

THE MORPHOPHONOLOGY OF THE MAITHILI VERBS: A STUDY ON THE ELISION OF THE STOPS IN MAITHILI

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Introduction

Among the main notions introduced into linguistic theory, especially into the theory of generative phonology, are included the notions of 'simplicity' and 'naturalness'. Simplicity is a measure proposed by generative linguistic theory which would automatically assign factors to competing linguistic analyses that would determine which of them was most satisfactory. Naturalness, too, is a notion introduced into this theory of generative phonology as an important criterion in evaluating analyses alongside such other criteria as simplicity.

There are three areas from which a natural explanation may be derived: (1) logical, (2) psychological and (3) phonetic. Our concern in the present paper is with the 'phonetic' plausibility of an analysis. An analysis, it is argued (Hyman 1975; Hooper 1976), must make phonetic sense, if it is to have any explanatory role in relation to the speaker's behaviour—such factors as relative ease of articulation must be taken into account. One of the first steps in defining naturalness more formally is to recognise the notion of 'natural class'. A set of segments is said (Hyman 1975) to constitute a natural class if fewer phonetic features are needed to specify the set as a whole than to specify any one member of the set.

The term in this sense applies to any set of speech segments which can be shown to have a highest common factor in this way; but as it stands the criterion needs to be supplemented by others, as it is too general. Several other relevant criteria have been suggested—e.g. that the set of speech sounds all turn up in the same phonological rules, undergoing similar processes together. Also, there are several difficulties in working with the notion in terms of features—e.g. the more natural solution is not always

the simpler. The notion of naturalness has thus been developed to take into account the relative naturalness of: (1) segments—mainly through the use of the marking convention, (2) sound systems—by computing the relative complexity of its units, this being defined in terms of marking values, and (3) phonological rules—based on the tendency for some phonological processes to be more frequent and phonetically more expected than others. These developments are continuing (see for more information, for example, Hyman 1975:138-185) and phonologists (e.g. Vennemann 1971; Stampe 1973; Hyman 1974; Hooper 1973 and 1976) have been attempting to improve this 'naturalness' theory of generative phonology.

It has repeatedly been noticed in various languages of the world that when morphemes are combined to form words, the speech segments of neighbouring morphemes become juxtaposed and sometimes undergo change. For example, it is often observed that consonants and vowels are subject to reduction in certain positions within a syllable or word, while they are relatively stable in other positions, often becoming reinforced phonetically. In order to capture such natural processes which affect syllabic and word structure, the traditional concepts of 'strengthening' and 'weakening' have been recently discussed within the framework of generative phonology (Foley 1970 and 1977; Vennemann 1972; Hooper 1973; Hyman 1975).

It has been suggested (Foley 1970 and 1977; Hyman 1975) that different consonant types should be assigned strength values to capture 'phonological relations' between segments, particularly as they function in syllables. The terms 'weakening' and 'strengthening' are used to define a scale of relative phonological strength. This scale refers not to the absolute phonetic strength of elements, but to the relation of the elements to one another in a phonological system.

Like the consonants and vowels of other languages, the Maithili consonants and vowels are also subject to strengthening and weakening processes relative to their position within syllables and words. The present paper analyses the morphophonology of the Maithili verbs and verb forms, and shows how the morphophonology of the verbs of this language provides significant evidences regarding the elision of *k b t* and *h* in different phonological environments. Since elision indicates relative phonological strength, the paper shows the order of the relative phonological strength of steps in Maithili.

Before we embark upon further discussions on the morphophonology of the Maithili verbs and verb forms, some general characteristics of the Maithili verbal system must be pointed out. The verbal system of this

language is basically inflectional: i.e. many of the desinence morphemes of the Maithili verbal system consist of elements like tense, aspect, mood, voice, gender, person and the social status of the person used in the subject/object of the sentence in which the verb occurs. This language forms its periphrastic tenses using one of the aspectual forms and a tense-mood marker. An aspect marker is attached to the main verb root, while tense and mood are marked mainly on auxiliaries. Similarly, gender, person and social status are also normally marked on auxiliaries. The category 'singular' or 'plural' relates only to certain parts of the noun phrase for certain classes of nouns and pronouns—any detailed discussions of which are beyond the scope of the present study—and this category has therefore no relevance for the morphology of the Maithili verbs. In other words, the verb form in Maithili always remains the same, no matter whether the grammatical subject of the sentence is in the singular or plural number.

The Auxiliary Verb Forms in Maithili

'Auxiliary' is a term used in the grammatical description of the verb phrase, to refer to the set of verbs, subordinate to the main lexical verb. The auxiliary verbs in Maithili are used with different markers. These markers make distinctions in tense, mood, gender as well as in person, according to the social status of both the grammatical subject and the object of the sentence in which the verb in question occurs.

Before embarking upon the analyses and discussions of these verb forms, a few general points with regard to the 'social status' of the person (whether the first, the second or the third) used in Maithili sentences must be clearly stated at the outset. As mentioned earlier, Maithili has a system of verbal inflection in which the verb is inflected for person and according to the social status of both the subject and the object, and not according to person and number as, for example, in Hindi (Pray 1969). Thus, the Maithili verbs are always used either in honorific or in non-honorific forms. As the name indicates, honorific forms are used to express levels of politeness or respect, especially in relation to the compared social status of the participants; non-honorific forms, on the other hand, are used when the social status of the person in question is relatively low. The latter forms are again sub-divided into two further categories: (a) intimate, i.e. the form which is used when the person in question is intimate to the speaker; and (b) non-intimate, i.e. the form which is used when the person concerned is not intimate to the speaker. Figure 1 indicates the binary development of the above-mentioned social status categories in Maithili:

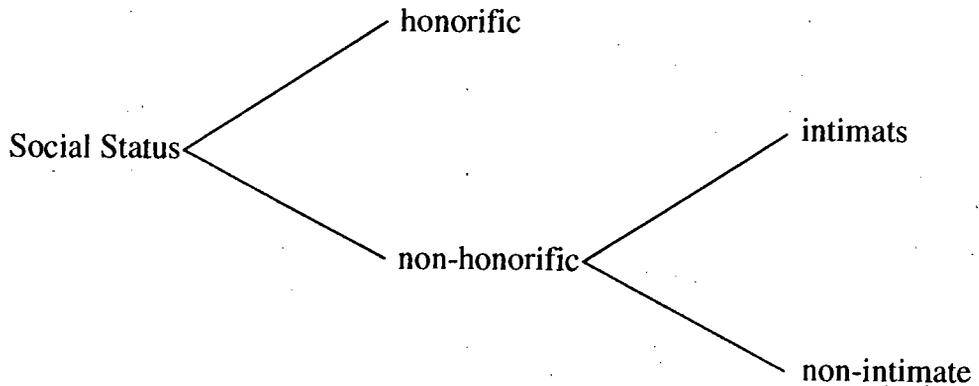


Figure 1: The binary development of the social status categories in Maithili.

When the grammatical subject or object of the auxiliary verb in Maithili is in the first person, the pronoun used for the subject is *hɔm* 'I', while the one used for the object is *hɔmra* 'to me'. Both *hɔm* (subject/nominative) and *hɔmra* (object/accusative) are always treated in the Maithili verbal system as having just one form each, and the social status markers attached to the auxiliary verb roots are primarily the ones that are used in the honorific forms of the second and the third persons. We shall therefore regard the verbal form of the first person in Maithili as simply 'honorific'.

But things become different when the subject or the object of the verb in Maithili is either in the second or in the third person. That is, when the subject or the object of the Maithili sentence is in the second person, the auxiliary verb can have one of the following three forms according to the social status of the subject or the object: (1) the *yɔu* form, (2) the *hɔu* form, and (3) the *rɔu* form. The *yɔu* form is honorific, and the pronouns used in accordance with this form are: *āhā/ɔpne* (subject/nominative) 'you' and *āhākē/ɔpnekē* (object/accusative) 'to you'; the *hɔu* form is at once non-honorific and intimate, and the pronouns used for this form are *tō* (subject/nominative) 'you' and *tora* (object/accusative) 'to you'; the *rɔu* form is both non-honorific and non-intimate, and the pronouns used for this form are also the same: *tō* (subject/nominative) 'you' and *tora* (object/accusative) 'to you'.

But when the subject or the object of the sentence is in the third person, then the verb in Maithili can have either an honorific form or a non-honorific one. The third person pronouns used in the honorific form are *i/o* (subject/nominative) 'he/she' or 'this/that' and *hinka/hunka* (object/accusative) 'to him/to her', while those used in the non-honorific form are also *i/o* (subject/nominative) 'he/she' or 'this/that', and *ekra/okra* (object/accusative) 'to him/to her' or 'to this/to that'.

The first, the second and the third persons in Maithili are all now categorized in Figure 2 below in accordance with the forms of their respective social status (ST):

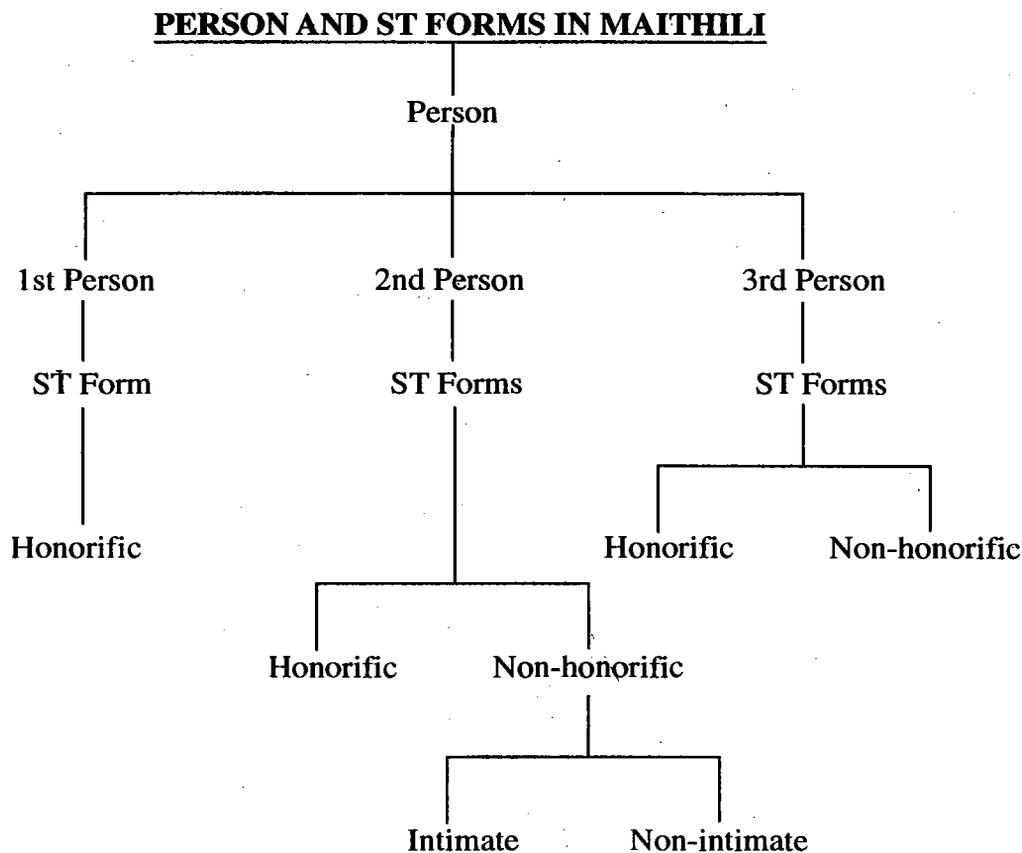


Figure 2: The first, the second and the third persons in Maithili categorized in accordance with the forms of their respective social status.

The above-mentioned 'person' and 'social status' categories in Maithili can be formalized in terms of four features: i.e. two features, (1st person) and (2nd person), for the categories of 'person', and two features, (honorific) and (intimate), for the categories of 'social status'. Each of these features may be either plus or minus. And all of them may be termed inflectional features since they enter into the phonological rules which categorize both the inflection of nouns and pronouns and the phonological variation of verbal forms usually labelled 'agreement' or 'concord'. A somewhat broad specification of these features is given below in (1):

- (1) (i) $V \rightarrow [\pm 1st\ person]$
 (ii) $[- 1st\ person] \rightarrow [\pm 2nd\ person]$
 (iii) $[+ 1st\ person] \rightarrow [+ honorific]$

- (iv) [+ 2nd person] → [± honorific]
- (v) [- 2nd person] → [± honorific]
- (vi) [- honorific] → [± intimate]/[2nd person]

The Forms in the Present Tense: Table 1a presents six Maithili sentences containing auxiliary verb forms in the present tense. The morphological analysis of these auxiliary verb forms is done in Table 1b. From the study of this morphological analysis done in Table 1b, we can draw the following two main conclusions about the regularities with which these verb forms occur in the present tense:

First, both c^h and the suppletive ∂c^h are used as auxiliary verb roots in Maithili in the present tense: ∂c^h is used only when the grammatical subject of the sentence is in the [- honorific] form of the third person; c^h is used in all other contexts.

Table 1a: Six Maithili sentences containing auxiliary verb forms in the present tense.

Person	ST Form	Sentence		Gloss
		Subject	Verb	
1. 1st	honorific	<i>hɔm</i>	<i>çh_i</i>	'I am'
2. 2nd	<i>yɔu</i> form	<i>ãhã</i>	<i>çh_i</i>	'You are'
3. 2nd	<i>hɔu</i> form	<i>tõ</i>	<i>çh^hɔ(h)</i>	'You are'
4. 2nd	<i>rɔu</i> form	<i>tõ</i>	<i>çh_ẽ</i>	'You are'
5. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>çh^hɔ_th_i</i>	'He/she is'
6. 3rd	non-honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>ɔç^h_i</i>	'He/she is'

Table 1b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verb forms as given in Table 1a.

Person	ST Form	Root	Present Tense cum-ST Marker		Verb Form
1. 1st	honorific	\check{c}^h	+	-i	\check{c}^hi
2. 2nd	<i>yɔu</i> form	\check{c}^h	+	-i	\check{c}^hi
3. 2nd	<i>hɔu</i> form	\check{c}^h	+	-ɔ(h)	$\check{c}^h\partial(h)$
4. 2nd	<i>rɔu</i> form	\check{c}^h	+	-ẽ	$\check{c}^h\bar{e}$
5. 3rd	honorific	\check{c}^h	+	-ɔ _t h _i	$\check{c}^h\partialthi$
6. 3rd	non-honorific	$\partial\check{c}^h$	+	-i	$\partial\check{c}^hi$

Secondly, as present tense-cum-social status markers, Maithili uses four inflectional suffixes: *-i*, *-a(h)*, *-e* and *-a^hi*. The suffix *-i* is attached to the root *c^h* when the subject of the sentence is either in the first person or in the honorific form of the second person; *-i*, in addition, is also attached to the root *a^h* when the subject of the sentence is in the non-honorific form of the third person. The marker *-a(h)* is attached to the root *c^h* when the subject of the sentence is in the *hdu* form (i.e. in [+ intimate] form) of the second person; the marker *-e*, on the other hand, is attached to the root *c^h* when the subject is in the *rdu* form (i.e. in [- intimate] form) of the second person. The suffix *-a^hi* is attached to the root *c^h* when the subject of the sentence is in the honorific form of the third person.

The Forms in the Past Tense: Given below in Table 2a are eight Maithili sentences containing those auxiliary verb forms that are used in the past tense:

Table 2a: Eight Maithili sentences containing those auxiliary verb forms that are used in the past tense.

Person	ST Form	Sentence		Gloss
		Subject	Verb	
1. 1st	honorific	<i>hdm</i>	<i>c^halā(h)ū</i>	'I was'
2. 2nd	<i>ydu</i> form	<i>āhā</i>	<i>c^halā(h)ū</i>	'You were'
3. 2nd	<i>hdu</i> form	<i>tō</i>	<i>c^halā(h)</i>	'You were'
4. 2nd	<i>rdu</i> form	<i>tō</i>	<i>c^halā</i>	'You were'
5. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>c^halā^hi</i>	'He/she was'
6. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>c^halā(h)</i>	'He was'
7. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>c^halī(hi)</i>	'She was'
8. 3rd	non-honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>c^hal</i>	'He/she was'

The morphological analysis of these verb forms is done in Table 2b. From the study of the morphological analysis done in Table 2b, we can draw the following four main conclusions about the regularities of these verb forms:

Table 2b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verb forms as given in Table 2a.

Person	ST Form	Root	Aspect Marker	PT Marker	Gender/ST Marker	Verb form
1. 1st	honorific	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -∂(h)ũ	č ^h ∂l∂(h)ũ
2. 2nd	y∂u form	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -∂(h)ũ	č ^h ∂l∂(h)ũ
3. 2nd	h∂u form	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -∂(h)	č ^h ∂l∂(h)
4. 2nd	r∂u form	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -ē	č ^h ∂lē
5. 3rd	honorific	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -∂thi	č ^h ∂l∂ ^{hi} i
6. 3rd	honorific	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -a(h)	č ^h ∂la(h)
7. 3rd	honorific	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ -i(hi)	č ^h ∂li(hi)
8. 3rd	non-honorific	č ^h	+ -∂	+ -l	+ ∅	č ^h ∂l

First, č^h is always used as the root of the auxiliary verb in the past tense (PT), and -∂ is used as its aspect marker.

Secondly, the morpheme -l is always used as the past tense marker. In the absence of any additional marker, the form č^h + -∂ + -l (č^h∂l) always denotes the non-honorific social status of its grammatical subject.

Thirdly, -a(h) and -i(hi) are the two gender-cum-social status markers that are attached to the č^h∂l form in different morphological contexts: -a(h) is attached when the grammatical subject is in the masculine gender and in the honorific form of the third person; -i(hi), on the other hand, is attached when the subject is in the feminine gender and in the honorific form of the third person.

Fourthly, -∂^{hi}i, -ē(h)ũ, -∂(h) and -ē are the four social status markers that are attached to the č^h∂l form of the auxiliary verb in different morphological contexts. Each of these social status markers remains neutral with regard to the gender of its grammatical subject. The marker -∂^{hi}i is used when the subject is in the honorific form of the third person; -ē(h)ũ is used when the subject is either in the first person or in the honorific form (i.e. the y∂u form) of the second person; -∂(h) is used when the subject is in the h∂u form of the second person; and -ē is used when the subject is in the r∂u form of the second person.

The Forms in the Future: Table 3a lists eight Maithili sentences containing those auxiliary verb forms that are used in the future:

Table 3a: Eight Maithili sentences containing those auxiliary verb forms that are used in the future.

Person	ST Form	Sentence		Gloss
		Subject	Verb	
1. 1st	honorific	<i>hḁm</i>	<i>rḁhḁb</i>	'I will be'
2. 2nd	<i>yḁu</i> form	<i>āhā</i>	<i>rḁhḁb</i>	'You will be'
3. 2nd	<i>hḁu</i> form	<i>tō</i>	<i>rḁhḁbḁ(h)</i>	'You will be'
4. 2nd	<i>rḁu</i> form	<i>tō</i>	<i>rḁhḁbē</i>	'You will be'
5. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>rḁhḁt^hin(h)ē</i>	'He/she will be'
6. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>rḁhḁta(h)</i>	'He will be'
7. 3rd	honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>rḁhḁti(hi)</i>	'She will be'
8. 3rd	non-honorific	<i>o</i>	<i>rḁhḁt</i>	'He/she will be'

The morphological analysis of these auxiliary verb forms is done in Table 3b. From the study of the morphological analysis done in Table 3b, we can draw the following four main conclusions about the regularities of these verb forms in the future:

First, *rḁh* is always used as the root of the auxiliary verb forms in the future, and *-ḁ*, is used as its aspect marker.

Table 3b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verb forms as given in Table 3a.

Person	ST Form	Root	Aspect Marker	PT Marker	Gender/ST Marker	Verb form
1. 1st	honorific	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-b</i>	+ \emptyset	<i>rḁhḁb</i>
2. 2nd	<i>yḁu</i> form	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-b</i>	+ \emptyset	<i>rḁhḁb</i>
3. 2nd	<i>hḁu</i> form	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-b</i>	+ <i>-ḁ(h)</i>	<i>rḁhḁbḁ(h)</i>
4. 2nd	<i>rḁu</i> form	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-b</i>	+ <i>-ē</i>	<i>rḁhḁbē</i>
5. 3rd	honorific	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-t^h</i>	+ <i>-in^(h)ē</i>	<i>rḁhḁt^hin(h)ē</i>
6. 3rd	honorific	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-t</i>	+ <i>-a(h)</i>	<i>rḁhḁta(h)</i>
7. 3rd	honorific	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-t</i>	+ <i>-i(hi)</i>	<i>rḁhḁti(hi)</i>
8. 3rd	non-honorific	<i>rḁh</i>	+ <i>-ḁ</i>	+ <i>-t</i>	+ \emptyset	<i>rḁhḁt</i>

Secondly, *-b*, *-t* and *-t^h* are the three markers used in the future in Maithili. They are used in different morphological environments and they also indicate different social status of their grammatical subjects. The marker *-b* is attached to the auxiliary verb-root *rḁh*, when its grammatical subject is either in the first person or in the second person. The form *rḁh* + *-ḁ* + *b* (*rḁhḁb*) – without any other social status marker attached to it–

always denotes the honorific social status of its grammatical subject. The markers $-t$ and $-t^h$, on the contrary, are attached to $r\partial h\partial$, when their grammatical subjects are in the third person. The form $r\partial h + -\partial + -t$ ($r\partial h\partial t$), without any other social status marker attached to it, always denotes the non-honorific social status of its grammatical subject, while $-t^h$ is attached to the form $r\partial h\partial$ when the gender of the honorific third person remains unspecified.

Thirdly, $-a(h)$ and $-i(hi)$ are the two gender-cum-social status markers that are attached to the auxiliary verb form $r\partial h\partial t$: $-a(h)$ is attached to $r\partial h\partial t$ when its grammatical subject is in the masculine gender and in the nonorific form of the third person; $-i(hi)$, on the other hand, is attached to it when the subject is in the feminine gender and in the honorific form of the third person.

Fourthly, $-\partial(h)$ and $-\bar{e}$ are the two social status markers that are attached to the auxiliary verb form $r\partial h\partial b$: the former is attached to $r\partial h\partial b$ when its grammatical subject is in the $h\partial u$ form of the second person; the latter is attached to $r\partial h\partial b$ when the subject is in the $r\partial u$ form of the second person.

Summary and Discussion: To summarize, the Maithili auxiliary verb forms in the present tense consist of such elements as shown in Figure 3:

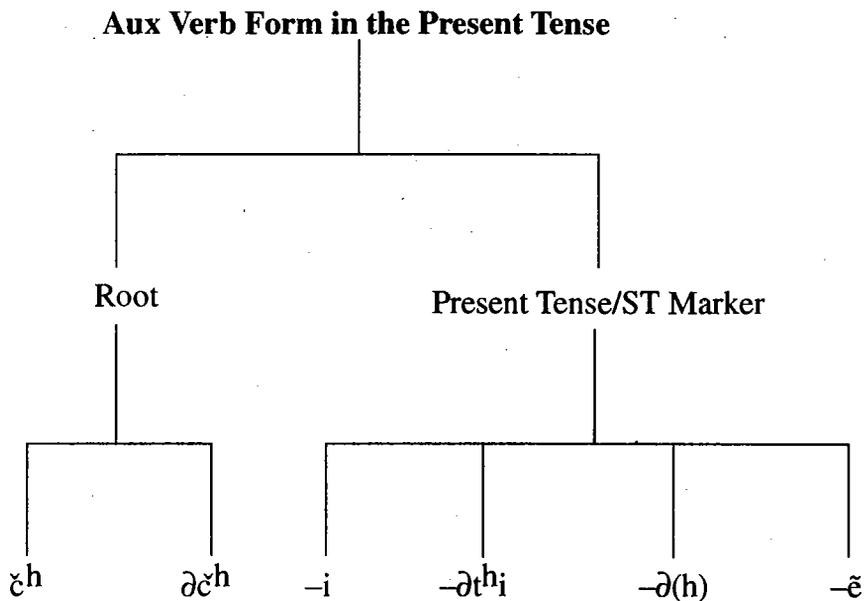


Figure 3: The Maithili auxiliary verb forms in the present tense

These present tense forms of the Maithili auxiliary verb are described in Rule (1) below:

Rule (1)

(i) Aux Verb in the Present Tense → root + present tense/ST marker

(ii) root → $\begin{cases} \check{c}h \\ \partial\check{c}h \end{cases}$

(iii) present tense/ST marker → $\begin{cases} -i \\ -\partial t^h i \\ \partial(h) \\ -\check{e} \end{cases}$

The past tense forms of the Maithili auxiliary verb are summarized in figure 4 below:

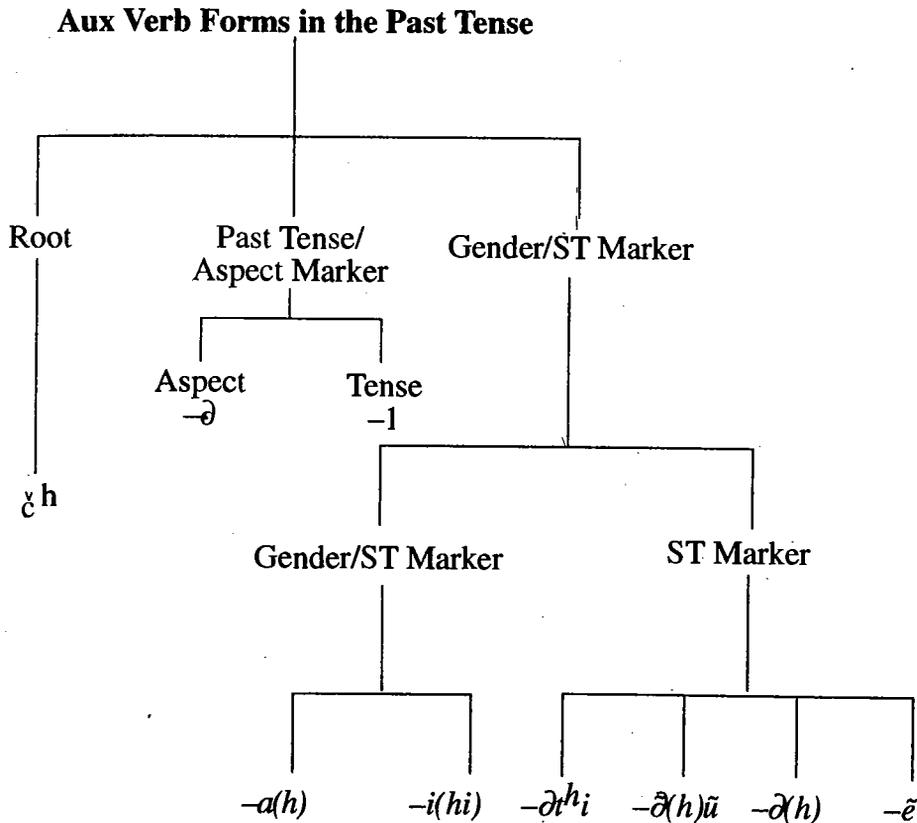


Figure 4: The Maithili auxiliary verb forms in the past tense.

These past tense forms of the Maithili auxiliary verb are described in Rule (2):

Rule (2)

(i) Aux Verb in the Past Tense → root + past tense/aspect marker + $\begin{cases} \text{a. gender/ST marker} \\ \text{b. ST marker} \end{cases}$

- (ii) root $\rightarrow c^h$
- (iii) aspect marker $\rightarrow -\partial$
- (iv) past tense marker $\rightarrow -l$
- (v) a. gender/ST marker $\rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} -a(h) \\ -i(hi) \end{Bmatrix}$
- b. ST marker $\rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} -\partial^h i \\ -\tilde{\partial}(h)\tilde{u} \\ -\tilde{\alpha}(h) \\ -\tilde{e} \end{Bmatrix}$

The Maithili auxiliary verb forms used in the future are summarized in figure 5 given below:

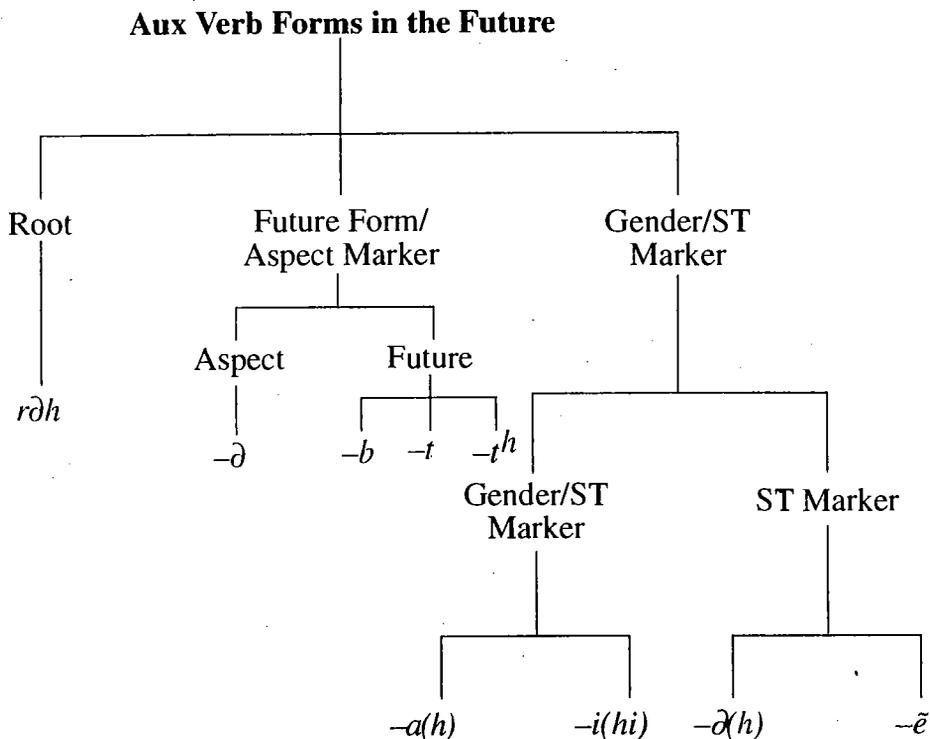


Figure 5: The Maithili auxiliary verb forms used in the future.

These forms of the Maithili auxiliary verb as used in the future are described in Rule (3) below:

Rule (3)

- (i) Aux Verb in the Future \rightarrow root + future form/aspect marker + $\begin{Bmatrix} \text{a. gender/ST marker} \\ \text{b. ST marker} \end{Bmatrix}$
- (ii) root $\rightarrow rdh$
- (iii) aspect marker $\rightarrow \partial$

- (iv) future forms $\rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} -b \\ -t \\ -t^h \end{Bmatrix}$
- (v) a. gender/St marker $\rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} -a(h) \\ -i(hi) \end{Bmatrix}$
- b. ST marker $\rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} -\partial(h) \\ -\bar{e} \end{Bmatrix}$

All these studies on the auxiliary verb forms in Maithili give ample evidences of elision—i.e. the omission of sound segments in connected speech. Like many other Indo-Aryan languages (see, for example, Chatterji 1926/1970 and 1960; Burrow 1955; S. Jha 1958), it has always been a feature of Maithili words that the weakly accented syllables have undergone a process of gradation, i.e. loss of phonemes or obscuration of vowels (S. Jha 1958). The same process of gradation, with resultant contraction, may be observed in operation in current Maithili. It is important, however, to distinguish between cases of elision which have already been established (S. Jha 1958) in the language for some time and those which have become current only recently, as in the case of the following Maithili auxiliary verb forms, which we already came across in earlier examples:

Present	Past	Future
$\check{c}^h\partial(h)$	$\check{c}^h\partial l\partial(h)\bar{u}$	$r\partial h\partial b\partial(h)$
	$\check{c}^h\partial l\partial(h)$	$r\partial h\partial thin(h)\bar{\partial}$
	$\check{c}^h\partial la(h)$	$r\partial h\partial ta(h)$
	$\check{c}^h\partial li(hi)$	$r\partial h\partial ti(hi)$

In these latter cases, the forms exhibiting the elision of a total syllable, as of (hi) from $\check{c}^h\partial li(hi)$ and $r\partial h\partial ti(hi)$, or of a total phoneme, as of h from the following:

Present	Past	Future
$\check{c}^h\partial(h)$	$\check{c}^h\partial l\partial(h)\bar{u}$	$r\partial h\partial t\partial(h)$
	$\check{c}^h\partial l\partial(h)$	$r\partial h\partial ta(h)$
	$\check{c}^h\partial la(h)$	

or of a particular distinctive feature only, as of the aspiration of n^h from $r\partial h\partial t^h in(h)\bar{\partial}$, are all typical of rapid, colloquial speech, whereas more

formal speech tends to retain the fuller form under the preservative influence of the spelling. These examples of elided auxiliary verb forms in colloquial speech are independent of the type of reduction affecting particular words and syllables under weak accent in connected speech, as discussed in the previous chapter. In the sections that follow, we shall again have further evidences of the elision of these and other speech segments in Maithili.

The Forms According to Both the Subject and the Object: As stated earlier, the system of verbal inflection in Maithili is such that its verbs are inflected for person and according to the social status of both the subject and the object. In this sub-section we shall first present and analyse those auxiliary verb forms that are used in accordance with the social status of their grammatical subjects and objects in the present, past and future, and then we shall summarize and discuss what light these forms throw on the process of elision in Maithili.

The Forms in the Present, Past and Future: To ascertain which inflectional forms are used in which cases, Table 4 provides a framework for all possible combinations in which the subject and the object, with their similar and/or different social status forms, can be used in the Maithili sentences. Based on this framework, later Tables 5a, 6a and 7a list 26 sentences each in the present, past and future forms, respectively. The main verb of all these sentences is the same: *kəhədi(t)* 'saying'; differences occur primarily in the social status forms of their subjects and objects, and consequently in their auxiliary verb forms as well.

Based on the framework outlined in Table 4, Table 5a lists 26 sentences which show how the Maithili auxiliary verb forms are inflected in the present tense in accordance with the social status of their grammatical subjects and objects. Table 5b presents the morphological analysis of the same auxiliary verb forms. Similarly, based on the same framework of Table 4, Tables 6a and 7a also list 26 sentences each and show how the Maithili auxiliary verb forms are inflected in the past and in the future, respectively. The morphological analysis of the verb forms of table 6a is done in Table 6b, while that of Table 7a is done in Table 7b.

Table 4: Possible combinations of the subject and the object that can be used in the Maithili sentences in the first, second and third persons—each person of the ‘subject’ and the ‘object’ columns is categorized in accordance with its ST forms.

Subject		Object	
Person	ST Form	Person	ST Form
1. 1st	honorific	2nd	<i>yðu</i> form
2. 1st	honorific	2nd	<i>hðu</i> form
3. 1st	honorific	2nd	<i>rðu</i> form
4. 1st	honorific	3rd	honorific
5. 1st	honorific	3rd	non-honorific
6. 2nd	<i>yðu</i> form	1st	honorific
7. 2nd	<i>yðu</i> form	3rd	honorific
8. 2nd	<i>rðu</i> form	3rd	non-honorific
9. 2nd	<i>hðu</i> form	1st	honorific
10. 2nd	<i>rðu</i> form	1st	honorific
11. 2nd	<i>hðu</i> form	3rd	honorific
12. 2nd	<i>hðu</i> form	3rd	non-honorific
13. 2nd	<i>rðu</i> form	3rd	honorific
14. 2nd	<i>rðu</i> form	3rd	non-honorific
15. 3rd	honorific	1st	honorific
16. 3rd	non-honorific	1st	honorific
17. 3rd	honorific	2nd	<i>yðu</i> form
18. 3rd	honorific	2nd	<i>hðu</i> form
19. 3rd	honorific	2nd	<i>rðu</i> form
20. 3rd	non-honorific	2nd	<i>yðu</i> form
21. 3rd	non-honorific	2nd	<i>hðu</i> form
22. 3rd	non-honorific	2nd	<i>rðu</i> form
23. 3rd	honorific	3rd	honorific
24. 3rd	non-honorific	3rd	honorific
25. 3rd	honorific	3rd	non-honorific
26. 3rd	non-honorific	3rd	non-honorific

Table 5a: Maithili sentences based on the framework outlined in Table 4, showing how the auxiliary verb forms are inflected in the present tense in accordance with the ST forms of their grammatical subjects and objects.

	Subject	Object	Verb		Gloss
			Main	Auxiliary	
1.	hðm	āhākē	kðhði(t)	č ^h i	'I am saying to you'
2.	hðm	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyð(h)	'I am saying to you'
3.	hðm	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyð(h)u	'I am saying to you'
4.	hðm	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyðn(h)ĩ	'I am saying to him'
5.	hðm	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyði(k)	'I am saying to him'
6.	āhā	hðmra	kðhði(t)	č ^h i	'You are saying to me'
7.	āhā	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyðn(h)ĩ	'You are saying to him'
8.	āhā	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h iyði(k)	'You are saying to him'
9.	tõ	hðmra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ð(h)	'You are saying to me'
10.	tõ	hðmra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ē	'You are saying to me'
11.	tõ	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðun(h)ð	'You are saying to him'
12.	tõ	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðhðk	'You are saying to him'
13.	tõ	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðhun(h)ð	'You are saying to him'
14.	tõ	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðhik	'You are saying to him'
15.	o	hðmra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðt ^h i	'He/she is saying to me'
16.	o	hðmra	kðhði(t)	ðč ^h i	'He/she is saying to me'
17.	o	āhākē	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðt ^h i	'He/she is saying to you'
18.	o	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðt ^h un(h)ð	'He/she is saying to you'
19.	o	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðt ^h un(h)ð	'He/she is saying to you'
20.	o	āhākē	kðhði(t)	ðč ^h i	'He/she is saying to you'
21.	o	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h ð(h)	'He/she is saying to you'
22.	o	tora	kðhði(t)	č ^h ð(h)u	'He/she is saying to you'
23.	o	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðt ^h in(h)ð	'He/she is saying to him'
24.	o	hunka	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðn(h)ĩ	'He/she is saying to him'
25.	o	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ðthin(h)ð	'He/she is saying to him'
26.	o	okra	kðhði(t)	č ^h ð(h)i	'He/she is saying to him'

Table 5b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verb forms in the present tense as given in the Maithili sentences of Table 5a.

	Root	Tense/ST Marker				Verb Form
		Subject		Object		
1.	čh	+	-i	+	∅	čhi
2.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂(h)	čhiy∂(h)
3.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂(h)u	čhiy∂(h)u
4.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂n(h)ĩ	čhiy∂n(h)ĩ
5.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂i(k)	čhiy∂i(k)
6.	čh	+	-i	+	∅	čhi
7.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂n(h)ĩ	čhiy∂n(h)ĩ
8.	čh	+	-i	+	-y∂i(k)	čhiy∂i(k)
9.	čh	+	-∂(h)	+	∅	čh∂(h)
10.	čh	+	-ē	+	∅	čhē
11.	čh	+	∂h	+	-un(h)∂	čh∂hun(h)∂
12.	čh	+	-∂h	+	-∂k	čh∂h∂k
13.	čh	+	-∂h	+	-un(h)∂	čh∂hun(h)∂
14.	čh	+	-∂h	+	-ik	čh∂hik
15.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hi}	+	∅	čh∂t ^{hi}
16.	∂čh	+	-i	+	∅	∂čhi
17.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hi}	+	∅	čh∂t ^{hi}
18.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hun} (h)∂	+	-un(h)∂	čh∂t ^{hun} (h)∂
19.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hun} (h)∂	+	-un(h)∂	čh∂t ^{hun} (h)∂
20.	∂čh	+	-i	+	∅	∂čhi
21.	čh	+	∅	+	-∂(h)	čh∂(h)
22.	čh	+	∅	+	-∂(h)u	čh∂(h)u
23.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hin} (h)i	+	-n(h)∂	čh∂t ^{hin} (h)i
24.	čh	+	-∂n(h)ĩ	+	-n(h)ĩ	čh∂n(h)ĩ
25.	čh	+	-∂t ^{hin} (h)∂	+	-n(h)∂	čh∂t ^{hin} (h)∂
26.	čh	+	-∂(h)	+	-i	čh∂(h)i

Table 6a: Maithili sentences based on the framework outlined in Table 4, showing how its auxiliary verb forms are inflected in the past tense in accordance with the St forms of their grammatical subjects and objects.

	Subject	Object	Verb		Gloss
			Main	Auxiliary	
11.	<i>həm</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)ū</i>	'I was saying to you.'
12.	<i>həm</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiə(h)</i>	'I was saying to you.'
13.	<i>həm</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiə(h)u</i>	'I was saying to you.'
14.	<i>həm</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiə(h)ĩ</i>	'I was saying to hm.'
15.	<i>həm</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiəi(k)</i>	'I was saying to him.'
16.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)ū</i>	'You were saying to me.'
17.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiə(h)ĩ</i>	'You were saying to him.'
18.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələiəi(k)</i>	'You were saying to him.'
19.	<i>tō</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)</i>	'You were saying to me.'
20.	<i>tō</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ</i>	'You were saying to me.'
21.	<i>tō</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəun(h)ə</i>	'You were saying to him.'
22.	<i>tō</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhək</i>	'You were saying to him.'
23.	<i>tō</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəun(h)ə</i>	'You were saying to him.'
24.	<i>tō</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhik</i>	'You were saying to him.'
25.	<i>o</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	{ a. <i>čʰələhəi</i> b. <i>čʰələ(h)</i> c. <i>čʰələi(hi)</i> }	'He/she was saying to me.' 'He was saying to me.' 'She was saying to me.'
26.	<i>o</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>chəl</i>	'He/she was saying to me.'
27.	<i>o</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	{ a. <i>čʰələhəi</i> b. <i>čʰələ(h)</i> c. <i>čʰələi(hi)</i> }	'He/she was saying to you.' 'He was saying to you.' 'She was saying to you.'
28.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəun(h)ə</i>	'He/she was saying to you.'
29.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəun(h)ə</i>	'He/she was saying to you.'
30.	<i>o</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ</i>	'He/she was saying to you.'
31.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)</i>	'He/she was saying to you.'
32.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)u</i>	'He/she was saying to you.'
33.	<i>o</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəin(h)ə</i>	'He/she was saying to him.'
34.	<i>o</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəin(h)ə</i>	'He/she was saying to him.'
35.	<i>o</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələhəin(h)ə</i>	'He/she was saying to him.'
36.	<i>o</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhəi(t)</i>	<i>čʰələ(h)i</i>	'He/she was saying to him.'

Table 6b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verbs in the past tense as given in the Maithili sentences of Table 6a.

Root	Gender/ST Marker		Verb Form
	Aspect Tense Markers Subject	Object	
1.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃ (h) ũ	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃(h)ũ
2.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃(h)	č ^h ə̃liyə̃(h)
3.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃(h)u	č ^h ə̃liyə̃(h)u
4.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃n(h)ĩ	č ^h ə̃liyə̃n(h)ĩ
5.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃i(k)	č ^h ə̃liyə̃i(k)
6.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃(h) ũ	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃(h)ũ
7.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃n(h)ĩ	č ^h ə̃liyə̃n(h)ĩ
8.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -yə̃i(k)	č ^h ə̃liyə̃i(k)
9.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃(h)	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃(h)
10.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ē	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lē
11.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃h	+ -un(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃hun(h)ə̃
12.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃h	+ -ə̃k	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃k
13.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃h	+ -un(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃hun(h)ə̃
14.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃h	+ -ik	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃hik
15.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + $\begin{cases} \text{a. } -ə̃thi \\ \text{b. } -a(h) \\ \text{c. } -i(hi) \end{cases}$	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃hi
		+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃a(h)
		+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃i(hi)
16.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃
17.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + $\begin{cases} \text{a. } -ə̃thi \\ \text{b. } -a(h) \\ \text{c. } -i(hi) \end{cases}$	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃hi
		+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃a(h̃)
		+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃i(hi)
18.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃thun(h)ə̃	+ -un(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃ə̃thun(h)ə̃
19.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃thun(h)ə̃	+ -un(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃ə̃thun(h)ə̃
20.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ ø	č ^h ə̃lə̃
21.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -ə̃(h)	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃(h)
22.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + ø	+ -ə̃(h)u	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃(h)u
23.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃thin(h)ə̃	+ -n(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃ə̃thin(h)ə̃
24.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃n(h)ĩ	+ -n(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃n(h)ĩ
25.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃thin(h)ə̃	+ -n(h)ə̃	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃ə̃thin(h)ə̃
26.	č ^h + -ə + -1 + -ə̃(h)i	+ -i	č ^h ə̃lə̃ə̃(h)i

Table 7a: Maithili sentences based on the framework outlined in Table 4, showing how its auxiliary verb forms are inflected in the future tense in accordance with the ST forms of their grammatical subjects and objects.

	Subject	Object	Verb		Gloss
			Main	Auxiliary	
1.	<i>həm</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəb</i>	'I will be saying to you'.
2.	<i>həm</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbə(h)</i>	'I will be saying to you'.
3.	<i>həm</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbə(h)u</i>	'I will be saying to you'.
4.	<i>həm</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbən(h)ī</i>	'I will be saying to him'.
5.	<i>həm</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbədi(k)</i>	'I will be saying to him'.
6.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəb</i>	'You will be saying to me'.
7.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbən(h)ī</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
8.	<i>āhā</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbədi(k)</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
9.	<i>tō</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbə(h)</i>	'You will be saying to me'.
10.	<i>tō</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbē</i>	'You will be saying to me'.
11.	<i>tō</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbən(h)ə</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
12.	<i>tō</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbənə</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
13.	<i>tō</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbən(h)ə</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
14.	<i>tō</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhəbənə</i>	'You will be saying to him'.
15.	<i>o</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	{ a. <i>rəhətə(h)</i> b. <i>rəhəti(hi)</i> }	'He will be saying to me'. 'She will be saying to me'.
16.	<i>o</i>	<i>həmra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət</i>	'He will be saying to me'.
17.	<i>o</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	{ a. <i>rəhətə(h)</i> b. <i>rəhəti(hi)</i> }	'He will be saying to you'. 'She will be saying to you'.
18.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət^hun(h)ə</i>	'He will be saying to you'.
19.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət^hun(h)ə</i>	'He will be saying to you'.
20.	<i>o</i>	<i>āhākē</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət</i>	'He will be saying to you'.
21.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhətə(h)</i>	'He will be saying to you'.
22.	<i>o</i>	<i>tora</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhətə(h)u</i>	'He will be saying to you'.
23.	<i>o</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət^hin(h)ə</i>	'He will be saying to him'.
24.	<i>o</i>	<i>hunka</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət^hin(h)ə</i>	'He will be saying to him'.
25.	<i>o</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhət^hin(h)ə</i>	'He will be saying to him'.
26.	<i>o</i>	<i>okra</i>	<i>kəhədit</i>	<i>rəhətədi</i>	'He will be saying to him'.

Table 7b: The morphological analysis of the Maithili auxiliary verb forms in the future tense as given in the Maithili sentences of Table 7a.

Aspect	Tense	Gender/ST	Marker	Root	Markers	Subject	Object	Verb Form
1.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	ø	rðhðb
2.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ð(h)	rðhðbð(h)
3.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ð(h)u	rðhðbð(h)u
4.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ðn(h)ĩ	rðhðvðn(h)ĩ
5.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ði(k)	rðhðbði(k)
6.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	ø	rðhðb
7.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ðn(h)ĩ	rðhðbðn(h)ĩ
8.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	ø		+	-ði(k)	rðhðbði(k)
9.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ð(h)		+	ø	rðhðbð(h)
10.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ẽ		+	ø	rðhðbẽ
11.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ðh		+	-un(h)ẽ	rðhðbðhun(h)ẽ
12.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ðh		+	-ðk	rðhðbðhek
13.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ðh		+	-un(h)ð	rðhðbðhun(h)ð
14.	rðh +	-ð +	-b +	-ðh		+	-ik	rðhðbðhik
15.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	{ a. -a(h) b. -i(hi) }		+	ø	rðhðta(h)
						+	ø	rðhðti(hi)
16.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	ø		+	ø	rðhðt
17.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	{ a. -a(h) b. -i(hi) }		+	ø	rðhðta(h)
						+	ø	rðhðti(hi)
18.	rðh +	-ð +	-th +	-un(h)ð		+	-un(h)ð	rðhðt ^h un(h)ð
19.	rðh +	-ð +	-th +	-un(h)ð		+	-un(h)ð	rðhðt ^h un(h)ð
20.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	ø		+	ø	rðhðt
21.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	ø		+	-ð(h)	rðhðtð(h)
22.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	ø		+	-ð(h)u	rðhðtð(h)u
23.	rðh +	-ð +	-th +	-in(h)ð		+	-n(h)ð	rðhðthin(h)ð
24.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	-ðn(h)ĩ		+	-i	rðhðtðn(h)ĩ
25.	rðh +	-ð +	-th +	-in(h)ð		+	-n(h)ð	rðhðthin(h)ð
26.	rðh +	-ð +	-t +	-ð(h)i		+	-i	rðhðtði

Summary and Discussion: The morphological analysis done in Tables 5b, 6b and 7b show a number of different markers that are quite

systematically used in Maithili to reveal the tense of each sentence as well as the gender and/or social status of the person used in its grammatical subject and/or object. Six pairs of such markers are:

- | | |
|---|--|
| (i) $-iy\partial(h)$
$-\partial(h)$ | (ii) $-iy\partial(h)u$
$-\partial(h)u$ |
| (iii) $-iy\partial n^h(i)$
$-\partial n^h(i)$ | (iv) $-iy\partial i(k)$
$-\partial i(k)$ |
| (v) $-\partial thin^h(\partial)$
$-in^h(\partial)$ | (vi) $-\partial thun^h(\partial)$
$-un^h(\partial)$ |

In each of these pairs, the first marker is used in the present and the past tense forms with suffixes like $-iy-$ and $-\partial i^h-$, while the second marker of each pair is used in future forms without using these $-iy-$ and $-\partial i^h-$ suffixes. There are, in addition, three other markers—i.e. $-\partial k$, $-ik$ and $-\partial(h)i-$ and these are used in all forms: present, past and future. All these auxiliary verb forms of Tables 5b, 6b and 7b provide further evidences of the process of elision occurring in Maithili. that is, they provide evidences of the elision of h and k in different phonological environments, as well as evidences of the weakening of n^h into n in particular phonological contexts.

Taking instances of the elision of h first, the auxiliary verb forms shown in the next page reveal that the elision of h from the suffix $-\partial h$ occurs in three phonological environments:

Present	Past	Future
$\check{c}^h iy\partial(h)$	$\check{c}^h \partial l\partial(h)\bar{u}$	$r\partial h\partial b\partial(h)$
$\check{c}^h iy\partial(h)u$	$\check{c}^h \partial liy\partial(h)$	$r\partial h\partial b\partial(h)u$
$\check{c}^h \partial(h)$	$\check{c}^h \partial liy\partial(h)u$	$r\partial h\partial ta()$
$\check{c}^h \partial(h)u$	$\check{c}^h \partial l\partial(h)$	$r\partial h\partial t\partial(h)$
$\check{c}^h \partial(h)i$	$\check{c}^h \partial la(h)$	$r\partial h\partial t\partial(h)u$
	$\check{c}^h \partial l\partial(h)u$	$r\partial h\partial t\partial(h)i$
	$\check{c}^h \partial l\partial(h)i$	

i.e.

- (i) when it occurs word-finally, especially when the final syllable of such words remains weakly accented;
- (ii) when it occurs in the final syllable of a word, preceded and followed by oral vowels; and
- (iii) when it occurs in the final syllable of a word, preceded and followed by nasal vowels.

These generalizations can be stated in terms of the following phonological rule:

Rule (4)

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ + \text{ low} \\ - \text{ voice} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \emptyset / V \text{ --- } (V) \#$$

It should be emphasized that the *h* of the suffix *-ðh* is elided only when it occurs in a weakly accented final syllable of a word. But if this *h* of *-ðh* occurs word-medially, as in the following verb forms, for example, then it simply does not elide in Maithili.

Present	Past	Future
ç ^h ðhun(h)ð	ç ^h ðlðhun(h)ð	rðhðbðhun(h)ð
ç ^h ðhðk	ç ^h ðlðhðk	rðhðbðhðk
ç ^h ðhik	ç ^h ðlðhik	rðhðbðhik

Similarly, the elision of *k* from the suffix *-ði(k)* or *-ik* occurs in Maithili whenever *k* appears word-finally, preceded by two adjacent vowels or a diphthong, as the following forms show:

Present	Past	Future
ç ^h iyði(k)	ç ^h ðliyði(k)	rðhðbði(k)

The elision of *k* can be described by means of the following phonological rule:

Rule (5)

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ - \text{ ant} \\ - \text{ cor} \\ + \text{ back} \\ - \text{ asp} \\ - \text{ voice} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \emptyset / VV \text{ --- } \#$$

But whenever the word-final *k* of the suffix *-ðk* or *-ik* is preceded by only one vowel, as in the following verb forms, for example, then the elision of *k* never occurs in Maithili.

Present	Past	Future
ç ^h ðhðk	ç ^h ðlðhðk	rðhðbðhðk
ç ^h ihik	ç ^h ðlðhik	rðhðbðhik

Likewise, whenever such suffixes as $-iy\partial n(h)\tilde{r}$, $-\partial n(h)\tilde{r}$, $-\partial t^h in(h)\partial$, $-in(h)\partial$, $-\partial t^h un(h)\partial$ and $-un(h)\partial$ are added to different auxiliary verb forms in Maithili, then the words which eventually surface contain the unaspirated nasal n instead of the aspirated n^h , as the following verb forms show:

Present	Past	Future
$\check{c}^h iy\partial n(h)\tilde{r}$	$\check{c}^h \partial liy\partial n(h)\tilde{r}$	$r\partial h\partial b\partial n(n)\tilde{r}$
$\check{c}^h \partial thun(h)\partial$	$\check{c}^h \partial \partial thun(h)\partial$	$r\partial h\partial b\partial hun(h)\partial$
$\check{c}^h \partial hun(h)\partial$	$\check{c}^h \partial \partial thun(h)\partial$	$r\partial h\partial thun(h)\partial$
$\check{c}^h \partial thin(h)\partial$	$\check{c}^h \partial \partial thin(h)\partial$	$r\partial h\partial thin(h)\partial$
	$\check{c}^h \partial \partial n(h)\tilde{r}$	$r\partial h\partial \partial n(h)\tilde{r}$

This weakening of n^h into n is phonologically conditioned: i.e. whenever n^h occurs intervocally in the final syllable of a verb form, it loses its aspiration. This weakening process can be described in terms of the following phonological rule:

Rule (6)

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ + \text{ nasal} \\ + \text{ ant} \\ + \text{ cor} \\ + \text{ asp} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow [-\text{asp}] / V _ V \#$$

Aspect Markers and the Elision of the Dentals and the Labials in Maithili

The category 'aspect' is used in the grammatical description of verbs, referring primarily to the way the grammar marks the duration or type of activity denoted by the verb. We divide this section into three parts: the first part outlines the system of aspects and the elision of the dental t in Maithili; the second part looks into some cases of the elision of b in Maithili; and the third part presents a summary of discussions concerning the elision of the dental t and the labial b .

The system of Aspects and the Elision of the Dental /t/ in Maithili: A complete paradigm of finite verbs in Maithili indicates such aspectual distinctions in the indicative mood as:

1. Perfect, and
2. Non-perfect (i.e. simple, imperfect and progressive).

This system of aspects is represented in the following tree-diagram:

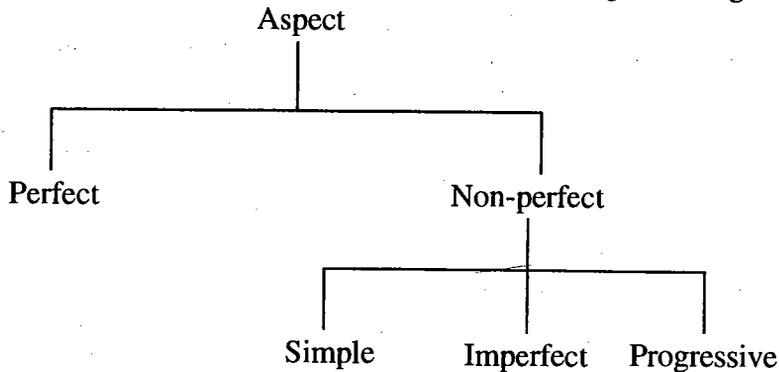


Figure 6: The system of aspects in Maithili

The verb forms that each of these aspectual distinctions takes can be shown by giving a paradigm of the verb *dek^h*, 'to see', as given in Table 8a.

Although each of the twelve Maithili sentences given in Table 8a contains only the non-honorific third person pronoun *o* 'he/she' as its subject, it must be pointed out that the person of the subject as well as the social status of that person does not affect the choice of aspect markers

Table 8a: A paradigm of the verb /dek^h/, showing each of the aspectual distinctions in Maithili.

Aspect	Tense	Sub ject	Verb Main	Aux	Gloss
Simple	Present	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ði^h</i>	\emptyset	'He/she sees.'
	Past	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ðl ðk</i>	\emptyset	'He/she saw.'
	Future	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ðt</i>	\emptyset	'He/she will see.'
Imperfect	Present	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ði(t)</i>	<i>ðç^hi</i>	'He/she is seeing.'
	Past	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ði(t)</i>	<i>ç^h ðl</i>	'He/she was seeing.'
	Future	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ði(t)</i>	<i>rðh ðt</i>	'He/she will be seeing.'
Progressive	Present	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h rðh ðl</i>	<i>ðç^hi</i>	'He/she is continuously seeing.'
	Past	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h rðh ðl</i>	<i>ç^h ðl</i>	'He/she was continuously seeing.'
	Future	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h rðh ðl</i>	<i>rðh ðt</i>	'He/she will continuously be seeing.'
Perfect	Present	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ne</i>	<i>ðç^hi</i>	'He/she has seen.'
	Past	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ne</i>	<i>ç^h ðl</i>	'He/she had seen.'
	Future	<i>o</i>	<i>dek^h ne</i>	<i>rðh ðt</i>	'He/she will have seen.'

in Maithili. In other words, aspect markers attached to the main verb-roots of Maithili always remain the same regardless of the person and the social status of the person given in the subject and/or object. The morphological analysis of the main verbs given in the above table is done in Table 8b. Relevant discussions based on the morphological analysis of Table 8b, especially discussions on the elision of the dental *t*, are presented in a later sub-section (2.3).

Table 8b: The morphological analysis of the main verbs shown in Table 8a.

Aspect	Root	Tense/ST marker		Aspect Marker		Verb Form
Simple	dek ^h	+	-ɔi ^h	+	∅	dek ^h ɔi ^h
	dek ^h	+	-ɔlɔk	+	∅	dek ^h ɔlɔk
	dek ^h	+	-ɔt	+	∅	dek ^h ɔt
Imperfect	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ɔi(t)	dek ^h ɔi(t)
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ɔi(t)	dek ^h ɔi(t)
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ɔi(t)	dek ^h ɔi(t)
Progressive	dek ^h	+	∅	+	rɔhɔl	dek ^h rɔhɔl
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	rɔhɔl	dek ^h rɔhɔl
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	rɔhɔl	dek ^h rɔhɔl
Perfect	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ne	dek ^h ne
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ne	dek ^h ne
	dek ^h	+	∅	+	-ne	-dek ^h ne

The Elision of the Labial /b/ in Maithili: There are some other verb forms in Maithili which provide evidences for the elision of the bilabial stop *b* in different phonological environments. Table 9a lists a number of different main verb-roots with *b* as their final speech segment. Table 9a also shows that when these verb roots are attached with the past tense and with the honorific social status markers, then the *b* of the original verb-root is elided from the verb forms that eventually surface. The morphological analysis of the verb forms given in Table 9a is done in Table 9b. Relevant discussions based on the morphological analysis of Table 9b, especially discussions on the elision of the bilabial stop *b*, are presented in the next sub-section.

Table 9a: The Maithili verb forms providing evidences for the elision of the bilabial /b/.

Root	Gloss	Honorific Past Tense Form of the Verb	Gloss
<i>pib</i>	'to drink'	<i>piḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'drank'
<i>deb</i>	'to give'	<i>deḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'gave'
<i>sib</i>	'to sew'	<i>siḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'sewed'
<i>č^hub</i>	'to touch'	<i>č^hulḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'touched'
<i>leb</i>	'to take'	<i>leḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'took'
<i>d^hob</i>	'to wash'	<i>d^holḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'washed'

Table 9b: The morphological analysis of the verb forms given in Table 9a.

Root	Past Tense Marker	Honorific ST Marker	Verb Form	Gloss
<i>pib</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>piḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'drank'
<i>deb</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>deḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'gave'
<i>sib</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>siḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'sewed'
<i>č^hub</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>č^hulḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'touched'
<i>leb</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>leḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'took'
<i>d^hob</i>	+ -1 +	-ḷ(h)ũ	<i>d^holḷḷ(h)ũ</i>	'washed'

Summary and Discussion: From the study of the morphological analysis of aspects done in Table 8b, we can draw the following conclusions about their regularities:

- (i) In the simple form, the main verb-roots in Maithili are not marked for aspect—they are attached with tense and/or social status markers only;
- (ii) The imperfect marker in Maithili is *-ḷi(t)* and it is always affixed to the root of the preceding main verb;
- (iii) The progressive form in Maithili is always marked with *rḷhḷ*, which is a free morpheme and which always occurs after the root of the main verb; and
- (iv) The perfect marker in Maithili is *-ne* and it, too, is always affixed to the root of the preceding verb.

Thus, the aspects in Maithili can be either unmarked, as in the 'simple' form, or marked in any one of the following three ways;

- (i) $-\partial i(t)$ (Imperfect)
(ii) $r\partial h\partial l$ (Progressive), or
(iii) $-ne$ (Perfect).

Of all these aspect markers, the imperfect marker $-\partial i(t)$ is the one which is very significant for us here as it provides some important evidence for the process of elision occurring in Maithili. The marker $-\partial i(t)$ has two main realizations: i.e. $-\partial i(t)$ and $-i(t)$. Table 10 shows the phonological contexts in which the two forms, $-\partial i(t)$ and $-i(t)$, occur in Maithili. That is, Table 10 clearly shows that there are two different phonological environments in which $-\partial i(t)$ and $-i(t)$ occur: $-\partial i(t)$ occurs when it is preceded by a consonant of the main verb-root; $-i(t)$, on the other hand, occurs when it is preceded by a vowel of the main verb-root. An informal rule given in (7) describes the two different environments in which the two imperfect aspect markers occur in Maithili.

Table 10: The forms $-\partial i(t)$ and $-i(t)$ attached to the main verb-roots in Maithili.

The Form	Verb Root	Aspect marker	Verb Form	Gloss
$\partial i(t)$	dek^h	+ $-\partial i(t)$	$dek^h\partial i(t)$	'seeing'
	sun	+ $-\partial i(t)$	$sun\partial i(t)$	'hearing'
	$k\partial h$	+ $-\partial i(t)$	$k\partial h\partial i(t)$	'saying'
	$h\partial s$	+ $-\partial i(t)$	$h\partial s\partial i(t)$	'laughing'
	sut	+ $-\partial i(t)$	$sut\partial i(t)$	'sleeping'
$-i(t)$	$\check{j}a$	+ $-i(t)$	$\check{j}ai(t)$	'going'
	k^ha	+ $-i(t)$	$k^hai(t)$	'eating'
	d^ho	+ $-i(t)$	$d^hoi(t)$	'washing'
	ho	+ $-i(t)$	$hoi(t)$	'happening'
	$n\partial ha$	+ $-i(t)$	$n\partial hai(t)$	'bathing'

Rule (7)

$$\text{Imperfect} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{l} -\partial i(t) / C \text{ — } \# \\ -i(t) / V \text{ — } \# \end{array} \right\}$$

Each of the two aspect markers, $-\partial i(t)$ and $-i(t)$, shows the elision of the dental t occurring in Maithili. The phonological context in which this elision takes place can be described in terms of the following phonological rule:

Rule (8)

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ + \text{ ant} \\ + \text{ cor} \\ - \text{ asp} \\ - \text{ voice} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \emptyset / \text{VV} \text{ — \#}$$

This rule says that the dental *t* occurring in the word-final position of the Maithili verb is elided, whenever it is preceded by two adjacent vowels.

Similarly, the the verb forms presented in Table 9a and morphologically analysed in Table 9b show that the labial *b* in the Maithili verb-roots like *pib*, *deb*, *leb* and so on is elided, whenever the past tense marker *-l* and the honorific social status marker $\text{-}\bar{a}(h)\bar{u}$ are attached to them. The phonological context in which this elision of the labial *b* occurs in Maithili can be stated in terms of the phonological rule given below:

Rule (9)

$$\left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ + \text{ ant} \\ - \text{ cor} \\ - \text{ asp} \\ + \text{ voice} \end{array} \right] \rightarrow \emptyset / [\text{V}] \rightarrow \left[\begin{array}{l} + \text{ cons} \\ + \text{ lateral} \\ - \text{ asp} \end{array} \right]$$

Summary and Conclusion

To summarise, it has always been a feature of the structure of Maithili words that the weakly accented syllables have undergone a process of gradation—i.e. loss of phonemes, obscuration of vowels, and so on (see S. Jha 1958, for more information). The same process of gradation, with resultant contraction, weakening and even total elision of speech segments, may be observed in operation in current Maithili. The forms exhibiting elision in Maithili are typical of rapid, colloquial speech, whereas more formal speech tends to retain the fuller form under the preservative influence of the spelling.

The morphophonology of the Maithili verbs and verb forms studied here provides significant evidences regarding the weakening of n^h to *n* and the elision of *k*, *b*, *t* and *h* in different phonological environments. Since elision indicates relative phonological strength (see, for example, Foley 1977), in Maithili velars are weaker than dentals or labials. As the dental *t* and the labial *b* are phonologically stronger than the velar *k*, both *t* and *b* dominate *k* in the Maithili clusters: *kt* and *kb*. With regard to dentals and labials, the dentals in Maithili are strongest as they or their reflexes remain

while velars and labials weaken. Like many other Indo-Aryan languages (Beames 1872-79/reprint 1966; Kellogg 1876/1893; Chatterji 1926/1970 and 1960; Burrow 1955; S. Jha 1958), the Maithili voiced dental *d* shifts to its voiceless counterpart *t*, as in the following compounds, for example:

təd + *kal* = *tətkal* 'immediately'
sənsəd + *sədḍsyə* = *sənsətḍsədḍsyə* 'member of Parliament'

This consonant shift must be regarded as an example of strengthening. Since according to the inertial development principal (Foley 1977) strengthening applies preferentially to strong elements, if only one element of a velar, labial or dental group strengthens, "that element is the strongest element" (Foley 1977:50). Since in Maithili dentals strengthen in preference to velars and labials, dentals are stronger than velars and labials. Thus, within the group of stops, the relative phonological 'strength' in Maithili can be shown as in Figure 7:

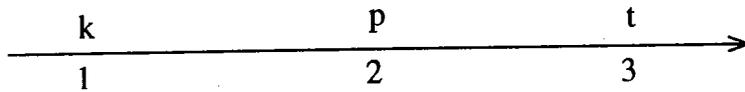


Figure 7: The relative phonological strength of stops in Maithili.

Even though our results concerning the relative phonological strength of stops in Maithili do not quite follow the pattern witnessed in most Romance and Germanic languages, for example, they should not be regarded as surprising. For, like Maithili, even in the group of Germanic languages, the dentals of German, too, are said (Foley 1977:50) to be phonologically stronger than labials. It therefore makes sense to say that for any particular language an order of relative phonological strength must be determined, as we have already done in the case of the Maithili stops, and that we may expect different languages to choose different orders. The phonological strength of stops in Maithili chooses an order which is similar to that of a language like German but not so similar to that of a language like English, for instance.

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