A Sociolinguistic Profile of the Bhils of Northern Dhule District

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Abstract

This study has a number of goals: (1) to determine lexical similarity between the “Dewali” Bhil, the “Mathwadi” Bhil, and the Pauras, and then between these and Marathi and Hindi; (2) to investigate intelligibility both between the dialects within and adjacent to the northern part of Dhule District; (3) to investigate bilingualism among the Bhil communities of northern Dhule; and (4) to investigate the different languages used by Bhillis in daily living and to investigate the attitudes and preferences that they exhibit toward different languages in these situations.

The Bhilli languages of Northern Dhule were found to be in three distinct divisions. Vasave, Bhilori, and Pauri are mutually unintelligible with one another, and in need of their own specific development. Bhilli languages are demonstrated to be used in most domains of life by all generations of the Bhil community with no indication that they will cease to be used in the foreseeable future. Further, the overwhelming majority of the Bhil population is not sufficiently bilingual to read and use another language.
Preface

This sociolinguistic survey was initiated to determine which of the languages in Dhule most effectively bridge the communication gap between mainstream Maratha culture and minority cultures. After a brief period of investigation it soon became apparent that such an interest was beyond the projected time limits of this survey project. Interests were narrowed to encompass only the Bhil groups of northern Dhule: hence, “A sociolinguistic profile of the Bhils of Northern Dhule District.”

It was my privilege to be involved in the four and a half months of research that went into this project. It began early in the September of 1987 with a brief three-week survey course taught by Frank Blair and me, followed by the initial research period, which continued until mid November of that same year. After a two-month spell in the highlands of Nepal, I returned late in the January of 1988 to complete the project by the end of March 1988.

Of course, this project would not be possible without the help of many people. I am grateful for the hospitality extended to me by the many different mission stations. Other local organizations were of great assistance in providing hospitality and transportation to some of the countryside areas. The mission stations in Chenchpada, Nawapur tahsil, and Kalvan, Nasik Dt., were also invaluable for their services of hospitality.

I am also grateful to the many Bhils who patiently taught me the many words of their language and who faithfully listened to the many lengthy recordings involved in dialect area studies. In many cases, the hospitality extended to me was well beyond their financial capabilities, and I humbly thank them. Gladwin J. and NamDeo G. were my fellow researchers who became much more through friendship. Without their valuable assistance in data gathering and their knowledge of the local area this project would not have been possible. I am also grateful to Lazerus V., Lazerus P., and Rupsing V. who helped in data gathering during various stages.

I am indebted to Frank Blair who provided guidance and insight during the beginning stages. Roland and Helena O. opened their home to me for the brief months I was in Dhule. It was there that I was introduced to the delights of Swedish cooking! I am grateful for their friendship, as well as their keen support of the whole project. Their knowledge after many years of living in Dhule was invaluable.

It should go without saying that I, alone, am responsible for any errors in this paper.

Stephen Watters
Kathmandu, Nepal
May 28, 1988
Maps

Figure 1. The Bhil homeland
Figure 2. Dhule district
Figure 3. The Bhils of Northern Dhule District
1 Introduction

1.1 Geography

The following section on geography has been taken from Blair's *A preliminary investigation into the Ahirs of Dhule District* (1988:1):

The district of Dhule (Dhulia)\(^1\) was known as West Khandesh until it was named after the district headquarters in 1960. The *Dhulia District Gazetteer*\(^2\) describes the situation of the district with the following words:

> It is the western-most of the districts on the northern border of Maharashtra State. It is bounded on the west by Dangs, Surat and Broach districts of Gujarat State, on the north by Baroda district of Gujarat and Jhabua and West Nimar districts of Madhya Pradesh, and on the east and south by Jalgaon and Nasik districts, respectively of Maharashtra State. (Kunte, et al. 1974:1)

The district has been composed of ten tahsils since at least 1971. They are: Akkalkuwa, Akrani,\(^3\) Dhule, Nandurbar, Nawapur, Sakri, Shahada, Shirpur, Sindkhede, and Taloda.

The Western Ghats, that range of mountains that stretches from Maharashtra south to Tamil Nadu, have their northern terminus in Dhule district. The Satpuda (Satpura) hills run through Akkalkuwa tahsil and Akrani tahsil, in the northern part of Dhule district. Most of this region is above 300 meters in altitude. The Toranmal plateau lies at 1,000 meters between two ranges of the Satpudas. In Sakri tahsil, in the southern part of the district, may be found the Sahyadri hills. This portion of the district also lies above 300 meters in altitude, though it is not as high as the Satpudas. Until recent times these hills were densely forested, but this is no longer the case.

In between the Satpudas and the Sahyadris lies the Tapti (Tapi) river valley. The tahsils of Talode, Shahada, and Shirpur form the north side of the Tapti river basin, while the tahsils of Dhule, Sindkhede, Nawapur, and Nandurbar all lie to the south of the Tapti. Together they form a valley which is generally less than 300 meters in altitude. This has traditionally been the part of the district with the greatest amount of agriculture.

1.2 People

Dhule district is a rural area, its colorful ethnic population living in small villages and hamlets scattered across the countryside. While a small 20 percent of its population resides in urban areas, usually built up around the tahsil headquarters, over 80 percent of its population reside in rural areas. The rurality also accounts for 96 percent of the scheduled tribe population. It follows naturally that 78 percent of the population is involved in some type of agricultural labor, although scheduled tribes are said to "...subsist on forest produce and allied work".\(^4\)

Among the groups that make up the rural population of Dhule, are the scheduled tribes, chief of whom are the Bhil, Dhanka, Gamit, Kokna, Naikda, and Pardhi tribes.\(^5\)

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\(^1\)Place names often have two variations in spelling in Dhule, where Hindi spelling is replaced by its Marathi counterpart. Where this variation is known to the researcher the Marathi spelling is written first followed by the Hindi spelling in parenthesis. All reoccurrences of a place name in the text are written in Romanized Marathi.

\(^2\)This Gazetteer contains the 1961 census returns.

\(^3\)Akrani tahsil and Akkalkuwa tahsil together once formed a tahsil known as Akrani-mahal. Akrani tahsil is sometimes (unofficially) referred to as Dhadgaon, which is properly the name of the town that is the tahsil headquarters.

\(^4\)All figures and quotes in this paragraph are obtained from pages 17 and 18 of *The District Dhule census handbook*. This handbook contains the 1981 census returns and was published in 1985.

\(^5\)This list is drawn from page 17 of the District census handbook of Dhule District.
The District census handbook of Dhule District states that “Dhule accounts for the highest percentage of scheduled tribes in the state. Out of the total districts population of 2,050,294, scheduled tribe population is 831,064 or 40.53 percent. (17).”

The Bhils are the largest of the scheduled tribes in Dhule, numbering 300,009 persons in the 1961 census returns. At that time they accounted for 22 percent of the population of Dhule. They belong to that extensive group, known under a variety of names, that “…stretches from the Aravadis in the north to Dans in the south and extend up to the forests of Bhopal in the north east (Bhils of Ratanmal (foreword)).” Grierson (LSI IX, part III, b) claims that Bhils may be found outside this area in various districts of Berar. He also claims that Bhilli dialects are spoken by nomadic tribes in the Punjab, the United Provinces, and in Mindnapore district of Bengal. Their territory is certainly extensive, and, not surprisingly, the Bhil tribes of today have splintered into a host of local and regional variants, each manifesting its own respective language in varying degrees of distinctiveness. The Bhils of northern Dhule are no exception, though they live in a relatively small geographical area.

Isolating the linguistic groupings that constitute the modern Bhils of northern Dhule poses some problems. Traditional classifications are often misleading. It is not unusual, for example, for a linguistically homogenous group that stretches across a large geographical area to have a multiplicity of names. Conversely, distinct linguistic groupings belonging to a small geographical area will sometimes be referred to by the same name. These names are derived from place names, geographical features, caste names, names given by other ethnic groups, names from mythology, and probably other derivations the researcher is not aware of. This research project is aimed at getting beyond those classifications, useful as they may be, and in defining the groups from a sociolinguistic point of view.

1.2.1 Dewali Bhil

The Bhils of northern Dhule may be divided into three broad groupings. The first of these groups are sometimes referred to as the Dewali Bhil. The term is used specifically by those living higher up in the Satpudas and refers to any of the Bhils living on the plains around the Tapi river basin. The plains people, however, refer to themselves by other names, though they are not unaware of the name “Dewali” used by outsiders. This is somewhat different from the situation that Grierson (LSI IX, part III, 158) describes in the early part of the century. He reports that the plains below the Satpuda range around Taloda, Nandurbar, and Mewas are locally called the des or deh, and, not surprisingly, the local language is referred to as Dehwali. This term, however, is no longer found to be in general use, except by those in the Satpudas.

Among the so-called “Dewali Bhils” is a rather large and fairly homogenous group of Bhils who speak dialects of the Vasave language. Depending on their locality, they are known by a variety of names such as Adawasi Bhil, Dhogri Bhil, Kesihi Bhil, Bhilori, Padwi Bhilor, Ambodia Bhil, and Vasave Bhil. They live in small villages and hamlets around the Tapi River, stretching into the Surat and Bharuch districts of Gujarat State. North of the Tapi River, they live in the southern areas of Akkalkuwa and Akrani tahsils, on a narrow belt of land between the Satpudas and the banks of the Tapi River. Some Vasave hamlets may also be found in the Satpudas. South of the Tapi River, they live in the central and northern parts of Nandurbar and Nawapur tahsils. It is not certain how far their boundaries extend into Gujarat, although it is known that Vasave speaking communities exist as far as Dediapada in Bharuch district of Gujarat state.

There are no specimens of the Vasave language, under such a name, in Grierson’s language survey of India. What Grierson refers to as Dehwali is probably known to the researcher as Vasave and as such classifies it as “…closely related to other Bhil dialects such as Mawchi, Rani, etc. (LSI IX, part III, 158).”

Another group of the plains, distinct from the aforementioned Vasaves, are the Kotali Bhils, living at the foot of the Satpudas north of Shahada, near Vasave speaking communities. It is not certain whether

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6 A scheduled tribe, as defined in The District census handbook of Dhule District, is a tribal community that has been given special rights and privileges under article 342(i) of the Indian Constitution by the President of India. These rights include protection from outsiders who might otherwise force them to leave or sell the traditional land areas that belong to them (Furer-Haimendorf 85:39)
this is the same group that Grierson (LSI IX, part III, p.168) refers to when he talks about the Kotalis, “…a wild Bhil tribe in the Satpudas”. Today, no such people group is found to exist under such a name in the Satpudas. Vasave-speaking people claim to have difficulty understanding the language of the Kotali Bhils, whom Grierson in his studies found to speak a dialect almost identical with Khandesi. Other “Dewal”, or plains groups, are not talked about in this report.

1.2.2 Mathwadi Bhil

Mathwadi Bhil is a general term denoting any of the Bhils living in the Satpuda hills, and is used, chiefly, by Bhils living on the plains. The hill groups themselves, however, refer to themselves by other names. Grierson (LSI IX, part III, p. 157) reports seven different Bhil tribes living in the Satpudas. Among them he reports the Mathwadi, Nali, and Kayali tribes, although he has no specimens of their language. He comes to the conclusion that these dialects “…do not any longer exist. It is therefore probable that the various names of the hill dialects are only local denominations of slightly varying forms of Khandesi.”

To a certain extent this statement is true today. The Mathwadi tribe, as such, does not exist, except as a term given by outsiders. And, the people group under the name Kayali is nowhere to be found. However, the Bhil communities of the Satpudas are very much alive, retaining their own tribal identity, and speaking various dialects quite different from Khandesi (also known as Ahirani) and Marathi.

Ninety-five percent of the population of Akrani tahsil, where a large percentage of the Mathwadi Bhil tribes live, is made up of scheduled tribes. Until recently, the valleys and hills of the Satpudas were accessible only by jeep track and foot. It still remains comparatively remote from the civilized plains of central India. Though the area is quite small geographically, it is of considerable size in terms of the amount of time it takes to travel from one area to another. This, undoubtedly, accounts for the fact that so many different Bhil groups exist closely together in such a seemingly small area.

Four principal ethnic groups are found to live in the Satpudas; the Molaya Bhils, the Bhiloris, the Nahals (Nahalis), and the Pauras. The ethnic boundaries of the Molaya Bhils are unknown to the researcher. According to hearsay, they live in northern Akkalkuwa tahsil spilling over into Gujarat, and along the banks of the Narmada River. It is certain, however, that they do not live along the banks of the Narmada River in the central and eastern regions of northern Akrani tahsil.

The Bhiloris are a small group who live, principally, around Dhadgaon, the Akrani tahsil headquarters. It may be that they are closely related to a larger group known as the Noiri Bhil, who are often found near Paura villages. The Noiri language of the Satpudas is almost identical to the Bhilori language, though its degree of similarity with the dialects of other Noiri speaking areas is not known.

Grierson (LSI IX, part III, 105) reports that “Noiri is the dialect of a small tribe in the Bhopawar Agency of Central India” (just north of the Satpudas). It is difficult to say whether the Nori of Bhopawar Agency and the Noiri of Dhule are the same languages. Only 346 speakers of Nori were reported in the Census figures Grierson had access to. This makes the assumption seem implausible that they are the same language.

A group of considerable interest is the Nahals (Nahalis) of Toranmal, living in northern Akrani tahsil on the Madhya Pradesh border. They are few in number, inhabiting approximately twelve different hamlets around Toranmal. There is much speculation as to the history and origin of this group.

It is thought that, perhaps, their language is one of the original languages of India. According to Kuiper (1962:79) “about 24 percent of the Nahali vocabulary have no correspondences whatever in India” suggesting that Proto-Indian and an early Munda language “contributed to the genesis of this particular language” (Kuiper 1962:80). Today, Nahali has been influenced by Kurku, “whose strong influence must have begun to make itself felt only after the extermination of the Nahal tribe, after 1800 A.D.” (Kuiper 1962:58). Stahl (1986:52) reports a similar situation concerning the Nihals in Chikaldara taluk and Akola Dt., who identify themselves with the Korku people, and language. The Nahals of

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7Among these seven tribes he also includes Mawchi, Dehwali, and Kotal, who are found to live, principally, on the plains. Mawchi communities, however, do live in the hills of Sakri and Nawapur tahsil.

8This figure is drawn from table 7 on page 17 of the District census handbook of Dhule District The percentage has been rounded to the nearest whole number.
Toranmal, however, speak a language similar to Pauri, although they view themselves as different from the surrounding Paura communities. Another community, north of Amalwadi in Jalgaon Dt., identify themselves by the name Nahale, but speak a language similar to Ahirani. It would seem that the catastrophic events that led to the downfall of the Nahal nation forced many communities to give up those traits that made them peculiarly Nahali. Language, perhaps, was the first trait to disappear in an attempt to appear similar to surrounding groups.

1.2.3 Paura

A third rather extensive group of northern Dhule are the Pauras, who are the largest of the tribal groups along the northeast borders of Dhule. Their boundaries extend from northern Akrai tahsil, where they are considered part of the Mathwadi Bhil population, along the northeast borders of Dhule district into the northwest regions of Jalgaon district. The vast majority of their numbers, however, are said to live in Madhya Pradesh, their boundaries extending as far as Indore and Bhopal in central M.P. The focus of this survey deals, primarily, with those Pauras living along the northern borders of Maharashtra.

When talking about the Pauras of the Satpudas, Grierson (LSI IX, part III, 72) reports that they deny they are Bhils and claim to be descendants of the Rajput Pawars who settled in Khandesh seven generations before the turn of the century. The members of one Paura community of northwest Jalgaon Dt., however, have settled in the area only within the last 60 years, and many even newer additions from Madhya Pradesh have been added within the last ten years. Grierson says: “Their northern origin is confirmed by their language, which has several points of connection with the Barel dialect of Udepur, and with the Bhil dialects of Rajpipla, Ali Rajpur, and Barwani.”

In fact, Pauras divide their ethnic community into two distinct groups; those who speak Bareli and those who speak Rathwi. These two terms are used among themselves more frequently than the general term, "Pauri". This distinction seems to be based, solely, on language variation, rather than caste, custom, dress, or other such distinctions. Barelis are found mostly in Akrai, Shahada, and Shirpur tahsils of Dhule, and regions of western Khargon District in M.P. The majority of Rathwis are found in Sendhwa tahsil of Khargon District, but also in Shirpur tahsil, and Chopda tahsil of Jalgaon District. This is not a concise geographical definition, but merely a generality. Many Paura communities are found to consist of both Barelis and Rathwis. It is not certain what type of Pauri communities live toward Indore and Bhopal.

Other Bhil groups and scheduled tribes of Dhule are not talked about in this report.

1.3 Languages

A number of specific Bhilli languages have been introduced above, but mostly in reference to their geographical setting. More complicated is the question of linguistic boundaries and concise definitions of language. Grierson broaches the problem well when he notes:

…on the one side, that the so called Bhil dialects gradually merge into the language of Khandesh, on the other, that Khandesi itself is not a Marathi dialect. Several suffixes, it is true, are identical with those used in Marathi. But most suffixes and the inner form of the language more closely agree with Gujarati and Rajasthani. (LSI IX, part III)

On the other hand, the Dhule District Gazetteer states that “…Bhilli can at best be regarded as a dialect of Marathi with a corrupt mixture of Gujarati and probably Hindi (Kunte et. al., 1974:208,209).” This researcher’s findings, however, agree with a contradictory statement found on the same page of the Gazetteer. It states that individuals in rural and semi-urban areas have not overcome linguistic barriers with the outside (Marathi and Ahirani speakers), and that they mix more freely with their respective linguistic groups. This is not surprising in light of the fact that the Bhilli languages of northern Dhule are lexically distinct both from Marathi and Ahirani, as well as the Bhilli languages of northern Gujarat and southern Rajasthan.

If, indeed, Bhilli is a distinct language from Marathi and Ahirani, then it becomes important to determine the level of bilingualism in Marathi among Bhilli speaking communities. In the 1961 Census
returns 27.72 percent of the population of Dhule were listed as mother-tongue speakers of Bhilli, while 59.3 percent\(^9\) were listed as mother-tongue speakers of Marathi. At that time, 8 percent of the population were reported to speak a language other than their mother tongue. That situation has most likely changed in the last twenty-five years and a larger percentage of the population is bilingual.

The individuals in rural communities of Dhule, however, are not likely to attain to high levels of bilingualism unless they have access to higher level education. Examining the levels of education that rural individuals attain to is a helpful step in determining possible levels of bilingualism. One convenient way of doing that is to examine the ability of the rurality to read and write.

According to the *District census handbook of Dhule District*, the Indian Census defines a literate as a person “…who can both read and write with understanding in any language (1985:18).” This includes those who have had no formal education, but who can read and write as a result of other learning. Those children under the age of five are assumed to be illiterate.

According to this definition, 37.51 percent of the inhabitants of Dhule are literate. Urban areas, however, inflate the district average. A case in point is a comparison between Akrani tahsil, one of the more rural tahsils, and Dhule tahsil, the more urbanized tahsil in Dhule district. Akrani tahsil has the lowest literacy rate at 6.96 percent while Dhule tahsil has the highest rate at 50.07 percent. Among those villages with less than two thousand inhabitants, which represent 88 percent of the villages of Dhule, the average literacy rate is 17.46 percent. This suggests that the majority of the population of scheduled tribes is illiterate and uneducated.\(^{10}\)

\(^9\)According to Blair in his *A preliminary investigation into Ahirani bilingualism* (1988), this figure appears to include mother-tongue speakers of Ahirani.

\(^{10}\)All figures in this paragraph are obtained from pages 17 and 18 of the *District census handbook of Dhule District*. 
2 Goals

2.1 Linguistic Similarity

One goal of this survey is to determine the lexical similarity between the spoken dialects of the “Dewali” Bhil, the “Mathwadi” Bhil, and the Pauras. Another goal is to determine the lexical similarity of the above dialects with Marathi and Hindi. Lexical similarity is determined by comparing a standard 210-item wordlist. The results are expressed as a percentage of similar words.

2.2 Dialect Intelligibility

A third goal of this survey is to investigate the levels of intelligibility among the dialects spoken by the Bhil groups of northern Dhule. It is readily apparent that in the areas investigated peoples of differing dialects living in adjacent areas have relatively high levels of intelligibility between them. Such intelligibility, however, is a “learned intelligibility” and comes as a result of frequent contact and interaction. This survey, though interested in such matters, is more interested in determining the levels of inherent intelligibility that exist between dialects. Furthermore, this survey seeks to determine which dialects are most widely understood as a result of inherent similarities. The levels of intelligibility are determined by using recorded text tests like those described in Casad, 1974. The results are expressed as a percentage of correct answers.

2.3 Bilingualism

A fourth goal is to investigate the levels of bilingualism among the Bhil communities of northern Dhule. Of special interest are the levels of bilingualism that significant cross-sections of the rural community attain to. The possible dichotomy in bilingual ability between the educated and uneducated segments of the population is regarded as a matter of importance and carefully investigated. Bilingual ability is tested in the same way as dialect intelligibility. No attempt is made to determine an individual’s level of competence in speaking a second language, only in understanding it.

2.4 Language Use and Language Attitudes

The final goal of this survey is to investigate the different languages used by the mother tongue Bhilli speaker in the situations encountered in daily living; and to investigate the attitudes and preferences that he exhibits toward different languages in these sets of situations. Language use and attitudes are investigated using a 25-item questionnaire issued to those tested in intelligibility studies.
3 Summary of Findings

3.1 Dialect Area Study

The ethnic groups of northern Dhule are found to speak several languages, each composed of a many varying dialects. The fact that languages and dialects spoken in adjacent areas are similar or distinct, however, does not appear to affect the levels of intelligibility. The levels between adjacent areas are always high. It would seem that Gumperz found a similar situation among the village dialects of India. In the introduction to Sociolinguistics the editor states that “Village dialects in India have been said to form ‘a continuous chain from Sind to Assam, with mutual intelligibility between adjacent areas’ (Gumperz, 1964) but not between more distant areas. (9)"

There are exceptions to this statement in northern Dhule, where distant dialects are intelligible with one another. For example, mutually intelligible dialects of Vasave are spoken in a large U-shape around the Tapti River. Mutual intelligibility is also found to exist among Pauri dialects extending from the northern areas of Dhule to the northwest areas of Jalgoan Dt. The above statement comes true, however, where Vasave, Pauri, and Bhilori-speaking communities meet. People in adjacent areas of these three language groups have high levels of comprehension between them. People in the central regions of these language areas do not. It is concluded, therefore, that Vasave, Bhilori, and Pauri are mutually unintelligible languages.

3.2 Bilingualism

Bilingualism in Marathi among the investigated Bhil communities of northern Dhule is promoted, among other things, by 1) the frequency of contact with second language speakers, and 2) the education of an individual. Apart from education, the contact that exists between the investigated communities and Marathi speakers appears not to bring individuals beyond a basic level of competence in Marathi, nor provide the reinforcement needed to increase bilingual ability among the educated. Higher levels of education, in general, push bilingual ability beyond those levels that exist as a result of contact.

Nevertheless, the levels of bilingualism achieved by educated test subjects are well below the currently accepted level thought to be needed to understand and read and write in another language. Uneducated test subjects are, obviously, well below this level also. Because the majority of the rural population of Dhule is illiterate, it is thought that the majority of the population of the Vasaves, Bhiloris, and Pauras have only attained to the levels of bilingualism achieved by the uneducated test population.

3.3 Language Use and Attitudes

The investigated languages are demonstrated to be used in most domains of Bhil communities. These domains include speech among family members, other members of the community, and members of other communities. One of the most important of these domains is the home domain, where the language of the “heart” is spoken. Marathi is used outside of these domains in situations where there is contact with non-Bhils. This contact is shown to be somewhat infrequent for the majority of the investigated population.

Attitudes toward vernacular languages vary from mildly negative to positive. A negative attitude is displayed by those who feel that vernacular languages are of little value because they serve no purpose in economic gain or upward social mobility. Such people display positive attitudes toward Marathi. Though there is truth in the advantage of speaking Marathi well, it is demonstrated that significant portions of the population are not able to do so. Most people display positive attitudes toward their respective Bhilli languages. The sentiment of the majority of the investigated communities is summed up in a candid statement made by a Nahal man, “Other people speak very loudly and use bad words but we speak softly. Our language is sweeter than all other languages.”
4 Study of Dialect Areas

4.1 Linguistic Similarity

4.1.1 Procedures

Spoken languages are not usually uniform across the geographical spread where they are spoken. Rather, a spoken language can often be characterized by a number of different speech varieties called dialects. The speech varieties of dialects are the result of differences in vocabulary, phonology, or grammar. Where there is little difference in these three areas, the individuals in differing dialect areas are able to communicate well with one another. The ability to communicate that exists among the individuals of such dialect areas is inherent in their speech varieties. The understanding which results from inherent similarities, whether few or many, is referred to as inherent intelligibility. Conversely, where there is considerable difference in one or more of these three areas, communication among the differing dialect areas is difficult. The level of inherent intelligibility among the individuals of such dialect areas is low. They cannot communicate well unless their understanding is learned through frequent contact and interaction. Learned understanding is referred to as acquired comprehension.

When seeking to reach the Bhils through the medium of vernacular literature, it becomes important, then, to investigate the dialect relationships that exist among the Bhils of northern Dhule. In particular, it is important to find those dialects which are most widely understood as a result of inherent similarities. Though they are known to speak the Bhilli language, it is possible that some Bhilli dialects are only understood by a specific group of communities, and not by the Bhil community as a whole. Or, it is possible that a particular Bhilli dialect is understood by the majority of Bhil communities in northern Dhule. The dialect relationship that exists among the Bhils is investigated here through lexical similarity comparisons and intelligibility studies.

Lexical similarity among Bhilli dialects is determined by comparing a standard 210-item wordlist. Wordlists are elicited in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) from those mother tongue speakers of Bhilli who belong to the communities under investigation. A wordlist is elicited twice from two different mother-tongue speakers of the same community. Emphasis is placed on obtaining words native to that dialect area during the first elicitation. During the second elicitation, emphasis is placed on checking and weeding out incorrect entries, and finding synonyms or near synonyms. It is hoped that this process of elicitation insures that the resultant wordlist is accurate and suitable for comparison.

Without conducting a comparative word analysis, which seeks to isolate and compare cognates, the wordlists are compared according to a standard procedure given by Marshal (86). This comparison procedure seeks to determine the degree of phonological difference that exists between the vocabularies of dialects. The degree of phonological difference found in vocabulary items is thought to serve as an index for intelligibility levels (personal communication from Marshal). In the following paragraphs a prose summary of Marshal's procedures is given.

The matching phonetic segments of words being compared are divided into three categories. They belong to category one when they are identical, or in the case of a vocoid when it differs by only one phonetic feature, and when phonetically similar segments (PSS) correspond in at least three word pairs. Those PSS that do not correspond in three word pairs belong to category two. All pairs of phonetic segments belong to category three when they are not phonetically similar or when one member of a pair of compared segments has no matching sound correspondence.

Words are categorized as either “similar” or “dissimilar” according to the number and type of matching phonetic segments that are common between the compared words. The compared words are aligned so that there is a maximum number of matching phonetic segments. When one entry is longer than the other, the shorter of the two entries is considered to be the same length as the longer entry. The two aligned entries are considered “similar” if the following minimum requirements are met, otherwise, they are considered “dissimilar.” Half of the matching phonetic segments must belong to category one and one quarter must belong to category two. The remaining phonetic segments can belong to category
three. When comparing words that are only two segments in length, both segments must belong to category one. Words that are three segments in length must have two segments that belong to category one and one segment that belongs to category two.

The similarity of two wordlists is determined, then, by comparing the entry of a gloss of the first wordlist with the entry of the corresponding gloss in the second wordlist. After every gloss for each of the wordlists being compared has been categorized as either “similar” or “dissimilar,” the number of “similar” glosses are divided by the total number of comparisons made. The resultant number is multiplied by one hundred and expressed as a percentage of lexical similarity.

### 4.1.2 Lexical similarity charts

Wordlists are collected from four “Dewali” Bhil communities, three “Mathwadi” Bhil communities, and six Paura communities, located in northern Dhule, northern Jalgaon, and south west Madhya Pradesh (see map). The results of the comparison of wordlists from these thirteen communities are shown.

Felpada Vasave
95  Dhanoura Vasave
95  96  Digiamba Vasave
70  69  70  Amoda Vasave
69  67  71  60  Astamba Noirri
68  66  70  58  95  Mundalwad Bhilori
54  50  53  56  63  64  Mandvi Bareli Paun
52  49  52  54  63  64  93  Bhusha Bareli Pauri
55  52  56  62  59  60  88  87  Shahana Bareli Pauri
56  53  56  54  53  76  79  79  Kangai Rathwi Pauri
54  50  53  52  51  75  78  77  93  Amalwadi Rathwi Pauri
51  48  50  50  51  50  73  75  74  88  91  Segwi Rthwi Pauri
54  51  54  58  57  58  70  73  69  65  67  65  Toranmal Nahali

Figure 4. Lexical similarity percentages.

**Vasave**

According to the lexical similarity chart, the Vasave-speaking communities of Kelpada, Dhanoura, and Digiamba emerge as very similar dialect areas. Amoda, also a Vasave-speaking community, emerges as a somewhat different dialect, significantly related only to other Vasave dialects.

**Bhlori**

The Noiri-speaking community of Astamba and the Bhlori-speaking community of Surwana emerge as very similar dialect areas, both of which are somewhat related to Vasave and Bareli Pauri. It is interesting that the Vasave-speaking communities of Kelpada, Dhanoura, and Digiamba are equally similar in vocabulary to both Amoda Vasave and the Bhlori-Noiri dialects. For the remainder of the paper, these two dialects will be referred to as one dialect under the name Bhlori.
Pauri

The Bareli Pauri speaking communities of Mandvi, Bhusha and Shahana emerge as three very similar dialect areas. These three dialects are quite similar in vocabulary to the Rathwi Pauri-speaking communities of Kangai, Amalwadi, and Segwi, which also emerge as very similar areas. However, Kangai and Amalwadi are not "pure" Rathwi-speaking communities, both of which have an admixture of Bareli. This accounts for the fact that the Bareli-speaking communities are more similar to Kangai and Amalwadi than to Segwi. Bareli Pauri and Rathwi Pauri are referred to as Bareli and Rathwi, respectively, for the remainder of the paper. The Nahali-speaking community of Toranmal is somewhat similar to both Bareli and Rathwi, though it is more similar to Bareli. It is not similar to any of the other languages investigated in northern Dhule.

It is helpful to understand the dialect relationships portrayed by the lexical similarity chart by averaging the percentages of very similar dialects together and comparing them with other distinct groupings. Consider table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vasave 2 (Amoda)</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>59</th>
<th>57</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>58</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vasave1 (Kelpada-Dhanoura-Digimba)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhilori</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bareli</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rathwi</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahali</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Similarity among distinct lexical groupings.

Although the above sequence varies somewhat from a geographical relationship, the classic picture of a dialect chain emerges, with significant levels of lexical similarity between adjacent areas but not between more distant areas. The Vasave and Pauri dialects emerge on either ends of the dialect continuum, and Bhilori fits somewhere into the middle. Figure 6 illustrates this relationship.

Vasave 1 ---- Vasave 2  \ Nahali
  +    /    +  \  +  \  +  \  +  \  +  Rathwi
  Bhilori ---- Bareli  +  \  +  \  +  \  +

Figure 6. A dialect continuum.

It should be remembered that the lexical similarity percentages found in the charts above serve as indexes to the levels of intelligibility between dialects. They do not illustrate a historical relationship, as is done by a comparison of cognates. As such, the following guidelines are used to interpret these percentages for dialect area studies.

If dialects are compared and found to be below 60 or 65 percent lexically similar, these dialects are considered distinct. It is thought that individuals in these dialect areas will not be able to understand
each other, unless their understanding is learned. If similarity is above 90 or 95 percent, the compared dialects are considered to be virtually the same. It is thought that individuals in these dialect areas will understand each other well as a result of inherent similarities. If, however, lexical similarity falls between 65 and 90 percent, the level of understanding between the groups being compared is not known. Intelligibility tests are needed to determine the level of understanding between dialects.

4.1.3 Conclusions

Lexical similarity between Vasave and Pauri is low, and, therefore, they are thought to be inherently unintelligible. Further intelligibility studies are not needed to clarify the dialect relationship between them. Bhilori and the Pauri dialects, Nahali and Rathwi, are also inherently unintelligible according to lexical similarity comparisons. However, Bhilori is somewhat lexically similar to the Pauri dialect, Bareli. This relationship must be clarified through further intelligibility studies. The relationship between Bhilori and Vasave must also be further clarified through intelligibility studies. Furthermore, it is important to clarify the relationships between the dialects of the language, particularly, among the Vasave dialects and among the Pauri dialects.

4.2 Dialect Intelligibility

4.2.1 Procedures

Dialect intelligibility among communities of northern Dhule is studied using the methods set forth in Eugene Casad's *Dialect intelligibility studies* (1974). It is a method used throughout the world for dialect area studies with reasonable success, though there are obvious disadvantages. It is “not a direct measure of anything besides comprehension” (Blair 1987:129).

It is thought that when dialects are similar and the differences in speech varieties are few, then comprehension levels will be high, and test subjects will score well. And, similarly, when the differences in speech varieties of dialect areas are many, then comprehension levels will be low, and the scores of test subjects will be poor. The latter is not true, however, when test subjects have obtained a high level of acquired comprehension.

Intelligibility is expressed as the number of questions answered correctly on a recorded text test, divided by the total number of questions on the test and multiplied by one hundred. For example, if a subject answers eight out of ten questions correctly, it is said his level of intelligibility is eighty percent.

Casad's methods are not explained in this report. Those seeking further information on the methods of dialect area studies should refer to Casad (1974) or Blair (1987:113–129)—a detailed summary of the methods followed in recorded text testing).

Two departures from the recommended procedure are mentioned here. A committee of mother-tongue speakers of the investigated languages is not appointed to make appropriate questions for the texts used in recorded text tests. Rather, the researcher and those working with him developed questions for texts. Possible errors in this deviation were corrected by discarding questions that were frequently missed on hometown tests, though at least ten questions were used in subsequent tests.

Another variation from the standard survey procedure used in South Asia occurs in the test administration procedure. South Asia survey procedure recommends that a question and the portion of text that contains the answer is not rewound and played a second time when it is answered incorrectly. This seems somewhat contradictory with Blair’s (1987) statement. However, Blair’s statement is open for interpretation: “If the subject is unable to respond to a question on the first hearing, that portion of the tape which contains the answer and the question is played again once more (113).”

On this particular survey, his statement is interpreted to mean that if a subject is unable to respond correctly to a question on the first hearing, the question and appropriate portion of the text is rewound and played a second time. The succeeding portions of the text with the appropriate questions are played if the subject is not able to respond correctly on the second hearing.
4.2.2 Dialect intelligibility scores

The scores on recorded text tests do not distinguish between acquired comprehension and inherent intelligibility. Test populations can score equally well on texts from both similar and dissimilar dialects. The scores, however, are a result of two different phenomenons. The scores of intelligibility between the test populations of similar dialects are a result of the similarities inherent in the spoken varieties of the languages being tested. The high levels of comprehension between the test populations of dissimilar dialects are a result of learned comprehension through frequent contact and interaction.

It is important to distinguish between the two types of intelligibility; acquired comprehension is a matter of bilingualism, and must be treated as such. It, therefore, becomes important to distinguish between the types of intelligibility that exist among the groups of northern Dhule, whose dialects are lexically distinct, yet who live in adjacent areas.

The level of inherent intelligibility is usually constant throughout a community, whereas the level of acquired comprehension is varied according to the degree of contact that different members experience. Test scores among the populations that are inherently intelligible are, generally, uniform. Test scores among populations that have attained to different levels of acquired comprehension are varied. An analysis of the test scores by calculating the standard deviation is helpful to determine the degree of variation in test scores. It is important, however, that the test population consist of the different cross-sections of a community. In those situations where acquired comprehension has considerably increased the level of intelligibility, a varied test sample is helpful in distinguishing between the more bilingual segments of the community.

The standard deviation on a set of recorded text test scores is considered high when it is greater than 12 to 15 percent. It is low when it is less than 10 to 12 percent. Usually, when the standard deviation is low, the mean score of the test population, whether high or low, is a reflection of the level of inherent intelligibility. When the standard deviation is high, the mean score is usually a measure of the level of acquired comprehension.

Examine the results of the recorded text tests administered in eight communities of northern Dhule (see map). Reference points are communities where narrative texts are collected and validated in hometown tests, and test points are the communities where texts from reference points are tested. Stars are placed beside hometown test scores. The average score is found above the standard deviation, which, in turn, is found above the number of subjects tested in a particular test.
Table 7. Dialect intelligibility scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Points</th>
<th>Vasave</th>
<th>Bhilori</th>
<th>Pauri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kel</td>
<td>Dha</td>
<td>Dig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelpada</td>
<td>*99%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>6.86</td>
<td>7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhanoura</td>
<td>*96%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.07</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>15.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digiamba</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>*100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amoda</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>*97%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>6.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundalwad</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>*100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhadgaon</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>*98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalwadi</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>*99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17.13</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toranmal</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>*97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>4.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7. Dialect intelligibility scores.

Vasave
d

Dialect intelligibility tests are administered among the communities of Kelpada, Dhanoura, and Digiamba, though they emerge as very similar dialect areas according to lexical similarity percentages. At the time of intelligibility testing, wordlist comparisons indicated that the speech varieties of these three areas were somewhat distinct, and only after further checking were wordlists found to be almost identical. The results of the two methods of dialect area studies are found to be identical. These three areas are found to constitute one basic dialect area. This is also verified through observation and the claims of mother-tongue speakers of Vasave themselves. When testing this dialect of Vasave in other communities, the text from Dhanoura is used as a representative sample of this dialect area as a whole. Amoda, which represents the extreme eastern boundary of Vasave-speaking communities, is found to score high on the text from Dhanoura. Reciprocal intelligibility is true, although intelligibility in Dhanoura is 4 percentage points lower than in Amoda. Standard deviation is low, most likely, indicating that the intelligibility that exists among them is inherent in their speech varieties.

The Vasaves of Amoda interact frequently with the Vasaves around Taloda (thought to be part of the same dialect network of Kelpada, Dhanoura, and Digiamba), claiming that their languages are the same.
Intermarriage between these two areas occurs occasionally. The Vasaves of Dhanoura, on the other hand, have little contact with the Vasaves of Amoda. This accounts, perhaps, for the slight difference in reciprocal intelligibility levels between the two. Even so, the levels of inherent intelligibility among the investigated Vasave-speaking communities are high, suggesting that the Vasave communities of northern Dhule consist of a series of very similar dialects.

**Bhilaroti**

The Bhiloris are a small group, who are surrounded in all directions by speakers of other languages (see Introduction). To the south and west lie Vasave-speaking communities, and to the north and east lie Barel-speaking communities. Frequent contact and interaction with both groups comes as a natural course for the Bhiloris. Before roads were developed and Dhadgaon became properly linked with the plains, Bhiloris traveled by foot through Vasave-speaking areas to reach Taloda, where they came for medicinal help and a few modern conveniences. Today, those same amenities are available in Dhadgaon, which has a sizeable Barel-speaking population. Many Barel-speaking communities are also found in outlaying hamlets, near Bhilorispeaking communities. It comes as no surprise that Bhiloris are proficient in both Vasave and Barel.

However, it would appear at first that Bhiloris is a mutually intelligible dialect of both Vasave and Pauri, almost like a medial stepping stone between the two. Although a community profile is not done, a number of probable cross sections of the Bhiloris community are represented in the test sample: sex, age, and education. They score an average of 97 percent on the Dhanoura Vasave text, 100 percent on the Bareli text, and 94 percent on the Rathwi text, with low standard deviation percentages on all three sets of tests. Intelligibility among the Barelis on the Bhiloris text is equally high. They score 100 percent on the Rathwi text. It is evident that this is not true, however, when the Bhiloris text is tested in Vasave and Pauri communities a distance away from Bhilorispeaking areas. The Rathwi-speaking community of Amalwadi scores 54 percent on the Bhiloris text, and the Vasave-speaking community of Dhanoura scores 61 percent. These scores indicate that the levels of inherent intelligibility between Bhiloris and both Vasave and Pauri are low and proper communication between them is not possible.

The diversity of the Bhiloris test sample, the high scores, and the low standard deviation suggest that several significant cross-sections of the Bhiloris community are bilingual in both Vasave and Pauri. It is too premature to suggest which segments of the Bhiloris community are more bilingual than others, or in which language they have attained to a higher level of bilingualism.

It is interesting that the test subjects in Amalwadi view the Bhiloris text as a Noiri text. A fairly high standard deviation on the Bhiloris text in Amalwadi indicates that some members of the community experience more exposure with such a language than others do. It is certain, though, that there is no interacting between the Bhiloris of Mundalwad and the Pauris of Amalwadi. This suggests, perhaps, that Bhiloris is similar to other Noiri-speaking areas just as it is very similar to the Noiri of Astamba.

**Pauri**

Three principle dialects of Pauri emerge after lexical similarity comparisons: Bareli, Rathwi, and Nahali. A text from Mandvi, a village near Dhadgaon, is taken as a representative of the Bareli dialect, also found in Bhusha and Shahana. A text from Amalwadi is taken as a representative of the Rathwi dialect, also found in Segwi and Kangai, though the dialect spoken in Amalwadi and Kangai is corrupted somewhat by Bareli. A text from Toramal is taken as a representative of Nahali.

It is difficult to find Paura villages that are isolated from the speakers of other Pauri dialects. However, the above three areas are thought to be suitable in determining the levels of inherent intelligibility among the three investigated dialects. Bareli speakers in Dhadgaon are thought to have

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11 The Bhiloris text is not played in a more distant Bareli-speaking community because there is no such test point. Intelligibility tests seem to indicate that Bareli and Rathwi are very similar dialects, so testing in a distant Rathwi-speaking community should give an indication of inherent intelligibility levels between Barelis and Bhiloris.
little contact with Rathwi speakers. Rathwis in Segwi are, most probably, more isolated from Barelis than Rathwis in Amalwadi, but researchers are not able to visit there, and testing is done in Amalwadi. Two Nahal communities are found in the investigated areas, but only one is found to speak a language similar to Pauri. Testing is done in that one Pauri-speaking Nahal community.

After intelligibility studies, Rathwi and Bareli emerge as similar dialects. Rathwi speakers score an average of 91 percent on the Bareli text, and Bareli speakers score an average of 92 percent on the Rathwi text, with low standard deviation points on both sets of tests. It might be argued that the high intelligibility scores are a result of acquired comprehension, and that actual levels inherent of intelligibility are lower. The situation between the Bhilori and Bareli communities, however, sheds an extra ray of light on this subject.

The Bhiloris speak a language lexically distinct from Pauri, and the level of inherent intelligibility between these two languages is low. Through contact and interaction, the Bhiloris have attained to significant levels of bilingualism in Bareli. They do not, however, have contact with Rathwi speakers who live further east of Akrani tahsil. They have no opportunity to gain proficiency in Rathwi. Therefore, if Rathwi and Bareli were distinct dialects, then Bhiloris would only attain to low levels of comprehension of Rathwi. Bhiloris, however, score 94 percent on the Rathwi text. This suggests that the high level of intelligibility between Rathwi and Bareli is not merely the result of acquired comprehension, but, is, in fact, based upon true inherent intelligibility.

The conclusion that Rathwi and Bareli are similar dialects of the Pauri language is not contradictory with the viewpoints of mother tongue speakers themselves. Though it is true that they make a distinction between the two speech varieties, they claim that the two are very similar and easy to understand. Perhaps there is a greater degree of difference between the two in other Pauri-speaking areas, but among the Pauras of northern Dhule, this is not true.

Intelligibility testing is done between the Bareli-speaking community of Dhadgaon and the Vasave-speaking community of Amoda, not because of linguistic similarity, but because of the proximity of Bareli and Vasave-speaking villages. Both groups are found to be somewhat bilingual in each other’s languages. Barelis travel through Amoda on their way to Shahada, the tahsil headquarters of Shahada. It is through this contact that they claim to understand each other. Both groups acknowledge, however, that their languages are very different. The level of inherent intelligibility between these two groups is not known, though it is assumed to be low. Their vocabularies are below 60 percent lexically similar.

**Nahali**

The Nahals of Toranmal are similar to the Bhilori in that they are surrounded on all sides by other ethnic groups. Their remoteness, however, has helped them to maintain a certain identity, though their language is similar to the surrounding Pauri language. Toranmal is situated on a plateau 1,000 m. in altitude, and is accessible by only one bus a day. Foot travel through the surrounding Paura communities is still a medium of transportation to reach the bazaars of the plains. Nahals claim that outsiders rarely travel to their area.

It is difficult to know how distinct Nahali is from the Pauri language. Unfortunately, the test sample in Toranmal is not diversified, and the more forward segments of the community are tested. It is most probable that these forward segments are also the more bilingual segments of the population. The Nahals score 96 percent on both the Rathwi and Bareli texts, with low standard deviation percentages on both sets of tests. Barelis, also, do well, scoring 93 percent on the Nahali text. These scores are presumably inflated as a result of learned comprehension through contact. However, this contact is infrequent, and, in fact, many Nahals deny that they have interaction with Pauras.

The comprehension levels of the Rathwi community of Amalwadi are, most likely, indicators of the true level of inherent intelligibility that exist between Pauri and Nahali. Rathwi speakers of Amalwadi, who deny they ever travel to Toranmal, or have contact with Nahals, score an average of 81 percent on the Nahali text. The standard deviation on this test is below ten. This suggests that the high level of

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12 That Bhiloris score better on the Rathwi text than Barelis, is explained by the fact that the Bhilori test population is more educated, and, therefore, less intimidated by a recorded text test.
intelligibility between Barelis and Nahals is based, somewhat, on learned comprehension, but also that the levels of inherent intelligibility are quite high. Inherent intelligibility levels between Bareli and Nahali may, in fact, be higher than between Rathwi and Nahali. Lexical similarity percentages are five points higher between Bareli and Nahali, than between Rathwi and Nahali.

Though dialect area studies conclude that Nahali and Pauri are mutually intelligible dialects, the Nahals view themselves as a separate cultural entity from other groups, and their language as different from other languages. This, however, is a cultural attitude rather than, perhaps, a reflection of true linguistic similarity.

4.2.3 Conclusions

After testing the levels of inherent intelligibility that exist among the languages of northern Dhule, Vasave, Bhilori, and Pauri emerge as three distinct languages. Vasave is shown to consist of three very similar dialects, with high levels of intelligibility between all three dialect areas. A fourth dialect is mutually intelligible with one of these areas, and is, therefore, assumed to be mutually intelligible with the remaining two Vasave-speaking areas.

Bhilori is shown to have high levels of intelligibility with Vasave and Bareli-Rathwi. After further intelligibility studies, it is learned that these levels are based to a large extent on acquired comprehension. The levels of true inherent intelligibility with both Vasave and Bareli-Rathwi are actually low. As such, Bhilori may be thought of as distinct from these languages.

Pauri is shown to consist of three dialects, the Nahali dialect being somewhat distinct from the other two, known as Bareli and Rathwi. Bareli and Rathwi are shown to have high levels of inherent intelligibility between them. The levels of intelligibility that exist between Nahali and the other two Pauri dialects are also high, but these levels are influenced by learned comprehension. The actual inherent levels of intelligibility among the Nahals are substantially lower, though still higher than the threshold thought to be sufficient for mutual intelligibility.

4.3 Integration of Dialect Area Conclusions

The Vasave-speaking communities of Kelpada, Dhanoura, Amoda, and Digjampa, acting as contiguous points in a large U shape around the Tapti River, are found to speak similar dialects that are mutually intelligible. This language is not inherently intelligible with the other languages surveyed in this report.

The Bhilori and Noiri-speaking communities of Mundalwad and Astamba, respectively, are found to be very similar dialects, distinct from the languages that surround them.

The Barel- speaking communities of Bhusha, Mandvi, and Shahana; the Nahali-speaking community of Toranmal; and the Rathw- speaking communities of Kangai, Amalwadi, and Segwi act as a contiguous chain of slightly varying Pauri dialects from the northwest regions of Dhule to the northwest regions of Jalgaon Dt. These dialects are found to be mutually intelligible. However, the levels of inherent intelligibility between Nahali and Bareli-Rathwi are just above the level thought to be necessary for sufficient understanding to properly communicate. According to dialect area studies, Pauri is not inherently intelligible with Vasave or Bhilori.

4.4 Residue

Unfortunately, this survey is confined very much to the political boundaries of Dhule district. Vasaves and Pauras are two groups known to live on two sides of these political boundaries. The Vasaves of Dhanoura claim to have relatives living in Bharuch Dt. of Gujarat who speak Ambodia Bhil (many Vasaves in other communities also claim to have relatives in Gujarat). Ambodia Bhil, though “a bit different”, is claimed to be understood by them and spoken as far as Rajpiple (towards Baroda and Bharuch). It is also said that many Vasaves live in Surat district of Gujarat state. It would be invaluable to investigate the relationship that exists between the Vasaves of Dhule and the Vasaves of Gujarat.
The Pauras of Dhule claim that the bulk of their population live in Madhya Pradesh, their boundaries extending as far as Indore and Bhopal in central M.P. It would be a monumental task to investigate the dialect relationships among the Paura tribe as a whole, but, nevertheless, important in prescribing the correct vernacular languages that most effectively meet their need.

The relationship between Bhilori and Noiri is worthy of further investigation. It may be that Bhilori is part of a much larger group, whose needs of vernacular literature may be met by a more far-reaching Noiri dialect. Noiris are known to live in the Satpudas, and in northwest Jalgaon Dt.

The relationship between Nahali and Bareli may be further clarified by testing the Nahali text among the Bhiloris. It would, perhaps, shed light on the situation just as testing a Rathwi text among Bhiloris clarified the relationship between Rathwi and Bareli.

Finally, there are many other groups in Dhule district among whom very little research has been done. It seems impossible to define and locate each one of them. Not unlike the rest of India, a tremendous mixing of languages and cultural backgrounds has occurred. For example, two hybrid versions of the Bhilli language are found at the foot of the Satpudas. One is a group of adavasis who converted to Islam five or six hundred years ago who speak a so-called “dialect” of Gujarati. The other is a group with similar background who speak an “urduized” Bhilli, known as Macrani.

This survey project has focused entirely on the Bhils of northern Dhule. It is true, though, that there are many groups outside the area of focus. Those seeking to communicate effectively to the minority groups of Dhule would be wise to continue the research begun on this project, as well as to begin to investigate the sociolinguistic situations among other groups.
5 Bilingualism

5.1 Procedures

The multilingual situation in Dhule would, initially, appear to be a complex network of overlapping regional languages. Dhule lies in the extreme northwest corner of Maharashtra, bounded by other states whose regional languages are different from Marathi, the state language of Maharashtra. Along the northern and western borders are the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat whose state languages are Hindi and Gujarati, respectively. Inside the borders of Dhule, itself, Ahirani, thought by some to be a dialect of Marathi, is spoken as a mother tongue by a large percentage of the population. However, Marathi is found to dominate and take precedence over the neighboring state languages and the domestic Ahirani. It is found from the interviews given during recorded text tests that individuals who claim to be bilingual, are, almost without exception, bilingual first in Marathi, and then, perhaps, Gujarati, Hindi, or Ahirani. Toranmal is an exception to this finding, where most individuals are bilingual first in Hindi and then other languages. It is, therefore, probable that the investigated communities are significantly bilingual in only Marathi and Hindi, the latter only in Toranmal.

Bilingualism among the ethnic groups of northern Dhule is studied by the same methods used in dialect intelligibility testing. Subjects tested for dialect intelligibility levels are also tested for their ability to comprehend narrative texts in Marathi or Hindi. Bilingual ability is expressed as a level of intelligibility, based on the percentage of questions answered correctly on a recorded text test.

Recorded text tests are by no means a comprehensive way of measuring bilingual ability of an individual or community. As quoted from Blair earlier, recorded text tests are a direct measure only of comprehension. Bilingual ability, on the other hand, is dependent upon the ability to speak, in addition to the ability to comprehend. Recorded text tests, then, are useful in measuring only one facet of bilingual ability.

A more comprehensive method of measuring bilingual ability is to evaluate an individual using the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) scale. It conceives of five base levels to denote the bilingual ability of an individual, ranging from an individual with no ability (level 0) to an individual with the ability of an educated mother-tongue speaker (level 5). There is speculation as to the level an individual must reach to sufficiently use and understand other than the simplest literature, but it is, generally, assumed to be level four on the FSI scale. It is also not certain what level an individual reaches when he scores 100 percent on a recorded text test. Nevertheless, it is certain that recorded text tests do not measure beyond level 2+ on the FSI scale. It is clear that if a community does not do well on a recorded text test as a measurement of second language ability, then it is not sufficiently bilingual to understand or use complicated text in the language being tested. Figure 8 illustrates this relationship.

The slope scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No bilingual ability</th>
<th>Educated mother-tongue ability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ability needed to understand difficult literature ------ >

100% on RTT measures up to --------------------- >

Figure 8. Recorded Text Tests in relation to the FSI scale.
5.2 Pilot Bilingualism Testing

Blair (1987:98, 99) describes several analytical situations in which social characteristics are known to affect bilingualism in a community. One of the situations he describes is when the second language is both the lingua franca and the language of education, such as is found in Dhule. When the above is true, he states that bilingual ability will not increase during the first few years of education in a community where there is little contact and interaction with second language speakers. His reasoning is that “…there is little chance for people to put to use what knowledge of the second language they have acquired in school. Without such reinforcement, bilingual ability is likely to remain near zero among that portion of the population with only a few years of school. (98)”

He goes on to say, however, that bilingual ability will increase after a few years of education, for academic success depends upon it.

Blair talks about a second possibility in areas where the second language is both the lingua franca and the language of education. He states that in communities where there is frequent contact with second language speakers, a significant bilingual ability may exist regardless of the level of education to which its members attain. Individuals have opportunity to learn the second language outside the domain of education and, as a result, will acquire a certain degree of competence. The reinforcement of the second language through domains outside of education is helpful, also, to individuals in school. Their bilingual ability will steadily increase.

The situations Blair describes are applicable to the bilingual situation in Dhule. Examine table 9. Ten subjects from each of the communities tested in intelligibility studies, totaling seventy subjects, are tested for their ability to comprehend a narrative Marathi text.13 Test subjects are divided into two categories; educated and uneducated. Those who have achieved to standard five and above in school, or who are literate in the Devanagari script are considered to be educated, and those who have not achieved beyond standard four, or who have not been to school are considered to be uneducated. The results are presented in the same format as the results of the intelligibility studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>24.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9. Pilot bilingualism results.

It is seen that the investigated communities fit partly into the second possibility Blair speaks about. Those outside of the educational domain are seen to have a competence of a most basic nature in Marathi—a result of somewhat infrequent contact. Those who have received some education have gone beyond the level of competence that exists as a result of contact to attain to higher levels of bilingualism. Table 10 further illustrates the dichotomy scores between the uneducated and educated test populations.

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13Demographic information is not available on one test subject, so his scores are not included in the table 4. This brings the number of usable scores down to 69.
The Vasaves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bhiloris

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pauras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Educated</th>
<th>Uneducated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10. The dichotomy between the educated and the uneducated.

(Educated people, on the average, score 24 percentage points higher than uneducated people. Their score denotes a level of bilingualism somewhere below 2+ on the SLOPE scale, as talked about earlier. Uneducated people fall even further down this scale.)

The competence that the uneducated Vasave test population has attained is considerably higher than the other uneducated test populations. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the Vasave-speaking population lives on the plain where contact with Marathi speakers is more probable than in the Satpudas where the Bhiloris and some Pauras live. Nevertheless, the uneducated Vasave test population, which presumably represents the majority of the Vasave population, is well below the currently accepted level necessary. It is clear also that the overwhelming majority of the Bhilori and Paura population fits in this latter category.

The educated Vasave test population is quite bilingual with many of the test subjects exceeding the ability that a recorded text test is able to measure. It comes as a surprise, however, that other educated test subjects do not score higher than they actually do. When interpreting the test scores in light of FSI levels, they are well below the currently accepted level thought necessary. It is probable that the reinforcement needed to practice knowledge of the second language learned in school is not adequate outside the domains of education. Those going back to traditional lifestyles after having achieved a high standard of education are, perhaps, apt to lose some of the bilingual ability gained during school. The reinforcement Blair speaks of in the first situation is lacking.

If educated people, as a whole, are below the accepted level thought to be, then uneducated people are most certainly well below the accepted level. And, it has been demonstrated that the majority of the rural population of Dhule is illiterate (see Introduction). This suggests that the majority of the population...
of the Vasaves, Bhiloris, and Pauras have only attained to the levels of bilingualism achieved by the uneducated test population.

The Nahals are typical of the communities tested across the breadth of northern Dhule. Educated test subjects are found to be quite competent in Hindi, and the uneducated test subjects are found to possess a competence of a rudimentary nature. The average score of the ten subjects tested is 74 percent, and the standard deviation is 31.34. This suggests that some people are able to understand the Hindi text, but that many are not able to understand very much. It would seem that the Nahals, also, have attained only to those levels of bilingualism typical of the uneducated test population.

5.3 Conclusions

Bilingualism in Marathi among the investigated Bhil communities of northern Dhule is promoted, among other things, by 1) the frequency of contact with second language speakers, and 2) the education of an individual. Apart from education, the contact that exists between the investigated communities and Marathi speakers appears not to bring individuals beyond a basic level of competence in Marathi, nor provide the reinforcement needed to increase bilingual ability among the educated, who presumably attained proficiency in Marathi. Higher levels of education, in general, push bilingual ability beyond those levels that exist as a result of contact. However, the levels of bilingualism achieved by educated test subjects are well below the currently accepted level thought to be needed to understand and use literature in another language than their own. Uneducated test subjects are, obviously, well below this level also. Because the majority of the rural population of Dhule is illiterate, it is thought that the majority of the population of the Vasaves, Bhiloris, and Pauras have only attained to the levels of bilingualism achieved by the uneducated test population.
6 Language Use and Language Attitudes

6.1 Procedures

6.1.1 Questionnaire

The individuals of an ethnic community such as exist in Dhule, are often forced through daily living to have contact with communities that speak languages different from their own. The individual in such a community is forced to learn the languages of the surrounding communities to accomplish the tasks of daily living. The individual’s use of the languages he learns is often confined to a particular situation or set of situations. These situations are often referred to as domains. An investigation into the different languages used in the domains of daily living is a study of languages use. An investigation of the attitudes and preferences toward different languages in these domains is a study of language attitudes. A study of language attitudes is important in determining the preferred language of communication in a given set of domains. It is important, then, to investigate the situations in which Bhil communities use their language and other surrounding languages, and the attitudes that they display towards their own language and other languages.

Language use and language attitudes are investigated through the use of a 25-item questionnaire (see Appendix B). Questionnaires are useful in uncovering information about what people want you to think that they do and think about various languages. As such, the information gained through such a method often varies from the truth. What people think they speak in a given situation is often different from what they actually do, and what they claim to speak is, yet again, often different from what they think and do. The claims of individuals, though often different from the truth, are useful in obtaining a language attitude.

6.1.2 Observation

Observation is also used as a tool, and useful in finding the difference between what people claim to speak and what they actually do speak. Such observation, however, is limited to the observer who is very familiar with the local situation and the investigated languages. The researchers on this project cannot make this claim, though the general situation is thought to have been made clear to them.

6.2 Data

The language use and language attitude questionnaire is administered to the subjects tested in intelligibility studies. For the sake of brevity in a complete test sequence, however, questionnaires are only administered to three communities: Amoda, Mundalwad, and Amalwadi, totaling thirty interviewed subjects. It is not a comprehensive study, but a general overview can be obtained from the results.

Without exception, test subjects claim that they speak their respective vernacular languages in the home and to different members of the family. This includes conversations between spouses, between parents and children, and between other closely related relatives. These claims are consistent with responses concerning what language a good Bhil mother should use to speak to her children. Without exception, all test subjects claim that mothers should speak to their children in the vernacular. This suggests that the investigated vernaculars are still the languages of the home and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

Vernacular languages are the language of inter-tribe communication. With the exception of one Paura respondent, who said he tries to make Vasave speakers understand Marathi, all respondents claim to speak their respective vernacular languages to members of other Bhil groups. When meeting with individuals from other linguistic groups, respondents usually claim to speak the language of the other
group, rather than their own. For example, most Bhiloris claim to speak Pauri with the Pauras, and most Pauras claim to speak Bhilori with the Bhiloris. Such a conversation would, no doubt, be interesting! Nevertheless, it demonstrates that Bhil groups use each other’s languages to communicate with one another, rather than Marathi.

The use of Marathi is confined to those situations where there is contact with non-Bhils, such as shop owners, bus conductors, forest officials etc. For some this contact is a daily occurrence and for others it is less frequent. Table 11 illustrates the frequency of contact that twenty four respondents claim to have with Marathi speakers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11. Frequency of contact with Marathi speakers.

The majority of these respondents are demonstrated to have contact on a weekly basis. A small minority have very little contact on an infrequent monthly basis. Compare the frequency of contact of these respondents with their average scores on the pilot bilingualism test in table 12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 12. Frequency of contact compared with bilingualism scores.

These tables illustrate, beyond inference, that there is a direct correlation between frequency of contact and bilingual ability among those who claim to have daily and weekly contact. Those who claim to have contact with Marathi speakers on a daily basis do well on the bilingualism tests. Those who claim to have weekly contact are more consistent than those who have monthly contact, but nevertheless, do poorly. Those who claim to have monthly contact do very poorly, although one test subject does fairly well. There is little difference in scores between those who claim to have contact with Marathi speakers on a weekly and monthly basis, although the difference in standard deviation between the two is large. A larger number of subjects would have to be tested before a correlation developed in these latter two categories.

The figures in the above agree with the results of the pilot bilingualism study. If the majority of test subjects were to have daily contact with Marathi speakers, then levels of bilingualism would be high. Conversely, levels of bilingualism among subjects with infrequent contact would be low. Test subjects are demonstrated to have some contact, and this agrees with the finding that bilingual ability is of a rudimentary nature among the majority of Bhils.

Attitudes among the investigated communities towards their own languages range from mildly negative to positive. Two of the thirty respondents feel that their own language is of little value because it cannot be used outside the village domain. They claim that it serves no purpose in an upward advance in society or as an aid to economic improvement. These respondents claim that learning Marathi is the key to such success. It is interesting that such respondents still claim that the vernacular should be the language of the home. Though Marathi is important for upward social mobility, this suggests that the vernacular is still the language of emotion.

Some negative attitudes toward vernacular languages are displayed by the local Church. Some display attitudes similar to the respondents who feel that Bhilli is of little value, and as such, assume that
communication to the Bhils should be in Marathi. This stems, partly, from the fact that many are 
unaware that the levels of bilingualism among the investigated language groups are low.

The remaining twenty-eight respondents and many other Bhils, however, demonstrate positive 
attitudes toward their own languages. The fact that so many communities continue to speak their 
respective vernacular languages over Marathi is a strong statement in itself. The sentiment of the 
majority of the investigated communities is summed up in a candid statement made by a Nahal man: 
“Other people speak very loudly and use bad words but we speak softly. Our language is sweeter than all 
other languages.”

6.3 Conclusions

The investigated languages are demonstrated to be used in most domains of Bhil communities. These 
domains include speech among family members, other members of the community, and members of 
other communities. One of the most important of these domains is the home domain, where the language 
of the “heart” is spoken. Marathi is used outside of these domains in situations where there is contact 
with non-Bhils. This contact is shown to be somewhat infrequent for the majority of the investigated 
population.

Attitudes toward vernacular languages vary from mildly negative to positive. A negative attitude is 
displayed by those who feel that vernacular languages are of little value because they serve no purpose 
in economic gain or upward social mobility. Such people display positive attitudes toward Marathi. 
Though there is truth in the advantage to speaking Marathi well, it is demonstrated that significant 
portions of the population are not able to do so. Most respondents display positive attitudes toward their 
respective Bhilli languages.
7 Recommendations

7.1 For Language Development

Three principle studies were undertaken in this sociolinguistic survey: dialect area studies, bilingualism studies, and language use and attitude studies. In these studies, this researcher has sought to investigate many of the issues needing clarification before language development can begin. The foremost of these issues is whether or not the Bhils are able to read and use currently available literature. Another important issue is the vitality of Bhilli languages, and whether or not a language shift is taking place among them. If the Bhils cease to speak their own language, then, most probably, language development is not necessary. A third issue is to define linguistic boundaries, and to find a focal point of intelligibility within these boundaries. As talked about earlier, one Bhilli language may consist of several mutually unintelligible dialects, each of which may need separate development.

The findings of this sociolinguistic survey have clarified each of the above issues for the Bhils of northern Dhule. The summary of these finding is found below.

The Bhilli languages of northern Dhule are divided into three distinct divisions. These three divisions are Vasave, Bhilori, and Pauri, all of which are mutually unintelligible with one another, and in need of their own specific development. Within each of these distinct languages, slight dialect variations occur, but none as divergent as to need a separate development of its own. Bhilli languages are demonstrated to be used in most domains of life by all generations of the Bhil community with no indication that they will cease to be used in the foreseeable future. One of the most important of these domains is the home domain, where the language of the “heart” is spoken.

The majority of Bhils demonstrate positive attitudes toward their respective languages.

The overwhelming majority of the Bhil population is not sufficiently bilingual to read and use Marathi.

In view of these facts, it seems peremptory that language development and literature be made available in each of the distinct languages studied in this project.

7.2 For Future Survey

Finally, there are many other groups in Dhule district among whom very little research has been done. It seems impossible to define and locate each one of them. Not unlike the rest of India, a tremendous mixing of languages and cultural backgrounds has occurred. For example, two hybrid versions of the Bhilli language are found at the foot of the Satpudas. One is the group of adavasis who belong to the Tadwi caste. They converted to Islam five or six hundred years ago and speak a so-called “dialect” of Gujarati. The other is a group of similar background who speak an “urduized” Bhilli, known as Makrani.

This survey project has focused entirely on the Bhils of northern Dhule. It is true, though, that there are many groups outside the area of focus. Those seeking to communicate effectively to the minority groups of Dhule would be wise to continue the research begun on this project as talked about in section 4.4, as well as to begin to investigate the sociolinguistic situations among other groups.
8 References

Bibliographic information is not available on The Bhils of Ratanmal and The Dhule District Census Handbook.