

On the prosody of pragmatic focus in Chodri, Gujarati and Marathi  
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This project investigates the prosodic realization of pragmatic focus in three Indo-Aryan languages: Chodri, Gujarati and Marathi. While Gujarati and Marathi are officially-recognized Indo-Aryan languages belonging to the Central and Southern subgroups, respectively, Chodri is an understudied language from the Bhili dialect continuum, which is placed in the Central subgroup. In the talk, we report the findings of a production experiment designed to explore the prosodic realization of utterances of sentences like the Marathi sentence in (1) under two focus conditions: pragmatic focus on the subject in response to a question about the subject (e.g., 'Who is exercising?') and pragmatic focus on the predicate in response to a question about predicate (e.g., 'What is Ananyaa doing?').

(1) Ananyaa vyaayaam kar-te aahe.  
[Marathi] Ananyaa exercise do-impf.f.sg be.pres.3.sg  
'Ananya is exercising.'

We ran the production experiment with 11-12 talkers from Chodri, Gujarati, and Marathi to analyze the prosody of pragmatic focus in each language and to facilitate comparison between the three languages. We observe prosodic cues to focus condition from (a) the tones realized on the predicate and the auxiliary, (b) the duration of the subject and the predicate, and (c) the pitch range on the subject and the predicate. However, the languages seem to differ with respect to which of the aforementioned prosodic cues realize focus. Our data are compatible with an analysis of these languages as accentual phrase languages in which L and H tones are associated with the left and right edges of non-final accentual phrases, respectively. We tentatively suggest that between-talker variation in the alignment of the H tone may be driven by social factors.