

Citation: Ashiq, M., Mir, S. H., & Shafi, S. (2021). Lexical Stress and Semantic Range: A Comparative Componential Analysis of Pahari and English Words. *Global Language Review*, VI(II), 326-339.

[https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021\(VI-II\).35](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2021(VI-II).35)



Lexical Stress and Semantic Range: A Comparative Componential Analysis of Pahari and English Words

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Abstract

Stress is a unique feature in any language's phonology, serving various purposes. The study explores the function of lexical stress in Pahari by presenting a contrast between English and Pahari. In English, stress changes the syntactic category of the word; unlike English, the stress in Pahari not only changes the syntactic category but manages to put the lexical item in an entirely different semantic field with a sharp contrast of meaning. Documented data is insufficient for studying stress in Pahari, as it needs more established literature. Therefore, native Pahari speakers are the participants in exploring the phenomenon. Data analysis revealed that a stress shift in Pahari alters the entire organization of the lexicon in terms of a particular word as the word becomes representative of the different semantic fields. The feature distinguishes Pahari from English and many other languages where the stress changes only the syntactic category, not the semantic field; as a result, the lexical item carries the same conceptual field. An example of the change in the semantic field in Pahari is the word "mundi". Stress on the first syllable, /mʌndi/, will occupy the feature of the body part where it means 'neck'. Stress on the second syllable /mʌn'di/ carries the feature of the remaining portion of the trunk of the chopped tree, where it means 'tree stump'. The study presents a list of such words and their meanings through componential analysis (CA), indicating the same word with two different stress realizations stands for two different semantic fields. This prosodic feature of lexical stress in Pahari is similar to the languages like Hebrew.

Key Words: Language Comparison, Pahari, Lexical Stress, Semantic Field, Meanings, Componential Analysis

Introduction

Pahari is an Indo-Aryan language and one of the ancient languages of South Asia. Historically, it was promoted by the Buddhist dynasty of the Harappa civilisation. Later, the language earned prestige in the reign of King Ashoka, who honoured Pahari as the official language of his state. Under his rule, the first

university in South Asia was established at Sharda in the Neelam Valley near Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Pahari flourished at Sharda University, written in the Sharda script, which was named after the place where the university was established (Karnai, 2007). Later in history, the language could not be promoted as it flourished in the

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past. Consequently, it lost its status and became an endangered language.

Now, Pahari is mainly used for oral communication. The language was not sufficiently explored linguistically until recently when local linguists of Kashmir took an interest in their regional languages. Despite that, the language has neither written grammar nor a compiled dictionary (Khan, 2013). Literature in Pahari is limited to a few pieces of poetry written in Urdu script. Therefore, it is not included in the school curriculum, unlike some other regional languages in Pakistan. Abbasi and Asif (2010) reported it as an underdeveloped, unprivileged, and ignored language that needs proper orthography. During the last decade, local linguists explored Pahari's phonology and syntax. However, the semantics of the Pahari language is a field that needs attention. This study explores the semantic range of Pahari words that are sensitive to stress. This feature is further compared to English, where stress strictly remains a pure phonological feature and does not create an association with semantics.

Pahari is rich in many dialects, such as Mirpuri, Gojri, and Hindko, spoken in various regions of Azad Kashmir. Among these, the dialect spoken in Rawalakot was called *Poonchi* by Abbasi and Asif (2010). This dialect is spoken in Rawalakot and is considered the central dialect of Western Pahari by most Pahari linguists, as reported by Khan (2013). The dialect is diverse enough to have many variants for a single referent and carries a variety of meanings with a slight phonological difference.

Semantics is the study of meanings; the term was derived from the ancient Greek word "*smantikós*," meaning significant. Semantics focuses on the relationship between *signifiers*, like words, phrases, signs, and symbols, and what they stand for—their denotation. Generally, words in any language have well-established literal meanings studied under semantics. Along with literal interpretations, meanings may depend upon context and are studied under pragmatics. Where pragmatic meaning exhibits an advanced language level, learning literal meaning is fundamental to learning any language.

Before modern linguistics, the meaning of a word was assumed to be unaccountable. However, semanticists have now been able to state that the sense of a word can be analysed in terms of a set of more general sense components, semantic properties, or features. The theory, componential analysis (CA) or feature analysis or contrast analysis, is a method of lexical semantics under structuralist approach that analyses the structure of a word's meaning. Componential analysis was patterned on the phonological methods of the Prague School, which described sounds by determining the absence and presence of features. This study will use the theory of componential analysis not as the framework but also as the method of data analysis.

Literature Review

The language was seen as a concrete act of singing, speaking, and writing by Crystal (2008). All these linguistic levels of language evaluation are primarily concerned with meaning in one way or another. Meaning is an

extremely sensitive component which can be changed by changing a single phoneme or morpheme (Saeed, 2015). Therefore, meaning has become complicated due to its sensitivity and multilayered nature. There are various forms of meaning at deeper levels. However, it is roughly divided into three broad categories, i.e., linguistic meaning, social meaning, and affective meaning. Sense and reference are traced in linguistic meaning, context provides social meaning to the language units, and the affective meaning of linguistic units depends upon the user's utterance (Babalola, 2014).

Nwaozuzu (2013) holds that discoveries and analyses of different fields of language have gained attention in linguistics; however, certain other fields, such as semantics, need answers, explanations, and concrete definitions. On the other hand, Anabogu et al. (2010) declare semantics as the most advanced level of grammatical analysis related to the meanings of words and how these meanings are incorporated within phrases and clauses in any language. Semantics is concerned with exploring the linguistic meanings of words within a language. Along with many other prominent sub-fields of semantics, under the structuralist approach, lexical semantics explores the relationship between components of the meaning of a word. CA is considered one of the most influential frameworks for articulating key aspects of lexical semantics to explain linguistic meaning (Ifeagwazi, 2016; Murphy, 2011).

Anthropologists initially devised CA to compare vocabulary from different cultures, and semanticists have developed it as a general framework for analysing meaning (Crystal, 1984). It was then believed to reveal the culturally important features of language

speakers distinguishing different words in the domain (García-Sánchez, 2015). CA is also reportedly inspired by structural phonology too; stating that CA defines the conceptual building blocks/ semantic components or features just as phonemes characterise contrastive dimensions (Geeraerts, 2017).

After determining the lexical field, in-depth meaning can be understood by exploring internal sense relationships between its components, particularly those sufficient to exhibit meaning more clearly (Al-Zoubi, 2009; Shalihah, 2015; Yu & Liang, 2016). Distinctive meanings are vital to learning a language because it develops the schemata of the field, which is how knowledge multiplies (Hameed, 2013). Using techniques such as arbitrary descriptive metalanguage and a reductionist approach to meaning performs CA. These techniques decompose lexical meaning by making comparisons by describing the presence and absence of features. The symbol [+] represents the presence, and the symbol [-] shows the absence of the feature. For example, 'human' is perceived as a general schema of some English words such as man, woman, boy and girl. To decompose this general schema, lexemes can be broken into their sense relations. Here, a man is [+ adult -female +human], a woman is [+adult -male +human], the boy is [-adult +male +human], and a girl is [-adult -male +human] (Murphy, 2010; Saeed, 2015; Widyastuti, 2010:).

CA is arguably advantageous in the study and formal representation of meaning. However, its limitations are also apparent; it can only be applied to the same semantic domain rather than the whole lexicon. In addition, anything that appears in the general definition of a lexeme cannot be converted

into sense components. Moreover, it generates but does not conclude the debate about whether semantic features are the universal primes shared by all world languages (Gnatkowska, 2014). Riemer (2016) proposes that these limitations can be addressed by remodelling descriptive metalanguage and further developing it to account for the semantic complexity of context and utterances.

Methodology

The research design for this project is qualitative as it enables researchers to in-depth study of the phenomena in their natural setting, without controlling variables, not directly related to the study. It further empowers researchers to explain situations without manipulation or intervention.

Convenience sampling was applied to select ten participants selected for the study. The participants were both male and female, un-educated Pahari speakers aged thirty to forty-five. The speech of educated speakers is urbanized and has been influenced by the national and foreign languages. Therefore, they were not selected for the sample.

Lexical items were randomly selected that provide stress variants in both languages. Praat was used to analyse stress in the Pahari words. The lexical items were spoken in a sentence,

e.g., ‘anss is ki mundi akhneyan’ (we call it ‘mundi’). The rest of the words were excluded in the Praat analysis, and the spectrographs were generated showcasing the stress variants only. After tracing the stress location, the words were then analysed using the componential analysis technique.

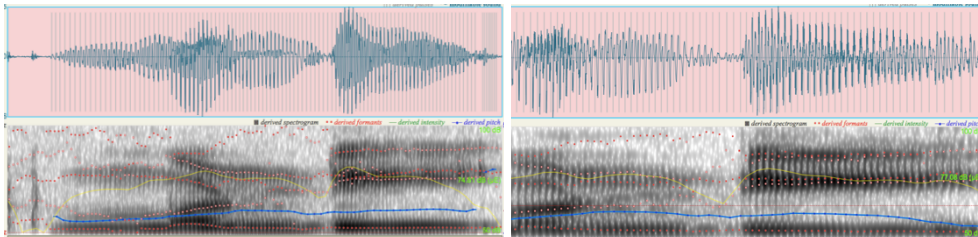
Discussion

The data consists of ten English and ten Pahari lexical items. More than ten words would make a lengthy analysis; therefore, this number was chosen for a compact and precise discussion of the phenomenon. English lexical items were selected from the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (9th edition). Pahari lexical items were selected through observation. For analysis, the data appears in the form of sets, in each set, English stress variants along with componential analysis will appear in the first place. English is a well-documented language, therefore only the spectrograph of stress in Pahari is presented here. In the second place, spectrographs of both Pahari stress variants are presented followed by their componential analysis. The compositional analysis is presented in tables listing [+] for the presence and [-] for the absence of features.

Addict (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈædɪkt/	Noun	[+ cause][+ state]	A person addicted to something
/əˈdɪkt/	Verb	[+ cause][+ state]	To cause someone to become addicted

Munddi (Pahari)



/'mondɪ /
/mon'dɪ/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/'mondɪ/	Noun	[+human] [+animal] [+ body part]	Neck
/mon'dɪ/	Noun	[-human] [+chopped] [+tree part]	Tree Stump

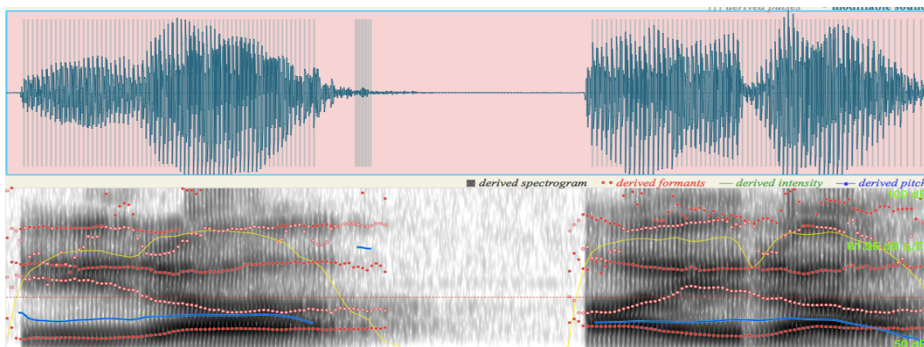
The English words in this comparison maintained the semantic category as both the words refer to the same concept. On the other hand, the first Pahari word, with stress on the first syllable, is the body part of a human or

animal. With the shift of stress on the second syllable, the semantic field changes, and the word's meaning becomes a remaining portion of a chopped tree. In sum, both the Pahari words have entirely different semantic fields.

Conflict (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/'kɒnflɪkt/	Noun	[+ state] [- positive]	A disagreement
/kən'flɪkt/	Verb	[+ state] [- positive]	To be incompatible with

Aera (Pahari)



/'eɪrə /
/eɪ'rə/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈeɪrə/	Adjective	[+/- animate] [+ cause][- change]	Safe
/eɪˈrə/	Adjective	[+ state] [+ animate] [- female]	Active

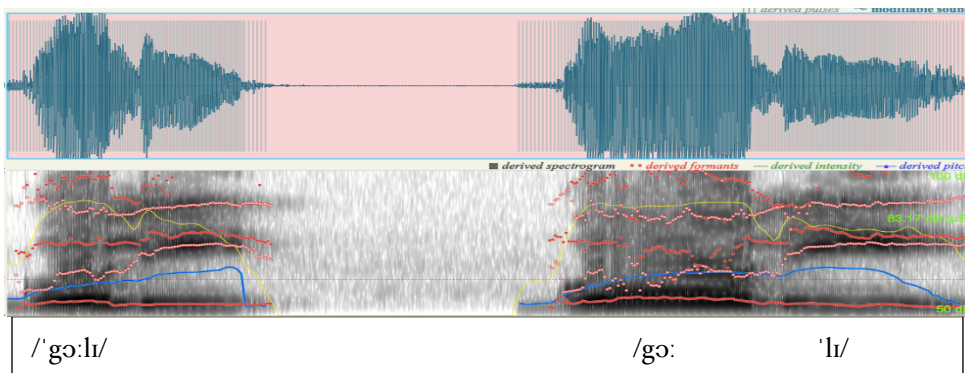
In this section, the English word with different stress realizations maintains the same semantic field as both words represent disagreement in some situations. Stress on different positions changes only the syntactic category. In contrast, Pahari words represent unparallel meanings in terms of a semantic field. The first

word describes the state of an inanimate or animate object where it managed to survive without any harm after some incident. The other word with a different stress position is used for telling the quality of an active and vigilant person.

Project (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈprɒdʒekt/	Noun	[- animate] [+ action]	Something planned
/prəˈdʒekt/	Verb	[- animate] [+ action]	To plan something

Goli (Pahari)



Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈgɔ:lɪ/	Noun	[+ remedy] [+action] [-inedible]	Tablet
/gɔ:ˈlɪ/	Noun	[+ weapon] [+mechanical] [-normal]	Bullet

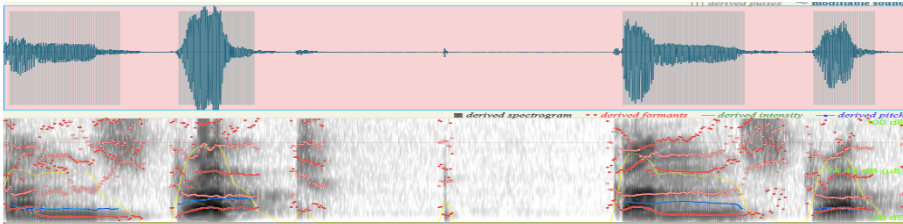
In this set, the semantic field of planning remains the same for both the stress variant of English words. In contrast, stress on the first syllable of the Pahari word provides the

semantic field of medicine. Stress on the second syllable of the same word alters the semantic field and it becomes a bullet, used in the gun.

Construct (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/kən'strʌkt/	Verb	[+ action] [+change]	To build
/'kɒnstrʌkt/	Noun	[+ action] [+change]	Something constructed; a concept

Lamba (Pahari)



/'ləmbə//ləm'bə/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/'ləmbə/	Adjective	[+ state] [+/- animate] [- female]	Long, tall
/ləm'bə/	Noun	[+ cause] [- animate] [+change]	Flame

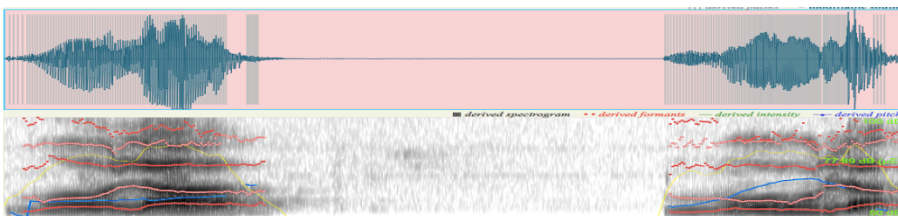
The semantic field remains the same for English words. On the contrary, the Pahari word with stress at the first syllable means a long object or a tall person. Placing stress on the second syllable will change the meaning

and can be translated as flame. Unlike the previous two examples, stress changes the syntactic category of the Pahari word in addition to the semantic field.

Decrease (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/'di:kri:s/	Noun	[+ process] [- increasing]	A reduction
/di'kri:s/	Verb	[+process] [- increasing]	To become smaller

Mola (Pahari)



/'məʊlə//məʊ'lə/

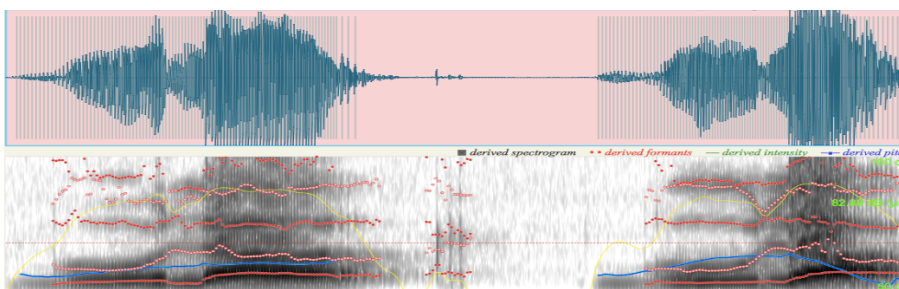
The English words with different stress placements show the same meaning of reduction. Pahari words, however, provide different meanings. The first 'Mola' in the

above table refers to God. The other "mola" is a solid piece of wood used as a hammer. Traditionally, it is used for grinding corn.

Export (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈɛkspɔ:t/	Noun	[+ object] [+ action]	Something that is exported
/ɪksˈpɔ:t/	Verb	[+ object] [+ action]	To sell goods to a foreign country

Boola (Pahari)



/ˈbu:lə//bu:ˈlə/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈbu:lə/	Noun	[- inanimate] [+/- adult] [+ male]	Name (Male)
/bu:ˈlə/	Noun	[+ cause] [+state] [+ disease]	Sore mouth (of animals)

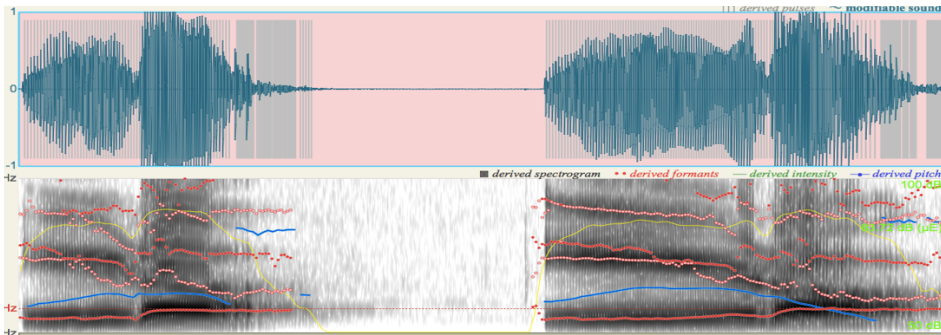
In this example, two different forms of stress for the same word maintain the sense of business for English words. In the case of Pahari counterparts, the first referent is the name of the male person in Pahari. The next

referent, produced because of the different stress position, means a kind of animal disease, especially in goats, commonly known as 'sore-mouth' or 'scabby-mouth'. In this disease, pimples appear on the lips of goats.

Extract (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈɛkstrækt/	Noun	[+ action] [+ getting a part]	Something extracted
/ɪksˈtrækt/	Verb	[+ action] [+ getting a part]	To get something out of something else

Erra (Pahari)



/ 'æɾə // æ 'ɾə /

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ 'æɾə /	Noun	[+ object] [- animate][+ bird]	Nest
/æ 'ɾə /	Noun	[+cause][+ state] [+/- animate]	To Stumble

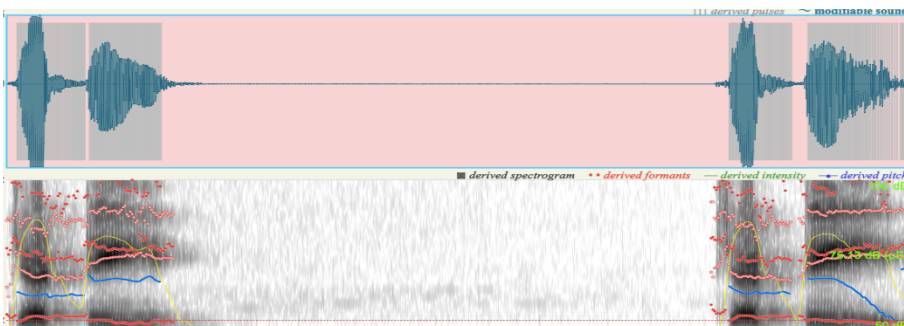
English words give a sense of extraction no matter where the stress is placed. Pahari words demonstrate the contrast in the semantic field. The meaning of the first word is the nests of

pets and wild birds. The second word means a state in which a human, animal, or bird stumbles while walking due to some obstacle on the way.

Insult (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/in 'sʌlt/	Verb	[+ action] [- positive][+ behaviour]	To offend someone
/ 'insʌlt/	Noun	[+ action] [- positive][+ behaviour]	An action intended to be rude

Chatti (Pahari)



/ 'tʃətɪ // tʃə 'tɪ /

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈʃətɪ/	Verb	[+ action] [- masculine] [+ change]	Licked
/ʃətɪ/	Noun	[+ cause] [- positive] [+change]	Penalty or punishment

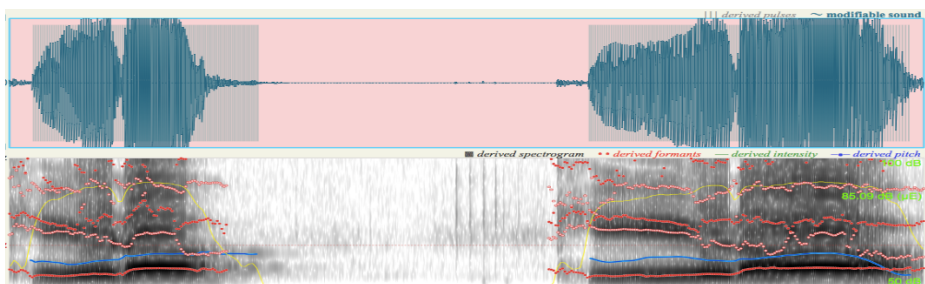
Word insult conveys a negative sense under both the stress positions. However, the word ‘chatti’ with the stress on its first syllable is an action in which a human or an animal, licks something of a feminine sense, e.g., a plate or ice cream. /ɪ/ serves in this example as the

inflection of the feminine gender. Stress on the second syllable means penalty or punishment to somebody due to failure or an unsuccessful task. It may be in the form of a fine or some extra work.

Record (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈrɛkɔ:d/	Noun	[+ knowledge] [+ action]	An information put into a physical medium
/rɪˈkɔ:d/	Verb	[+ knowledge] [+ action]	To make a recording of something

Kherra (Pahari)



/ˈkʰæɾə/

/kʰæˈɾə/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈkʰæɾə/	Verb	[+ action] [+process] [-animate]	Purchase
/kʰæˈɾə/	Noun	[- animate] [+ state] [-cut]	Dry grass

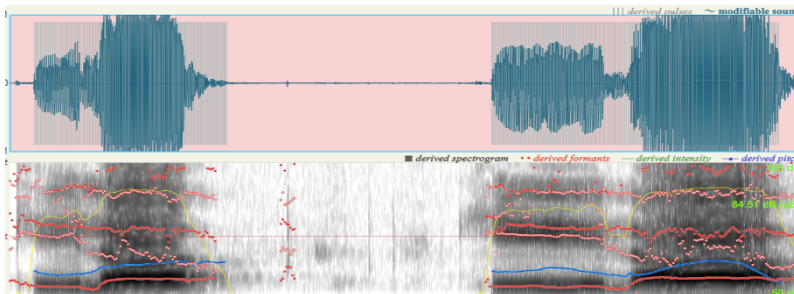
The English word record displays the same semantic field regardless of the stress placement. On the other side, stress on the first

syllable of the Pahari word means purchase and the stress on the second syllable makes it uncut dry grass.

Impact (English)

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈɪmpækt/	Noun	[+change] [+ state]	Effect
/ɪmˈpækt/	Verb	[+change] [+ state]	To affect

Khela (Pahari)



/ˈkʰælə/ /kʰæˈlə/

Stress	Syntactic Category	Semantic Features	Literal Meaning
/ˈkʰælə/	Adjective	[+/-animate] [+ action][- sitting]	Standing
/kʰæˈlə/	Noun	[+ state] [- animate] [-farming]	Uncultivated

The English words represent the same sense for both the stress realizations, whereas the Pahari word with the stress placed on the first syllable means something of masculine sense is standing. /ə/ at the end of words is a masculine gender marker at the end of Pahari words. The same word with stress on the second syllable means an uncultivated field that has not been used to grow crops for short or long periods.

Conclusion and Findings

Lexical stress in Pahari is a sensitive phenomenon that brings about semantic variation. It can change the syntactic category; at the same time, the semantic field is always

changed with the stress shift. Conversely, English maintains the semantic field more often, but the syntactic category continuously varies. Thus, stress functions for different purposes in Pahari and English.

Some significant findings of this study that go as under;

- In English, nouns are usually changed into verbs or vice versa, but the data shows that in Pahari, nouns are changed into nouns, verbs into nouns, nouns into adjectives, and adjectives into adjectives by the stress shift.

- By shifting stress, the vowel in the stressed syllable changes in English but remains unchanged in Pahari.
- Semantic features, or the semantic field, are usually the same in English due to stress shifts, but they always come with a sharp contrast in Pahari.
- Changes in the semantic field and the semantic category have mainly been observed in both Pahari and English disyllabic words.
- It is not easy to describe the meanings of all the words in componential analysis, but it has proved to be a fair approach in most cases.
- It is easy for native speakers of any language to understand the meaning of a word under specific stress placement without decomposing a word in its feature, but it is difficult for the non-native speaker or the observer.
- Speech, especially the pronunciation, of educated Pahari speakers is influenced by Urdu and English, as there is a great tendency to use Urdu and English for communication among educated communities in the Pahari-speaking areas.
- There is a noticeable difference in Pahari pronunciation between the speech of old, uneducated native speakers and young, educated native speakers.

Semantics and phonology of Pahari are vast fields for conducting research. Future researchers can analyze stress in multisyllabic Pahari words. As tone and stress connect closely in tonal languages, tone can be explored in Pahari. Many basic phenomena in semantics have yet to be addressed in Pahari, such as researchers can investigate the connotative meaning of Pahari lexical items and their denotative counterparts. Ground-breaking theories of semantics can be tested along with Pahari.

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