

**Location of Identity in Language Contact and Replacement:  
A Case of Hindi-ized Magahi and Magahi<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

The paper tries to trace the location of linguistic identity in the course of language change or replacement. Language is one of the components which take part in the formation of identity. Linguistic identity is rather a short-term and easily dissoluble object. Therefore, in this paper, we shall talk about the ‘identity’, and language as an important component of it. However, language is not the only deciding factor in the formation of identity. This paper presents linguistic evidence through which we shall be able to see how Magahi speakers are gradually changing their linguistic identity. The changing form of Magahi is termed as Hindi-ized Magahi. In the course of Hindi-ized Magahi, various features of Hindi are adopted and linguistic features of Magahi are dropped, e.g., the adoption of grammatical gender particularly in progressive aspect, auxiliary, pronoun, honorific features, etc., and loss of discourse/ pragmatic marker ‘-wa’, dropping of ‘re/ ge’ addressing features, etc. Such processes show the degree of changes. The paper is of the view that Magahi speakers<sup>2</sup> at the first place cannot claim that their linguistic identity is entirely associated with the language or dialect of the region. So, there is already an ambiguity which is always vulnerable to the out-group cultural situation and other factors such as ‘Globalization’. The paper has attempted to see how (linguistic) identity gets dislocated through the convergence of linguistic behaviour. The paper has also tried to understand the importance or centrality of language in the formation of self- individual as well as collective. It presents how language represents one’s belonging and, in turn, gives some sense of ‘self’, and at the same time it is also vulnerable to these factors.

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<sup>1</sup>The paper is the improved version of the conference-paper presented in the National conference on ‘Language, Identity and Society: Centrality of Language in Formation of Identity in Contemporary Society’ held at GBU, Greater Noida, UP-201312, India in 2015.

<sup>2</sup>The changes are largely seen in the age group of 15-25.

**Keywords:** Linguistic-identity, Hindi-ized Magahi, speech community, dialect levelling, ‘self’, ‘other’, globalization.

## 1. Introduction

Language, when seen as the only medium of social segregation, doesn't serve the purpose alone. Nevertheless, language consciously or unconsciously plays a very decisive role in the segregation of the society. Other than socially constructed categories which play a fundamental role in the categorization of society, language, however, being the social phenomenon too can be understood as one of the offstage factors which are less studied in the Indian context. The use of sounds, lexeme, tones, registers, etc., as symbols of communication, stratify the society in a certain pattern, if not very strictly. In a society, the function of a language is limitless; it would be no exaggeration to say that the study of language indeed reveals the structured pattern of a speech community, i.e., the social class can be understood based on the use of the above-mentioned linguistic features. It is true that language and society interact with each other all the time in almost all domains, and it would be interesting to see how the two (language & society) contribute to the formation of social being. Cultural or social identity must follow the question of linguistic identity, as the relation between language, culture and identity is shown by many theorists, e.g., K. Bhabha 1994, Clarke 2008, Buchlotz & Hall 2004a, 2005. However, the real question is about the centrality of the role of language in identity formation, if at all, identity is seen as the representation of one ‘self’. There are certain components which participate in the formation of identity, even if when we talk about kinds of identities like gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, linguistic, etc. We cannot perceive identity as the cultural product only if at all we are concerned with the individual ‘self’. The question of defining the ‘self’ in relation to society always brings the point of consideration of the elements of self. It (identity) is a complex amalgam of cultural entities and psychodynamic factors (Clarke 2008). The question of ‘self’, however, is always dependent on and draws its existence from the very existence of ‘others’; this is one of the central remarks in understanding the formation of identity.

In this paper, we are restricting ourselves to the cultural and linguistic identity. There are some fundamental questions which this paper is going to address regarding the formation of identity and its dislocation. The questions like, does language play a crucial role in one's identity formation? What are the mediums of asserting ones' new identity? What are the

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**Language in India**[www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 17:11 November 2017

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factors responsible for the linguistic shifts and, in turn, linguistic identity? The goal of the paper is, of course, to deal with the above-stated questions, but to see how it exactly happens. We have taken the examples of language shift from Magahi to Hindi, and have shown how the shiftiness of linguistic features is the assertion of a speech community's new identity and denial and unhappiness with the present.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 1 briefs about the direction in which we will take our argument on identity. Identity has been worked out taking care of various other factors that mould the definition and characteristics of identity. Section 2 gives a general overview on the formedness of identity. The multiple components of identity and their participation in the formation of identity have been discussed. It is discussed that how the identity is formed on the basis of others. Taking the reference from Saussure's understanding of objects from comparative point of view, I drew the parallelism. Next section, Section 3 talks about the cultural identity and how linguistic identity can be separated from the cultural one. In this section, I drew the reference from Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and also from the education system of pre-colonial India. In section 4, I have presented the information on Magahi speech community and have talked about the linguistic situation. In section 5, I have analyzed how the identity of a Magahi speaker is intertwined and confused. Why is Magahi speech community the most vulnerable linguistic group in Bihar? In section 6, I have shown how with the shift of linguistic features there is a shift in the identity. With the dropping of linguistic features, Magahi speakers are dropping their association with the language, and how with the adoption of Hindi linguistic features they are associating themselves with Hindi. I summed it up in the next section, i.e., section 7. Section 8 lists the references.

## 2. Identity Formedness and Threat

Identity is a vague entity that has no complete and durable meaning. There are various kinds of identity a person possess in a social construct, e.g., being a student, researcher, professor, doctor, engineer, father, mother, national, regional, male/female, etc. But most of these identities are mainly constructed<sup>3</sup> which may or may not participate in the wholeness of identity, i.e., the being of 'self. However, the question of nationality and regionalism actively

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<sup>3</sup>Constructed identity: - It is understood that identity is a socially and historically constructed phenomenon. Ascribed identities can also be thought of as constructed. Even the identities as natural as 'sex' can be understood as constructed identity. Particularly, the performative behaviour is constructed or instilled by the society. Identity in this paper strictly means the performance of the individual.

contribute to the notion of 'self'. There are many important factors as well, e.g., 'self' is also composed by ideas, ideologies and the way we perceive ourselves in relation to others. These ideas or ideologies, however, in turn, come from our very origin, family, role model, politics, education, media, etc. The 'self' which imbibes different ideologies and identifies itself, is also socially constructed and is not free from the weight of deep-rooted socio-cultural practices. The formedness of identity (cultural-linguistic) is mooted in the very origin of the person, the society or the region or the nation one is born in, and the language one acquires.

There are many kinds of ascribed identities like, gender, caste, religion, culture, and also language to some extent; and these identities in a way try to give us a stable or real identity that is not limited to a particular role, and these contribute in the making of 'self'. The question of 'self', however, as it is stated, is always defined in relation to others because of the factors responsible for the formation of 'self' (Goffman 1968). In the structuralist theory of linguistics, Saussure (1857-1913) says that everything is defined in comparison to others, i.e., a table is a table because it is not a chair, or a bed, or any other wooden thing. It is a table because of its different shape, structure, its function in relation to others. In the same way, the foundation of identity is found on others, whatever the kind of identity is; whether linguistic, cultural, biological, race, etc. The concept of identity can be understood in the fact that one has to be different from the other. These (caste, religion, culture, etc.) relatively stable factors in themselves are based on the existence of others, e.g. gender- someone is female in comparison to the male in two ways; biologically and through performative account. Someone belongs to a particular country or region or religion is all in relation to other. So, the existence of self is certainly found and based on others.

Though the identity of self is constructed on the very existence of other, it is essential to see the components of identity that get influenced by the behaviour of out-group. For doing so, we need to discuss the elements that participate in the construction of the identity. The existence of 'self', is the amalgam of the cultural landscape and the psychodynamic factors (Clarke 2008), i.e. it is the complex fusion of race, ethnicity, culture, language, emotion, motivation, desire, etc. Though the existence of cultural landscape is there, the psychodynamic factors largely move the self, and this becomes the reason for the fluidity in identity; it is not a solid entity against the time and space. However, the notion of other (in identifying the self) is also constructed by the 'self', and the constructed other is not 'other'

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but another self, let's say the imagined self, which sees itself either in the higher position or marginalized. Taylor (2002) has proposed a general theory of 'self-concept'; it talks about the two fundamental contrasts in the notion of 'self', and that are 'identity' (cold cognition) in contrast with 'esteem' (hot cognition). It says 'identity' component is descriptive, a knowledge component that describes who I am. In contrast, the 'esteem' or alternative, the evaluative or emotional component, focuses on my evaluation of myself. Thus, identity answers the question who am I, whereas, esteem raises the question, am I worthy? The point of departure in this paper is the 'esteem'; what Taylor (2002) has called 'esteem', Clarke (2008) termed it as psychodynamic self. This esteem or psychodynamic self which is evaluative and rational gets moved by the factors like social or political or economic marginalization, globalization, etc. It houses the aspiration of an individual; it is this part of identity where ideas and ideologies work. This component (esteem/ psychodynamic self) of identity formation is the cause of identity displacement. The esteem always tries to aspire to become the imagined self. However, one has to understand the deep motivation behind considering 'oneself' as less developed or marginalized. The 'identity', on the other hand, talks about the ascribed identities; it recognizes itself based on the region, religion, gender, caste, language, country, ethnicity, etc. It establishes the fact that one is different from another based on the factors mentioned above.

Identity can positively be thought of as an evolving entity with time rather pre-existing socially constructed phenomenon. It is continuously being affected, motivated, modified due to the various reasons as mentioned above; and one of the channels through which the constructed identity is challenged is 'globalization'. Hall (2003) recognized the role of globalization in the displacement of identity. Globalization is a process which denies or challenges the classical idea of 'society' as a well-bound system. The idea of a society or country and the associated identity with it, is vulnerable to the movement of globalization; the very process of conceptualizing the world as 'Global village' is a threat to any kind of identity which is supposedly claimed to be permanent like regional, linguistic, etc. It is producing the concept of cultural homogenization and the identity of being the citizen of the world and not only limited to a particular country or society or language. The concept of global or for that matter national identity is the concerning threat to the regional identity. The process of asserting/ obtruding national identity is such that it becomes unavoidable for the regional identity to sustain. Globalization is an umbrella term under which various factors

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participate to give a push to the ‘esteem’ or the psychodynamic components of identity. Some of the factors are like Media, global education, information technology, science, etc. We wouldn’t explore this dimension here, because of the scope and limitation of the paper. One can consult Hall (1990, 2003), Herman et al. (2007), Mumberson (2001), etc.

### **3. Cultural Identity and the Language**

Cultural identity is an ascribed status primarily performed through language, but also through extra-linguistic signs, e.g. behaviour, tradition, culture, clothes, etc. Social culture is an idea where different individual shares similar features, e.g. common language, common tradition, food, songs, clothes, etc. The term identity itself is primarily being referred to the cultural identity. The strong association of self to certain geography, its related customs, values, etc. mainly forms one’s identity/cultural identity. However, at this point we have to fundamentally make the distinction between the individual self and collective self, though, the existence of both the kind of identities are based on the notion of others. Collective identity is the description of the group where the individual belongs; it gives the basis of asserting the individual self. These two i.e. individual and collective ‘self’ including identity and esteem are four main components of identity as described by Taylor (2002). Hofstede (1991), however, classified elements of culture into four categories: symbols, rituals, values, and heroes; however, we are more interested to see how symbols reflect the cultural identity.

Language is nothing but the systematic arrangements of symbols; a meaningful arrangement. Symbols for Hofstede is words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry some meaning which are only organized and shared by the same culture. The relationship between language and culture is indeed deep, and the research on the subject goes back to Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (1921-1956); it has two related approaches- linguistic determinism, and linguistic relativity. The former holds the idea that our thought is determined by the structures and categories of our languages because we perceive the world in terms of our languages’ categorization of the world. It says that since our language has certain terms, therefore, we are able to conceptualize that objects or phenomenon. And if our language doesn’t have a certain term we don’t have the conceptualization of that object, i.e. we can’t conceptualize

the non-symbolic<sup>4</sup> concepts. The later view, i.e. linguistic relativity which was originally developed by Sapir means that the categories and distinctiveness are eroded in ones' linguistic system is unique to that system, and is different than the other cultures. This is supported and argued by Sapir (1921); it is formally called weaker hypothesis of linguistic relativity. It is in the view that languages do affect our worldview, but not necessarily imposes a worldview. A lot of examples were given from various cultural settings for linguistic determinism hypothesis (Whorf; strong hypothesis), e.g. how Hopi Indians perceive the form of water. They have more than a dozen lexical items for the different kinds of snow they see around them; however, the English, since, do not perceive that environment, lacks as many vocabularies for the same. The problem gets more and more philosophical, as Winston Churchill once said, 'we shaped our buildings, and afterward buildings shaped us.' We describe our experience and culture by using the language and the categories built into the language, and then its structures & categories influence our perceptions- language, in turn, shapes our thought. Language both expresses and embodies cultural reality. Because even its basic function involves cultural practices like greeting people, conducting religious services, custom, etc. It is believed that our thoughts and ideas are fettered or chained by the social structure or values. We conduct ourselves in a certain-way and that restriction is imposed (unknowingly) by the socially-constructed value through language.

One more instance or rather a historical event can be seen as an evidence for how a society or a particular culture associates itself to the language for its assertion of identity, and how a language can be used as an instrument to instill the cultural value of one particular community. The interaction between language, culture and identity, and the central role of language can be understood through the situation of colonial and post-colonial India. The relationship between language and identity is seen in the effort of Macaulay in the early stages on British Indian History. Thomas Macaulay wrote in his famous minute on Indian education; it was instructed to make English a means of uplifting the Indian people; creating Anglophone elite which would be "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 1972: 249). He desperately wanted to wash away the feeling of colonialization from the minds of Indians; through the language, he was trying to create people whose aspirations associate with English, and at the same time is

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<sup>4</sup>Non-symbolic exclusively means non-linguistics, here. Non-linguistics attributes are like food, clothing, tradition, gesture, certain borrowed concepts, etc. They are symbolic in themselves but are non-linguistic.

symbolically identified as Indians which in a way was a suppressed identity then. The British education policies deliberately ignored the indigenous values and almost did away with the belief in the Indian classical and vernacular languages, and with their basic philosophy of life of the Indian against Indian temperament (Pani & Pattanaik 2006). This effort broadly identifies the role of language in cultural identity, and how a language can work as a cultural symbolism. A language carries cultural practices, historical information, scientific knowledge, cultural values and etiquette, moreover, a language carries a particular worldview. Therefore, language is a very important factor in the formation of identity. However, linguistic identity is always vulnerable, unlike regional/gender identity. The reasons for vulnerability are many, but the most important reason is the status of the language<sup>5</sup>. The association of one's identity with the language which has been considered less prestigious or has no prestige at all is a question of humiliation or self-degradation. There are other various factors which help in turning the identity in a negative way. The factors that are responsible for making a language less-prestigious are like socio-political factors which indirectly play very crucial role in making someone's established identity vulnerable. Globalization can be seen as one umbrella factor.

What have we seen thorough the theories and examples is that the language plays a significant role in the making of cultural identity and, in turn, identity. The ways language reacts to the realities of the world is astounding; and many language philosophers try to understand the realities of the world keeping language in the centre, e.g. Langacker (1987, 2002, 2008), Taylor (2002), Jespersen (1924), etc. Language is considered as the haulier of a particular culture, tradition, values, etc. And we cannot entirely deny this observation. But, is it the case with Magahi speech community also? What seems to be a little perplexed is that the values, cultures, traditions, etc. peculiar to the Magahi speech community is not seen any longer in a significantly unique way. The two speech communities, i.e. Hindi & Magahi share a lot of cultural practices; they have similar tradition, similar clothing, similar food, similar festivals, similar taste, similar love/hate, etc. These similarities in many ways put an adverse effect on the little uniqueness Magahi culture has. The association of a language with a culture in this environment now is not that horizontal. What I feel that people have different

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<sup>5</sup>Being a linguistic minority is one of the vulnerability. But, in this case being minority is not supposedly the reason. Magahi has good number of speakers following Census of India. The language is socio-politically ignored.



cultural and linguistic association in such environment. They, for a while, associate themselves with the Magahi language but have always associated themselves with culture, and tradition of Hindi. In this shift in identity, language follows the culture. For the point, I am trying to make, one need to take an anthropological study to understand and describe the peculiarities beneath the cultural conversion.

#### 4. **Magahi Speech Community**

Magahi speech community is being referred to the people who speak Magahi as their first language. Magahi is mainly spoken in Bihar, but not limited to its geography and can be found elsewhere in the country with the mixed form. Magahi is regarded as one of the dialects of Hindi language and is not officially recognized even in the state. The official languages of the state are Hindi and Urdu; Hindi and English are the most used languages for the official as well as educational purposes. The language of media either print or mass is principally Hindi, Urdu, and English. Magahi, despite having a number of speakers, around 14 million according to 2001 census, doesn't have the official status. However, this research (the shiftiness of linguistic features) is based on the variety spoken in Patna district mainly, Bihta block. The kind of shiftiness of linguistic features being shown in the paper, however, is subject to change as per the geography and idiolects. Though in this paper, I am more concerned on how the shiftiness of linguistic features show the shift in the identity, and not very particular attention is given to justify the similar changes geographically.

Hindi and Magahi are in a diglossic situation in almost every domain where Magahi is spoken as the first language. In the diglossic situation, it is mostly the case that one language is standard and another is less prestigious or has no prestige at all (Ferguson 1959). The particular sociolinguistic situation of which we are talking about presents the similar scenario. Hindi, being the standard language of the state, dictates most of the domains, particularly all the formal and most of the functional. It is the language of education, mass media, infotainment, formal communication, etc. Magahi language gets no educational and political affiliation or benefit. People see it as a hindrance to their economic mobility and generated a lousy impression, covert feeling, feeling of embarrassment, etc. towards their first or home language. The covert feeling is evident in the documentation of 2001 census of the government of India regarding the number of speakers of the language (Verma 2003). The number of speakers reported in the Census was much lesser than the people who actually

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speak the language, and the number keeps fluctuating every time. This happens due to some reasons as Verma (2003) has talked about. One of the reasons is that speakers are not aware of their mother tongues or which language they speak. Either the census people report different language, particularly the major language or the speaker is under the impression that their language is Hindi<sup>6</sup>. This led to the wrong numerical documentation of the language. Magahi has the fair number of speakers as we have mentioned, according to 2001 census 14 million people speak the language. Though we cannot validate or believe the data, there is definitely a huge number of speakers in Bihar and outside of Bihar as well.

### 5. Shift of Language and Identity in the Case of Magahi

Language shift is a linguistic phenomenon under which one language gradually gets displaced by another. The process of language shift involves the questions of the political identity of the language, the functional and formal domains of the use of the language, cultural and political dominant/submissive, prestige attached with the language, globalization or urbanization of the state/region, and the restricting domains of the language, unclear cultural and linguistic identity, etc. However, it is not the case that every reason is necessarily present for all kinds of sociolinguistic context; every sociolinguistic milieu presents its reasons and socio-political situations, and to understand the circumstances a very specific and particular study is needed.

The present situation of shift of the language from Magahi to Hindi is more a case of Dialect levelling (Trudgill 1986). if we see the rate at which the language is shifting. The subordinate one (Magahi) is almost surrendering itself to the socio-politically dominant one (Hindi). One reason which has been discussed by some linguists responsible for healthy bilingualism or diglossic situation (Ferguson 1959) is the ‘mutual intelligibility’<sup>7</sup>. However, I believe and argue that the same reason is responsible for this quick shift or dialect levelling, in the case of Magahi. It has been argued by many linguists that mutual intelligibility is one of the criteria of maintaining the two languages simultaneously for a long time. And this has been one of the reasons which kept languages alive in India without much threat (Pandit 1972). Though this could be one of the reasons for the healthy maintenance of bilingualism

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<sup>6</sup>This wrong impression is mainly build by the print and electronic media, and is also through education.

<sup>7</sup>Mutual intelligibility is a concept in socio-linguistics which means that the speakers of two different varieties can understand each other without much difficulty.

for long, it cannot be considered in the same way in recent times. Mainly, due to the rate at which the underlying socio-political factors changed in some last few decades, it seems this very nature of mutual intelligibility proves to be dangerous for maintaining bilingualism. The characteristic such as mutual intelligibility serves with the option to the speakers that they can easily shift to the language they want to be. The situation of any variety in Bihar (a so-called Hindi belt) is currently the same<sup>8</sup>. There are socio-linguistic situations where it is seen that less-mutual intelligibility is a healthier way of maintaining bilingualism, for the simple reason that is talked by Ferguson (1959) in the case of diglossia. He talks about the use of the languages in different domains; languages are strictly divided as per the demand of the domains. With the situation of no mutual intelligibility, languages strictly would be limited to the domain of use, and therefore, the cases of dialect levelling or shifting from one language to another would not be that easy or even needed. The specialized use of language is more stable, e.g. performing rituals in India (in Hinduism) is strictly done in Sanskrit. And this is the only domain where the language is kept in oral use; though the language is taught as subject or literature in academics. The association of Sanskrit is considered with Brahmins of India. And in earlier India, the use of the language is limited only to the Brahmins. It can be understood in way that Brahmins perform themselves using the language as one of the most significant tools. So, the point to take home is that the degree of mutual intelligibility criterion decides the maintenance of bilingualism, especially when a variety has no historical literary background, and is completely an oral language.

As we have discussed, language is the preferred and convenient way of performing one 'self'. In the places, especially in the so-called the Hindi belt Hindustani or Hindi is considered as the language of education, civilization, and prestige. Magahi speaking people or some other such linguistic groups (collective) that come under Hindi belt possess an unclear sense of cultural and linguistic identity. The group as I have observed has unclear sense of collective behavior; many of the educated speakers perceive or perform the attributes which suit the Hindi speaking culture. This unclear sense of identity is always vulnerable to the out-group practices and beliefs; they rely on out-group members' perception. Such group is most of the time perceived negatively by powerful out-group members. This gives the birth

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<sup>8</sup>The seriousness of the problem is mainly visible in Magahi only. Because Magahi is the closest to the Hindi in many aspects, say it structural, lexical, or political, etc. Since it lacks literary background; speakers hardly stand for its recognition.

of unhealthy collective esteem in unclear cultural collective self. The language as components of identity is not fixed or say intertwined. There is no one language which is participating in the formation of linguistic identity, and this unclear sense of linguistic identity further complicates the process. In such situation, esteem or psychodynamic factors act to choose or prefer one over other, and this preference is based on the various factors which we have discussed above. The unclear sense of collectivity comes from the psychodynamic self, which is different for different persons. As Bayer (1990) says, in multilingual society, there is a hierarchy of identities, i.e., each group associates to one identity and at the same time also attaches its association with other identities to a certain degree. This association of self to other identities to whatever degree is dangerous if that association is because of the psychodynamic factors and if that ‘identity’ is superior in terms of the socio-political dominant language or culture. Because psychodynamic factors always ask the question, am I worthy?

## 6. The Shift of Features and the Identity

Leaving apart the socio-politico-economic status and the out-groups’ perception; the language in question even socially (in-group) is not well accepted (especially by educated speakers). Language is seen as a bad language, vulgar, language of uneducated, language of uncivilized, etc. Even according to the speakers of the language, it is not appropriate for a ‘healthy’ communication. This can be associated with some of the features of the language that are considered very rustic or are rather offending, e.g. the use of the noun particle ‘wa’<sup>9</sup>, and the addressing morphemes like ‘re’ and ‘ge’ that are used for male and female respectively. Noun particle ‘wa’ is always used with nouns, functions to specify the person and is used as pejorative. It cannot be used with the kinship terminology; with the people older or elder in the hierarchy. It cannot be used to refer to a stranger.

- |                      |        |             |
|----------------------|--------|-------------|
| (1) sunil-wa         | bəjar  | jo-ʈo       |
| sunil-N.NH           | market | go.2NH-EMPH |
| Sunil, go to market. |        |             |
| (2) lili-a           | məmmī  | kəhā̃ həi   |

<sup>9</sup>Noun particle ‘wa’ has three more phonological variants and all are in complementary distribution. The other forms are ‘-a’, ‘-iya’, and ‘-ma’ in some varieties. These features have very profound implication on the structure of the language.

Lily-N.NH            mother            where be.PRS.3NH  
 Lily! Where is the mother?<sup>10</sup>  
 (3) ?ḍiḍi-ya                            ələi  
 elder sister-N.NH come.PRF.3NH  
 Did elder sister come?

In the above two examples, i.e., (1) & (2) the person who is addressing is elder and therefore there is the use of ‘-wa’ with the noun which gives a pejorative sense. Example (3) is an unacceptable construction in general environment . The kinship term ‘ḍiḍi’ refers to the elder sister, and therefore /-ya/, by rule should not be used. But this can be acceptable for some specialized speech context. So in a circumstance where the person is either angry with addressee or with the referents; for purpose of rudeness or disrespectfulness, it can be used with everybody<sup>11</sup>.

The noun particles are used with younger, friends and also with elder female members of the kinship hierarchy. The language, however, is not equal for the female, though, I refrain myself, saying it sexist. There are such more features of the language which are not considered appropriate by the modern speakers of the language; like the use of pronouns, discourse marker, absence of certain sounds, some kinship terminologies, etc. There is just one form of second person pronoun in Magahi as compared to three forms in Hindi. In Magahi the only form is ‘tū’ (you), which is used for all indifference to age, relation, sex, love, hate, etc. Though these features of the language considered bad or taken disapprovingly or are pejorative participate in the identity denotation to the language and, in turn, to the people who speak it. Along with these features, there are some more, like the use of first person pronoun ‘həm’<sup>12</sup> (I and We), it contributes in the linguistic identity denotation. The use of ‘həm’ is one of the linguistic prototypes of Bihar. It is identified with the regional association of the people. Certain linguistic features or tones or intonation or accents are stalwartly associated with the region such that the use of these linguistic features reveals the

<sup>10</sup>N- Noun particle, NH- Non-honorific, ADD- addressing morpheme, 2- second person, 3- third person, be-auxiliary, PRS- present aspect, EMPH- emphatic

<sup>11</sup>Everybody implies every relational hierarchy as well. So, it can be used with all the kinship terminologies, e.g. ččwa (uncle), ḍəḍwa (grandfather), məstərwa (teacher), etc. However, only in the restricted sense; when there is a heated argument or fighting.

<sup>12</sup>It is both used for first person singular and plural, and has both the inclusive as well as exclusive meaning.

regional association of the people. Language revealing the regional identity sometimes proves to be the factor that encourages speakers of that language to depart from it, especially if the status of the region is obnoxious. Bihar is one such region.

We shall analyze one more linguistic feature in detail, and then shall see its adverse effect on linguistic identity. The morphemes ‘re’, and ‘ge’, unlike /-wa/ particle which is bound, are free. These morphemes can be understood as allomorphs which are grammatically conditioned and are always used with the human class. These can be used with noun or can occur without noun, i.e., it can stand on its own. It can occur pre/post nominal position; while occurring pre-nominally, its form gets changed. Along with having a derogatory reference it marks the sexual differences as well, i.e., ‘re’ is used for male members and ‘ge’ for female members. These addressing morphemes are considered as the most objectionable features of the language, and Magahi is condemned by the speakers of other Indian languages (Grierson 1903). Grierson further says that the same feature is used to refer to the inferior people in other parts of India. Let’s see some of the examples of the use of ‘re’ and ‘ge’ in Magahi.

(4) əre            sunil-wa        kəhɑ̃ he!

ADD.NH   sunil-N.NH    where   be.PRS.2

Hey! Sunil, where are you?

(5) əge            lili-ya            ge                pɑpɑ    buləite        hətʰun nə

ADD.NH   lily-N.NH        ADD.NH        father    call.IMPF        be.PRS.3H TAG.H

Hey! Lily, Father is calling you, isn’t he?

(6) čəndən-wa        re                bəjɑr    jo        ʈo

chandan-N.NH    ADD.NH        market go.2    EMPH

Chandan, go to the market<sup>13</sup>.

The use of ‘re’ or ‘ge’ twice in a sentence makes the sentence furthermore disparagement. There is more rudeness in the behavior. There are many layers in the uses of these features; one can consult Kumar (2015) for further and detail sociolinguistic description of the use of /-wa/, and ‘re’, ‘ge’ linguistic features.

<sup>13</sup>ADD- addressing morpheme, H- honorificity, IMPF- imperfective aspect, PRS- present tense, 2- second person

The 'wa', 're', 'ge', 'həm', pronoun, and some more linguistic features reveal the regional and linguistic identity of the people, even if one is speaking a different language. I have seen people denying their linguistic identity, but recognized by his/ her use of the language; particularly by 'wa' feature, 'həm' pronoun, pronunciation, accent, etc. People who want to demonstrate themselves as Hindi speakers or want to deny their attachment with the language (Magahi) are consciously dropping these identity denotation features of the language. The use of 're' and 'ge' features is limited only in some distant rural areas, and is absent in the speech of the educated people of the region. Children are not encouraged to use these features and are taught the phonological distinctiveness which is not there in Magahi. The variety with these features are considered as the speech of 'Chamar' (supposedly the lowest caste of India, also untouchable), and whosoever use the features were scolded as 'don't speak the language of 'Chamar or Mushars'. The features like 're' and 'ge' are dropping from the language very quickly, the other features like 'wa' is also discouraged from the use. Magahi speech community is adopting Hindi phonology, morphology, syntax and its honorific constructions. It is visible in their Hindi-ized constructions because many of the languages of Bihar like Magahi, Bhojpuri and others don't have the distinction between the sounds like alveolar fricative /s/, plato-alveolar fricative /ʃ/, and the dental /ʂ/, as in the first sound of the word /sureʃ/ and last sounds of the same word /sureʃ/. Magahi speaking people who want to go away with their ascribed linguistic identity are adopting these sounds deliberately. As we can see the hypercorrection phenomenon in the use of the sounds /ʃ/ and /ʂ/ (retroflex); this actually brings the study of Labov (1963) in the picture, where he examined the pronunciation of variable /r/ in the word-final position, in New York. He found that the overt pronunciation of /r/ in the speech is due to the prestige attaches with the pronunciation, which is why speakers were more likely to use it in their more careful speech. The work revealed that the pronunciation of the sound /r/ at the word final position was spreading, as middle-aged and lower-middle-class women adopting it as a way of elevating their perceived social status. In the process, they displayed hypercorrection; same as Magahi speaking people use /ʃ/ instead of /s/ at various places. This hypercorrection may be fun for some persons, but the underlying psychological reality is that they are trying to upgrade their identity by performing in a certain way. This performance as we have seen involves the dropping of the various true features of Magahi, and adoption of Hindi features in return. One

more example I would like to present here; the changes on grammatical level. Since a Magahi speaker can shift to Hindi without much difficulty; in some situation they produce some constructions which are mixed e.g.

(7) čəndən-wa      kiḍər ja      rha      hɛ  
 chandan-N.NH    where go      be.IMPF.3MS be.PRS.3  
 Where is Chandan going?

(8) soni-ya      kene ja      rəhi      hɛ  
 soni-N.NH      where go      be.IMPF.3FS be.PRS.3  
 Where is Soni going?

Such construction is only seen in the case of progressive aspect. In the progressive aspect even the gender is maintained, Magahi otherwise has no grammatical gender. The speaker is in an environment where he/she is surrounded by some educated people who are having conversation in Hindi. Such constructions give us the structures which reveal how people always try to associate themselves with the one which has higher prestige.

The question of identity, in case of Magahi speech community, however, seems to be more or less attached to the language. The deliberate and constant effort of Magahi people to leave their language and adopt the one which has more prestige entails the fact that how language actively participates in the identity formation and its performance. Though its role is very central in the identity formation, it is vulnerable<sup>14</sup>, and this vulnerability leads one's disassociation of 'one-self' from one's language. It might be the case that because of the bad name, or the negativity associated with the language, or the region let them disassociate themselves from their one of the components of identity i.e., language. Though language can be one of the components, it carries a bundle of other elements which participate in the identity formation, as we have already discussed in the earlier sections.

However, it is essential to understand the kind of psychology behind a bad image of a language; certain features become bad or less sober only because there exists an option that gives an inkling of betterness, and this tincture of betterness is politically motivated. Since, the particular language is enjoying certain social and political status and is recognized as the language of education and scholarship. These languages with the passes of time developed to

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<sup>14</sup> Vulnerability comes from the insecurity; socio-political insecurity, economical insecurity, etc.



an extent to be used in all aspects and domains of life. The gap between the two languages is more the political, e.g., the use of second person pronoun in English; it doesn't have any honorific construction but has power and prestige and has no negativity attached to it. The negativity is not self-created or something natural; it is constructed or generated or made through different means by the government through the schooling, smart use of media, by showing the superiority of one over other, it is socio-politically constructed and is a process of mitigating one's identity and serving with other.

## 7. Closing Remarks

The components of 'self' which imbibes the socio-political factors get shifted to Hindi, now the new 'self' is imbibed by the new culture and now the new 'others' are the non-Hindi social-cultural and linguistic practices. The people who speak Magahi consciously turned to Hindustani, adopting its linguistic features, culture; showing 'otherness' in 'self' (here self is the semiotics of the community). The self-conscious act certainly reveals the state of oppressed mind and thought, which is in a way comes from the dominant culture and language through extensive schooling system, smart use of media and the way politically-economically strong hands handle higher education. Many people are not even aware what language they do speak, this separation of 'psychodynamic self' from the culturally and politically constructed 'self' imbalance the structure of 'identity'. 'Self' which imbibes emotion and motivation (Clarke 2011) is always fettered or psychologically induced by the desire to associate itself with the higher, dominant and socially-culturally-politically powerful community. Magahi speech community has totally surrendered its language and cultural identity to Hindi; it has hardly been seen that people speaking Magahi sought for its political recognition, or sought for its maintenance. People perceive it as a hindrance to their economic mobility and integration to the mainstream society. The 'self' is founded on the difference to others; one's semiotics, indexicality, and front become one's identity because it is different from others. We host this semiotics i.e., indexicality in the form of language, attitude, and behavior which are encapsulated from Hindi; this linguistic/cultural identity is idealized in opposition to the stigmatized identity (Goffman1968). Hindi-ized Magahi is an overt performance of deliberately exemplifying the feeling of being associated with a language which has power, prestige, and opportunities, and at the same time separating them with a language which has no hope, is considered rustic, is a hindrance to their development. The

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**Language in India**[www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 **17:11 November 2017**

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notion of linguistic identity, however, cannot be completely understood in isolation; it goes with the individual, group, regional and national identity. One has to delve deep into various social sciences, e.g., sociology, anthropology, economics, politics, theology, in order to properly handle the issue as vague as identity.

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 **17:11 November 2017**

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**Language in India** [www.languageinindia.com](http://www.languageinindia.com) ISSN 1930-2940 **17:11 November 2017**

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