RESEARCH PAPER

Examining the Stress Patterns followed by Urdu Speakers Learning English in English Department at UOK

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the stress patterns followed by the Urdu Speakers learning English in the English Department at University of Kotli (UOK). This study throws light on how students break words into syllables and the approaches they use in navigating this area, and explores the influence of the Urdu language on the stress patterns spoken by the students of the English Department while speaking English. Urdu is the native language of the inhabitants of Kashmir and so it has deep influence on the speech patterns of speakers especially while learning second language. The researcher wants to find the influence of native language of participants, which is Urdu, on the target language, which is English because no work has been done in this regard. The researcher conducted interviews and recorded the answers on a cell phone using sound recorder software and provided the participants with a text to read so that the researcher could get a deeper insight into how they produce stress while pronouncing a particular word. The results of this study reveal the complexities involved in acquisition and production of the English stress patterns of Urdu speakers of English.

| **KEYWORDS** | English, Speakers, Stress Patterns, Urdu |

Introduction

Urdu is a language which is spoken in Pakistan, and it shares the status of the official language of Pakistan along with English, and it also holds significant importance among the languages of the world. As it is one of the prominent languages spoken in Pakistan, it serves as a native language for nearly all the students enrolled in Pakistani universities. English is the lingua franca, and it offers challenges to new learners, especially those learners who have distinct linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, both languages exhibit different stress patterns because the English language uses variable stress patterns while the Urdu language usually employs stress on the whole word .The main focus of this study is to understand how the Urdu speaking students in the English Department at UOK lay stress on the English words, keeping in view the linguistic differences between both the languages, Urdu and English. Wiriyachitra (2002) states that English has become a part of our lives, and it is the first international language that is taught in the majority of the schools in the world, and describes the importance of appropriate stress on the syllable because it enhances the understanding of a word. Anwar (2007) argues that Urdu has the influence of Farsi, which makes it a complex language. The current study investigates the stress patterns followed by Urdu speakers learning English in the English Department at University of Kotli (UOK). The study also explores how students of the English Department lay stress on particular syllables.

Literature Review

Stress patterns vary in different languages. English is a complex language, so it is difficult for non-native speakers to achieve native-like pronunciation due to the influence of their native languages. The stress patterns in both languages vary. In every language, stress patterns describe the meaning of the words and incorrect stress patterns change the meaning of the whole conversation. . Morris Halle and Jean-Roger Vergnaud (1987) state that every phoneme is not able to bear stress, but stress on a syllable in a word enhances the beauty, and it is the most essential fact. Kelly, Michael H. Bock, and J. Kathryn (1988) suggest that speakers change the stress patterns according to the rhythmic biases, because when they pronounce di-syllabic words they always try to place stress on the first syllable, and they prefer to start the syllable with stress followed by the unstressed syllable and sometimes, its opposite happens because speakers change the stress patterns according to their convenience. Jenkins (1998) states that, nowadays, non-native people just want to convey their message, and they have nothing to do with the accent. Harmer (2001) describes the importance of appropriate stress on the syllable because it enhances the understanding of a word. Hahn (2004) and Arslan (2013**)** argue that stress plays a key role in order to understand the discourse in L2. Field (2005) discusses that various factors which include language background of the learner and the exposure to stress patterns help in improving stress patterns in a second language. Muro and Derwing (2006) state that the changes in stress patterns affect the pronunciation understanding of listeners. Moreover, stress patterns maintain the natural flow in a conversation. Anwar (2007) argues that Urdu has influence of Farsi, which makes it a complex language.

Nishihara and Weijier (2011) state that changes in stress on syllables in different words have a deep influence on communication, especially on a second language learner's understanding. Naz (2012) states that Urdu has a unique morphology and complex structure due to which it is preferred in literature. Arslan (2013) states that poor communication skills of non-native speakers put an end to communication because they do not put appropriate stress on the right syllable. Abbas (2018) states that Pakistani people consider the importance of Urdu in their surroundings while they want to learn English for communication on international level. Shahid (2024) states that Kashmiri speakers use their native language patterns in English pronunciation.

Material and Methods

This study employed the qualitative research to find the influence of Urdu language on English stress patterns among the students of English Department at UOK. Qualitative approaches helped the researcher for an in-depth exploration of the topic. The participants in this research were students of the English department at University of Kotli. The English Department of UOK comprises six classes, out of which four classes are at undergraduate (BS) level and two classes are at the postgraduate (MA) level .The researcher selected two students from each class to ensure representation from each level, and a total of twelve participants were selected out of which 6 were males and 6 were females. The purposive sampling technique was used by the researcher to select the participants who met the criteria of being students of the English department at UOK and were willing to participate in the study. This sampling technique helped the researcher to select the candidates who could provide relevant information about the topic.

The researcher got the ethical approval from all the participants and told them all the details regarding the study and the researcher also ensured their voluntary participation and confidentiality of all their responses and their identities would remain anonymous in the study. The sessions for data collection were programmed, keeping in

view the convenience of the participants. The data was collected through the recorded spoken responses from the participants. The researcher conducted the interviews and in the end provided the participants with a text to read in order to record their responses. The interview of each student was conducted individually. The researcher asked frequent questions in order to maintain the natural flow of conversation. The participants were asked to read a given topic in order to record the English stress patterns followed by participants. The speech was recorded on the cell phone. The stress patterns were observed on following words:

Table 1
List of words on which stress patterns are observed

Words	Syllables	Transcription	Stress patterns followed by participants	
			Incorrect	Correct
Begin (V)	2	[bɪˈgɪn]	[bɪˈgɪn]	[bɪˈgɪn]
Decide(V)	2	[dɪˈsaɪd]		[dɪˈsaɪd]
Expensive(Adj)	3	[ɪkˈspensɪv]	[ɪˈkspensɪv]	[ɪkˈspensɪv]
Interesting(Adj)	3 (British)	[ˈɪntrəstɪŋ]	[ɪntrəˈstɪŋ]	[ˈɪntrəstɪŋ]
Inspiration (N)	4	[ˌɪn.spɪˈreɪ.ʃən]	[ˌɪnˈspɪreɪ.ʃən]	[ˌɪn.spɪˈreɪ.ʃən]
Communicate(v)	4	[kəˈmju:nɪkeɪt]	[ˈkəˈmju:nɪkeɪt]	[kəˈmju:nɪkeɪt]
Information(N)	4	[ˌɪnfəˈmeɪʃn]	[ˌɪnˈfəˈmeɪʃn]	[ˌɪnfəˈmeɪʃn]
University(N)	5	[ˌju:nɪˈvɜ:səti]	[ˌˈju:nɪˈvɜ:səti]	[ˌju:nɪˈvɜ:səti]

The standard transcription was taken from Oxford Learner's Dictionaries for British English. The interview was conducted in an informal setting, keeping in view the convenience of participants, and stress pattern is noted by observing the frequency of vibrations on a syllable with the help of sound recorder software.

Results and Discussion

Urdu as a native language of the students of University of Kotli has a profound impact on the English pronunciation of the students, and they face problems in pronouncing a new word they encounter, because in the Urdu language generally stress is laid on the whole word which means each syllable is usually equally stressed while in English the criteria is different because stress is laid on particular syllables.

The researcher asked the question which language the participants primarily use at home. Following table shows the responses of the students:

Table 2
Languages spoken by participants at home

Total Participants	Urdu	Pahari	English	Urdu and English both
12	5	5	0	2
100%	41.66%	41.66%	0%	16.66%

The above table shows that 5 out of 12 students speak Urdu in their homes, which means that 41.66% participants speak Urdu in their houses and 5 out of 12 speak Pahari in their homes and no participant completely speaks English in his or her home, and 2 out of 12 speak both English and Urdu in their homes.

The following table shows the proficiency level of participants:

Table 3
Proficiency Level

Total Participants	Proficient	Intermediate	Not Proficient
12	8	4	0
100%	66.6%	33.34%	0%

The above table shows that out of 12 participants, 8 are proficient Urdu speakers, which means out of 100%, 66.6% students are proficient in Urdu, and 33.34% have an intermediate level of proficiency which means 4 participants out of 12 participants.

The researcher inquired which language participants generally used in their classrooms. The following table shows the responses of participants:

Table 4
Languages used by participants in classroom

Total Participants	Always Urdu	Only English	Urdu and English both
12	4	0	8
100%	33.34%	0%	66.66%

The researcher asked if the participants found English stress patterns difficult to master as compared to the other aspects of the English language. The following table shows the responses of participants.

Table 5
Perception of stress patterns by participants

Total Participants	Sometimes	Often	Always
12	4	7	1
100%	33.33%	58.33%	8.33%

The above table shows that 4 out of 12 participants sometimes find English stress patterns difficult to master as compared to the other aspects of the English language which means 33.33% of students sometimes face problem, and nearly 58.33% students often find English stress patterns difficult to master as compared to the other aspects of the English language which shows that 7 participants, out of 12 and 1 participant out of 12 always finds it difficult which contributes 8.33%.

The researcher asked about the ease and difficulty the participants faced in the identification of stress patterns in words. The following table shows the ease or difficulty in the identification of stress patterns:

Table 6
Stress identification

Total Participants	Easily	Sometimes difficulty	Always difficulty
12	5	6	1
100%	41.67%	50%	8.33%

The above table shows that 5 participants, out of 12 participants easily identify stress patterns, which means 41.67% participants are eligible to identify stress patterns in English and 50% of students sometimes become successful in the identification of stress patterns, and sometimes they face difficulty. This means 6 out of 12 students have intermediate level of stress identification, while 1 participant, out of 12 always faces difficulty in the identification of stress patterns, which shows that 8.33% of students always face difficulty with stress identification in English.

The researcher asked if the participants could identify the stressed syllable in the following words: comfortable and vegetable. The following table shows the responses of the students:

Table 7
stress identification on 'Comfortable'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
	Correct	[kʌmˈftəbl]	0	0%
Comfortable	Incorrect	[kʌmˈfətəbl]	3	25%
	Incorrect	[kʌmˈfətəˈbl]	9	75%

The above table shows that 0 out of 12 participants correctly identified the stress patterns on the word 'comfortable'[kʌmˈftəbl] which shows that 0% of participants correctly lay stress on the first syllable, which is **COM-F**or-table, while 3 out of 12 lay stress on **'for'** com-**FOR-**ta-ble **[kʌmˈfətəbl]** which are 25%. Moreover, 9 participants out of 12 lay stress on the last two syllables, which are **'ta'** and **'ble'** com-for-**TA-BLE** [kʌmˈfətəˈbl], which means 75% of students lay stress on the last two syllables.The participants also insert /ə/ sound which shows the influence of the Urdu language because participants follow CVC pattern in English pronunciation while in English it follows CCC.

Table 8
stress identification on 'Vegetable'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Vegetable	Correct	[ˈvedʒtəbl]	0	0%
	Incorrect	[ˈvedʒəˈtəbl]	12	100%

The above table shows that all 12 participants were unable to identify the stress patterns of the word vegetable, which means **100%** of students lay stress on 'veg' and 'table' **VEG- e-TABLE [**ˈvedʒəˈtəbl] with the insertion of /ə/ sound which shows the influence of the Urdu language because participants follow CVC pattern.

The researcher asked about their opinion if Urdu affects their pronunciation of English stress patterns and in what ways they think that Urdu influences their English stress patterns. The following table shows the responses of participants.

Table 9
Effect of Urdu on English Pronunciation

Total Participants	YES	NO
12	12	0
100%	100%	0%

The above table shows that all twelve participants said that the Urdu language has a deep influence on their pronunciation, due to which they sometimes face difficulty in laying stress on certain English words it means that the native speakers of Urdu 100% find the influence of Urdu on the pronunciation of English Words.

The researcher asked in what ways they believed that Urdu had affected their English stress patterns. The following table shows the responses of participants.

Table 10
The way Urdu effects English Pronunciation

Total Participants	Follow Urdu stress patterns in English	Eliminate difference syllables
12	9	3
100%	75%	25%

The above table shows that 9 participants out of 12 follow Urdu stress patterns in English, which means 75% of participants follow the syllable-timed rhythm of the Urdu language in which nearly equal stress is given on each syllable, and 4 participants try to combine syllables on the pattern of the Urdu language due to which they mispronounce the words.

The following tables show the stress patterns followed by participants on disyllabic words:

Table 11
Stress Patterns on 'begin'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Begin	Correct	[bɪˈgɪn]	11	91.66%
	Incorrect	[ˈbɪgɪn]	1	8.34%

The above table shows that 11 participants out of 12 participants correctly identified the stress patterns of the di-syllabic word 'begin', which shows that 91.66% participants correctly laid stress on the second syllable, which is be-**GIN** [bɪˈgɪn], while 1 participant out of 12 laid stress on the first syllable **BE**-gin [ˈbɪgɪn] which means 16.67% participants incorrectly laid stress on the word begin.

Table 12
Stress Patterns on 'decide'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Decide	Correct	[dɪˈsaɪd]	12	100%

The above table shows that all 12 participants correctly identified the stress patterns of the word 'decide', which shows that 100% of participants correctly laid stress on the second syllable, which is **de-CIDE [dɪˈsaɪd].**

The following tables show the stress patterns followed by participants on tri-syllabic words.

Table 13
Stress Patterns on 'Expensive'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Expensive	Correct	[ɪkˈspensɪv]	2	16.67%
	Incorrect	[ˈɪksˈpensɪv]	6	50%
	Incorrect	[ɪkspenˈsɪv]	4	33.33%

The above table shows that 2 out of 12 participants correctly laid stress on the word 'expensive', which means that 16.67% of participants correctly lay stress on the syllables, while 6 out of 12 lay stress on the first and second syllables **EX-Pen**-sive [ˈɪksˈpensɪv], which shows that 50% of students laid stress on the first and second syllables. Furthermore, only 4 students out of 12 laid stress on last syllable 'ex-pen-**SIVE**' **[ɪkspenˈsɪv].** This shows that 33.33% of participants lay stress on the last syllable.

Table 14
Stress Patterns on 'Interesting'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Interesting	Correct	[ˈɪntrəstɪŋ]	5	41.66%
	Incorrect	[ɪntrəˈstɪŋ]	7	58.33%

The above table shows that 5 out of 12 participants correctly identify the stress patterns of the word 'interesting', which demonstrates that 41.66% of participants correctly lay stress on the first syllable which is **IN-ter-est-ing** [ˈɪntrəstɪŋ], while 7 out of 12 lay stress on in-teres**TING** [ɪntrəsˈtɪŋ], which means 58.33% laid stress on wrong part of the word.

The following tables show the stress patterns followed by participants on tetra-syllabic words:

Table 15
Stress Patterns on 'Inspiration'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Inspiration	Correct	[ˌɪn.spɪˈreɪ.ʃən]	1	8.33%
	Incorrect	[ˌɪnˈspɪreɪˌʃən]	11	91.67%

The above table shows that 1 participant out of 12 participants correctly laid stress on the word 'inspiration' which means that 8.33% participants correctly laid stress on the third syllable which is '**in-spi-RA-tion**' while 11, out of 12 laid stress on in-**SPI**-ra-tion [ˌɪnˈspɪreɪˌʃən] which are 91.67% of 100%.

Table 16
Stress Patterns on 'Communicate'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Communicate	Correct	[kəˈmjuːnɪkeɪt]	3	25%
	Incorrect	[ˈkəˈmjuːnɪkeɪt]	9	75%

The above table shows that 3 out of 12 participants correctly laid stress on the word 'com-**MU**ni-cate' [kəˈmjuːnɪkeɪt], which means that 25% of participants correctly laid stress on the second syllable, however; 2 out of 12 laid stress on the first syllable which are 75% of 100%.

Table 17
Stress Patterns on 'Information'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
Information	Correct	[ˌɪnfəˈmeɪʃn]	5	41.67%
	Incorrect	[ˌɪnˈfəˈmeɪʃn]	7	58.37%

The above table shows that 5 participants out of 12 participants correctly identified the stress patterns of the word 'information', which means that 41.67% participants correctly lay stress on the third syllable, which is 'in-for-**MA**-tion', while 2 out of 12 lay stress on second syllable 'com-**FOR**-ta-ble' which are 58.37% of 100%.

The following tables show the stress patterns followed by participants on penta-syllabic words:

Table 18
Stress Patterns on 'University'

Word		Transcription	Frequency	Percentage
University	Correct	[ˌjuːnɪˈvɜːsəti]	5	41.67%
	Incorrect	[ˌjuːnɪˈvɜːˈsəti]	4	33.33%
	Incorrect	[ˌˈjuːnɪˈvɜːsəti]	3	25%

The above table shows that 5 out of 12 participants correctly identified the stress patterns on the word 'university', which means that 41.67% of participants correctly lay stress on the third syllable which is 'u-ni-**VER**-si-ty' [ˌjuːnɪˈvɜːsəti] while 4 out of 12 laid stress on the third and forth syllable u-ni-**VER-SI**-ty [ˌjuːnɪˈvɜːˈsəti] which are 16.67% of 100%. Moreover, 3 out of 12 laid stress on the first and third syllable which means 25% participants follow the stress patterns **U**-ni-**VER**-si-ty [ˈjuːnɪˈvɜːsəti]**.**

Conclusion

The results show that the Urdu language has a profound influence on the stress pattern of the students of the English Department at University of Kotli. The majority of

students face difficulty with the stressed syllables in a word, and they often lay stress on the wrong syllable. It is generally because the Urdu language follows a syllable-timed rhythm in which equal stress is laid on nearly each syllable, usually at equal intervals. Moreover, students follow CVC pattern of pronunciation of Urdu language in English pronunciation as in the case of VEG-e-TABLE and COM-for -TABLE. The research data shows that due to the frequent use of Urdu and less exposure to English, students of the English Department at University of Kotli face difficulties in pronunciation of English, as a result of which it is very difficult for these students to acquire native-like proficiency. Moreover, the findings of the study show that the exposure of students with English in their classrooms is also very low, due to which the majority of students mispronounce the words by giving stress on the wrong syllables. Furthermore, students also get puzzled when deciding whether a word is tri-syllabic or tetra-syllabic, and they sometimes also get confused in the case of mono and di-syllabic words, due to which they are stuck with the struggle of lying stress on the appropriate syllable. The extra-linguistic factor like gender has no influence on the study and the results have shown that both genders are equally liable to make mistakes in pronouncing words.

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