and languages are yet another significant issue. The term 'Maithili' refers to the individual, people and community speaking one of the dialects known as Maithili, this is an oldest language written in the Tirahuta, Nagari and Roman scripts. It also refers to the geopolitical territory noticed as Mithila in India and Madhesh in Nepal during several political movements. In an era when the great traditions of the literature, development and technology hasdisplaced the vernaculars—communities and dialects—from its original place, the focus on Maithili is a relevant issue.

Maithili Language

Maithili is a language derived from the word 'Mithila', an ancient kingdom governed by King Janak. It is spoken in the eastern part of India, mainly in the Indian state of Bihar and the eastern Terai region of Nepal. It is an offshoot of the Indo-Iranian, a branch of the Indo European languages. Linguists consider Maithili to be an Eastern Indic language and thus a different language from Hindi which is central Indic in origin. According to the 2001 census in India, 12,179,122 people speak the Maithili language, but various organizations have strongly argued that the actual number of Maithili speakers is much more than the official data suggests. Earlier Maithili was considered a "dialect" of both Hindi and Bengali but thanks to an active movement calling for official status for language, it is now included in 8th

schedule of the Indian constitution, which now allows the language to be used in education, government and the other official contexts. Maithili has a very rich literary and cultural heritage and was recognized by the Sahitya Academy much earlier. After its inclusion in the 8th schedule of the Indian constitution, now it is one of the 22 National languages of India. Maithili is now a language, having a large Maithili- speaking community with a rich literature. Poet Vidyapati is the most famous literary figure in Maithili. He is credited for raising the importance of 'peoples' language', i.e. Maithili in the official work of the state by influencing the Maharaja of Darbhanga with the quality of his poetry.

History of Maithili Language

As mentioned earlier the name Maithili is derived from the word Mithila, an ancient kingdom of which King Janaka was the ruler. Maithili is also one of the names of Sita, the wife of king Rama and daughter of kingJanaka. History has it those scholars in Mithila used Sanskrit for their literary work and Maithili was the language of the common folk (Abahatta). The earliest work in Maithili appears to be 'VarnRatnakar' by Jyotirishwar Thakur dated about 1224AD. The Medieval age of Maithili has some of the prominent writers like- Ganesh, Padmanabh, Chandeshwar, Vireshwar, Vidyapati, Vachaspati, Pakshadhar, Ayachi, Udayan etc. Modern Maithili Literature is also very rich in all the genres-fiction, poetry, drama, and criticism. Modern Maithili Theatre, "Aripam" was started by Shri Kaushal Kumar Das. Modern Maithili came into its own after Sir George Abraham Grierson, Irish linguist and civil servant, tirelessly researched Maithili folklore and wrote itsgrammar.

Maithili Speech Area

Maithili speech area comprises of almost all the districts of north Bihar except Bettiah and Motihari, namely Katihar, Purnea, Madhepura, Saharsa, Supaul, Khagaria, Begusarai, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Jainagar, Madhubani etc. It is also widely used in the valley areas of Nepal, particularly bordering India.

Scripts

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia[2], "Maithili was traditionally written in the Maithili script (also known by the names Tirhuta and Mithilakshar) and Kaithi script". However, in the modern times Devnagari script is most commonly used. Efforts are also being made to preserve the Maithili script and to develop it

for use in digital media by encoding the script in the Unicode standard, for which a proposal has recently been submitted.

Grammar, Morphology and Phonology

Lots of studies have also been conducted in the areas of Maithili language, grammar, morphology, syntax and phonology. Maithili is also widely available on internet, but not precisely in the area ofphonology.

The Phonology of Maithili

Maithili phonology is not much different from the phonologies of Hindi, Magahi, Bhojpuri and Angika with a remarkable thing that it is more akin to Sanskrit. It has 9+4=13, vowel sounds and 33 consonant sound. Like Magahi, Maithili too does not havediphthongs.

Vowels

The primary 9 vowel sounds in Maithili are:

/ə,ɪ,ʊ,ri:Iri:e,æ,o,o:/

One special feature to note here is that four vowelsnamely/a:u:i:ã / aredescribedasadditional vowel sounds in Maithili.

Consonants

There are 33 consonants in Maithili which are given in a chart below:

Kabarg	K	Kh	g	gh	ŋ
Chabarg	C	Ch	j	Jh	ỹ
Tabarg	T	Th	D	Dh	N
tabarg	t	th	D	dh	n
Pabarg	p	ph	B	bh	m
Antasth	y	r	I	W	
Ushm	š	x	S	h	

Maithili Consonant

Fricative sounds [ʂ, ɕ] only occur marginally, and are typically pronounced as a dental fricative /s/ in most styles of pronunciation is always added after a vowel.

In most styles of pronunciation, the retroflex flap [ɽ] occurs marginally, and is usually pronounced as an alveolar tap /r/ sound.

A retroflex nasal sound [ɳ] only occurs before a voiced retroflex /ɖ/ sound.

Approximant sounds [ʋ, w, j] and fricative sounds [ɸ, f, z, ʐ, x], mainly occur in words that are borrowed from Sanskrit or in words of Perso-Arabic origin. From Sanskrit, puʂp(ə) as puɸp(ə). Conjunct of ɦj as ɦz as in grafɦjə as grafɦzə.

The Interference of Maithili in the Speech of Maithili Speakers of English In Mithila

To find out the interference of Maithili in the speech of Maithili speakers of English, I have made a parameter taking into consideration the pronunciation at the following levels:

Sounds

(a) vowels, (b) diphthongs, (c) consonants, (d) conjuncts, (e) length of vowels sounds, (f) aspiration, (g) silencing of consonants.

Stress

(a) word stress, (b) sentence stress, (c) stress in connected speech

Sounds

Vowels

It is observed that Maithili speakers have problem in the pronunciation of four vowel sounds /3:/, **/ɒ /**, /ɔ:/ and

/ə/. The frequent tendency of Maithili speakers is toreplace

/3:/ with **/ə+r/, /ɒ /**and /ɔ:/ with /o/ and /o:/ and **/ə/** with**/ʌ/.** The use of **/ə/** is hardly observed in the speech of Maithili speakers even in common words like ago and river. Other distinctfeatureistheuseofadditionalvowelsounds/ɪ/and

/e/ in words like station, school, sky etc. One more very distinct feature of the speakers of Maithili English observed is the more rounding of lips, more frequency of rounding and rounding of lips even in the pronunciation of vowel sound like /3:/ and **/ə/.**

Maithili is very akin to Bengali and Bengalis frequently use rounded vowels simply because /ə/ is not that widely used in Bengali.

- All vowels have nasal counterparts, represented by "~" in IPA and ̆ on the vowels, like आँ ā:.
- All vowel sounds are realized as nasal when occurring before or after a nasal consonant. [46]
- Sounds eː and oː are often replaced by diphthongs əɪ̯ and əʊ̯.
- æ is a recent development.
- ɔ is replaced by ə in northern dialects and by o in southernmost dialects.
- There are three short vowels, as described by Grierson, but not counted by modern grammarians. But they could be understood as syllable break: - अं / ă /, इं/ ĭ /, उं/ ŭ /. Or as syllable break in Devanagari and "." in IPA.
- It is a Unicode letter in Devanagari, (IPA /əe̯/) which is not supported currently on several browsers and operating systems, along with its mātrā (vowel sign).

Diphthongs

This is the area where the majority of Bihari speakers have problem simply because Hindi does not have all the RP diphthongs and also because the speakers are not conscious enough to use diphthongs in their speech. Bihari in general tend touse pure vowels only except for/aɪ/and/aʊ/.

Consonants

EightRPconsonantssounds/f, v,θ,ð,z,ʃ,ʒandw/are common problems with Bihari speakers. This is because of the heavy interference of the mother tongue (L1) in their speech. Naturally there is a tendency to pronounce these consonants the way they pronounce these in their mother tongue replacing /f, v/ with Hindi /Ph, bh/, /θ, ð / with /th,d/, /z/with/dʒ/,/ʃ/with/s/,/ʒ/with/dʒ/and/w/with/v/oreven /b/.

Conjuncts

Conjuncts are also known as consonant clusters cause problem for Maithili speaker of English. They face problem in the pronunciation of simple words having a cluster of any two consonants like "concentrated" which has a /t/, /r/ cluster.

Instead of pronouncing "concentrated", most speakers pronounce "concentric" and "concentrated"etc.

Aspiration

In English the bilabial plosives /p, t, k/ are aspirated in the word initial and stressed position but Maithili speakers of English hardly use aspiration in theirspeech.

Silent Consonants

Silencing of consonants in RP is a very common and natural phenomenon. There are also certain fixed rules for the silencing of consonants. Some glaring examples are bomb, tomb, foreign etc. but unfortunately very few Maithili speakers of English are aware of silent consonants. Unawareness of this feature naturally makes their speech highlyunintelligible.

Weak Forms

Use of weak forms makes the speech intelligible and impressive particularly in connected/rapid speech. The unawareness of this feature naturally makes someone's speech bookish and mechanical. But since people in Bihar hardly get a chance to interact with the native speakers of English, so they fail to cultivate this feature of English in their speech.

Length of the Vowel Sounds

It is observed that Maithili speakers of English generally fail to make clear distinction between short and long vowels and make a fool of themselves in the pronunciation of words like, full and fool, lip and leap, hip and heap etc. The use of one for the other affects intelligibility as well. Very common examples being:

/riːvər/for/rɪvə/,/ɪskʊl/for/skuːl/,/siːtiː/for/sɪtɪ/etc.

One more remarkable feature of Maithili speakers is the preference for short vowels even at places where the use of the short vowel makes their speech funny.

Stress

Maithili speakers of English hardly found to be conscious about giving proper stress in their connected speech. If they will take full care of proper stress, 50% of their errors of spoken English can be rectified because wrong stress causes semantic problems and affect intelligibility.

Tone and Intonation

Tone and Intonation is an important feature of Standard English which affects intelligibility and acceptability of spoken English and causes great semantic problem because English is a stress-timed language and rhythm plays an important role in in.

But unfortunately Maithili speakers of English do not maintain the tone and intonation of SIE in their speech.

Use of Suffixes

Certain suffixes in English are pronounced in three different ways in three different environments. The past tense suffix '-d'or'-ed'canbepronouncedas/t/,/d/, /ɪd/. Similarly, the suffix '-s' or '-es' can be pronounced as /s/, /z/ and/ɪz/.Forexample,/tʊkt/,/pleɪd/,/wantɪd/,/bʊks/,/pleɪz/,/rəʊzɪz/etc.

But I have observed that Maithili speakers of English care a little about such features of English speech. Only few speakers have some awareness of thisfeature.

Dialects

Maithili varies greatly in dialects. The standard form of Maithili is based on sotipura dialect or central dialect, which is mainly spoken around Darbhanga, Begusarai, Madhubani and Saharsa districts of Bihar, India. Bajjika dialect of Maithili is spoken in Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur and Vaishali districts of Bihar in India. Bajjika is listed as a distinct language in Nepal and overlaps by 76–86% with Maithili dialects spoken in Dhanusa, Morang, Saptari, and Sarlahi Districts. Thēthi dialect is spoken mainly in Kosi, Purnia and Munger divisions of Bihar, India and some adjoining districts of Nepal. Angika is spoken in and around the Bhagalpur area / Anga area. Several other dialects of Maithili are spoken in India and Nepal, including Dehati, Kisan, Bantar, Barmeli, Musar, Tati and Jolaha. All the dialects are intelligible to native Maithili speakers.

Standardization

Standardization refers to the processes in which a panicular existing variety or an amalgam of various varieties is selected to be developed into a standard one, which is codified by its written dictionary and grammar so that everyone agrees on what is correct, which is elaborated (extended) in various functions like education, literature, office, media, etc. and which is accepted by the speech community. From

the beginning of the 19th century till now, abundant studies mostly written in the melalanguage of English have been done on the syntax.

Phonetics: lexicography, etc. of this variety by native as well as foreign scholars. For the funher corpus development of Maithili, the research work should be extended, especially, to those unexplored areas like Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Sociolinguistics, etc. On the basis of all these research studies, descriptive reference books and pedagogic texts related to the various aspects of this language should be prepared together with the basic wordlist of Maithili for teaching purposes. There is also a demand for the standardization of non-elite variety of Maithili for which editions have extended towards codifying and extending it to various functions.

Modernization

Modernization, in the sense of corpus planning, refers to the development of expanded vocabulary to equip the language so as to communicate about modem topics and fond of discourse. As a language is extended for new functions and topics, its resource should expand to meet the new demands. New knowledge and technology demand new terms. This process provides ease in intenranslatability among the languages. This process is not confined to the languages of developing, modernizing societies which occurs also in the languages of developed, modernized societies. With the extension of Maithili functions in education, office, mass media, etc. its resources need to be expanded further.

It can enlarge its vocabulary in two ways- (a) by building new terms from its own sources either by giving new meanings to the existing terms or by creating terms based on the roots of Maithili and (b) by borrowing words from foreign languages.

If the latter is done, in that case, the loan words can be indigenized by changing their pronunciation, their spelling or their affixes to suit the structure of Maithili, as we find in the case of words borrowed from English like 'station', 'class', etc.

Maithili language planners can turn to Sanskrit for borrowing terminology for literature, culture and scholarship and can turn to European languages, especially English, for borrowing terminology for modem science and technology, as we find the processes adopted for expanding the vocabulary of Bhojpuri, Nepali and other related languages. Thus the targets of the corpus planning of Maithili can be achieved by following the tripartite model suggested by Ferguson. For the successful implementation of its corpus planning, the government of Nepal should set up Maithili Academy, which can play a key role in carrying out the research studies and other related activities in the language, exploiting also the recent information

technology for preparing Maithili corpora. Keeping in view its present strength, it is absolutely necessary to extend the functions of Maithili to the domains of education, office and mass media before entering into any corpus planning of Maithili. Only after using Maithili in these domains. we have to develop its corpus according to its requirements.

Graphization

Graphization refers to the developing of a writing system. It involves determining! he script, spelling (orthography), rules of punctuation, word-division, etc. Without a script no language can develop, no lilcrary crealivity can flourish and no language can find any function in literature, education, media, etc. Although Maithili has its own script called 'Tirhuta' or 'Mithilakshar', Devanagari script is most widely used in it as Devanagari is used in Hindi, Nepali and other closely related languages, its use in Maithili has been accepted for the ease in writing, for the use in carrying over other languages and for the ease in using computer and other printing techniques. In spite of these reasons in favour of Devanagari script, Mithilakshar has to be conserved by allocating contain specified domains or contexts for its use. Further, Devanagari script needs to be refined and renovated. For an instance, a special letter is required to be coined for a vowel sound found in the final position of the Maithili word ('mother') for removing the problem in writing.

Educational

Maithili has got the due place in education because of which even educated Mailhili speakers arc, ironically, illiterate in their own language. For some years, Maithili. as an optional subject, has been introduced at the primary education but because of the lack of textbooks. teachers and proper management, its implementation has been very weak and ineffective, in spite of the growing demand for it. At the secondary level, too, Maithili language is optional. It is selected as one of the requisites for the completion of secondary level education but at the same time student are likely to opt for subjects like Mathematics, in which case they will not be able to opt Maithili language. And, at higher secondary levels, Maithili is not the part of curriculum, however there is the provision of Maithili being an optional subject at Proficiency Certificate levels and Bachelor of Arts in the faculty of Humanities. At the same time, it has been found that students are not interested considering Maithili as one of the required subject to get through the given level, as, they think, there no bright future after studying Maithili. Hence, there is the need to re-organise, strengthen

and extend the teaching of Maithili from the primary to the University levels. Corpus preparation for low-resource languages and for development of human language technology to analyze or computationally process them is a laborious task, primarily due to the unavailability of expert linguists who are native speakers of these languages and also due to the time and resources required. Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili, languages of the Purvanchal region of India (in the north-eastern parts), are low-resource languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan (or Indic) family. They are closely related to Hindi, which is a relatively high-resource language, which is why we compare them with Hindi. We collected corpora for these three languages from various sources and cleaned them to the extent possible, without changing the data in them. The text belongs to different domains and genres. We calculated some basic statistical measures for these corpora at character, word, syllable, and morpheme levels. These corpora were also annotated with parts-of-speech (POS) and chunk tags. The basic statistical measures were both absolute and relative and were expected to indicate linguistic properties, such as morphological, lexical, phonological, and syntactic complexities (or richness). The results were compared with a standard Hindi corpus. For most of the measures, we tried to match the corpus size across the languages to avoid the effect of corpus size, but in some cases it turned out that using the full corpus was better, even if sizes were very different. Although the results are not very clear, we tried to draw some conclusions about the languages and the corpora. For POS tagging and chunking, the BIS tag set was used to manually annotate the data. The POS-tagged data sizes are 16,067, 14,669, and 12,310 sentences, respectively, for Bhojpuri, Magahi, and Maithili. The sizes for chunking are 9,695 and 1,954 sentences for Bhojpuri and Maithili, respectively. The inter-annotator agreement for these annotations, using Cohen's Kappa, was 0.92, 0.64, and 0.74, respectively, for the three languages. These (annotated) corpora have been used for developing preliminary automated tools, which include POS tagger, Chunker, and Language Identifier. We have also developed the Bilingual dictionary (Purvanchal languages to Hindi) and a Synset (that can be integrated later in the Indo-WordNet) as additional resources. The main contribution of the work is the creation of basic resources for facilitating further language processing research for these languages, providing some quantitative measures about them and their similarities among themselves and with Hindi. For similarities, we use a somewhat novel measure of language similarity based on an n-gram-based language identification algorithm. An additional contribution is providing baselines for three basic NLP applications (POS tagging, chunking, and language identification) for these closely related languages.

Conclusion

To conclude it can be say that the Maithili speakers of English have problem in pronunciation of vowel sounds like/3:/,/ɒ/,/ɔ:/and/ə/and consonant sounds like:/ f,v,θ,ð, z,ʃ,ʒandw/. They also have problem in proper use of some Supra Segmental Features like: Stress, Tone, and Intonation, Conjuncts, Length of Vowel Sound, Weak Forms, Silent Consonants, Aspiration and Suffixes etc. But in spite of all the problems if they are aware of the unconscious errors they make in the pronunciation of English sounds, the process of unlearning will automatically start and they would definitely be able to pronounce the vowels, consonants and diphthongs and other important feature of English with care and comfort and their language will become intelligence and acceptable. To make their speech intelligible, impressive and acceptable they should try to be more conscious about their errors and do continuous practice to improve their spokenEnglish.

To sum up, the status of Maithili should be elevated by using it in various domains outlined above and its corpus should, accordingly, be developed to meet its requirements conducti ng various research and other activities in the language. Such a planning of Maithili will definitely bring about a great change in the Maithil society. It can help educate the Maithils by virtue of which their socio-economic mobility can be geared up. Also, it can help manage by linguistically based inequality and discrimination fossilized in Nepalese context and by fostering instrumental attachments to the nation, create job opportunities for the Maithils in the field of education and in the government and other offices, promote creativity, and open the door to a decent life. All these can happen only when the entire Maithili speaking community shows its genius ne loyalty towards the language and its awareness of the linguistic rights and only when "Language ... becomes something to love, to fight for, to die for, something to safeguard, to develop and to enrich.

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