

## A Study of Pitch Accent in Gurezi Shina

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### Abstract

The paper aims to provide a description of pitch accent as a significant feature of Gurezi Shina. The description has been presented with the help of minimal pair of words. Pitch accent graphs have also been presented to highlight the accented as well as unaccented syllables. The data has been collected from native Shina speakers during various field trips to the Gurez Valley. The data has been transcribed using SilDoulos IPA 93. For analysis of pitch accent both PRAAT and Speech Analyzer (SA) has been used. For sound editing GoldWave freeware has been used. The nature of the paper is descriptive.

**Key words:** Pitch accent, Syllable, Mora, Minimal Pair, Spectrograph

### Introduction

Accent is often conceived as the prominence that a syllable in a word receives in comparison to other syllables of the same word. Pitch accent refers to the phenomenon in which pitch-change attributes prominence to the certain syllable of a word as against other syllables of that word and is usually associated with a local high and low pitch<sup>1</sup>. In pitch accented languages each word has one and only one prominent or accented syllable. This accent or prominence is fixed for all words of the language, whether simple or complex thus making it a lexical feature of the word.

Hypothetically for a tri-syllabic word, the pitch accent can be placed on either of the first, medial or final syllables.

### Syllable and mora

Since pitch accent is functional at syllabic level, as such some understanding of syllable and the sub-syllabic unit called mora is required in the perception of pitch accent. Syllables have generally been categorized into heavy and light<sup>2</sup> as an indication of their weight. Syllables having a long vowel and/or a coda are considered as heavy syllables while as syllables having only a short vowel are

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<sup>1</sup> Ladd 1996, P 46, 59

<sup>2</sup> Hyman 1985, P 5.

treated as light. Syllable weight has been explained in terms of the weight bearing units called mora. A short vowel is considered to be as one mora and a long vowel as two moras<sup>3</sup>. A coda following a short vowel in a syllable is also taken as one mora. However this is only true of some languages; many languages treat CVC pattern as comprising of a single mora<sup>4</sup>. Diagrammatically the syllable, mora and syllable weight is shown in the following manner.

### **The present study**

The present paper reports part of the findings of a major study<sup>5</sup> undertaken on Gurezi Shina<sup>6</sup>. The paper aims to provide a description of pitch accent as a significant feature of Gurezi Shina. The description has been presented with the help of minimal pair of words. Pitch accent graphs have also been presented to highlight the accented as well as unaccented syllables. The data has been collected from native Shina speakers during various field trips to the Gurez Valley. The data has been transcribed using SilDoulos IPA 93. For analysis of pitch accent both PRAAT and Speech Analyzer (SA) has been used. For sound editing GoldWave freeware has been used. The study will take a long vowel as consisting of two moras.

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<sup>3</sup> Hayes 1989

<sup>4</sup> Hayes 1989.

<sup>5</sup> The study entitled Description Documentation and Preservation of Shina, undertaken in the department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, was funded by UGC.

<sup>6</sup> Shina, locally pronounced as /ʃināā/ or /ʃiŋāā/ is the language of the people scattered over a vast mountainous region stretching from northern areas of J&K in the east through the territories in North-West province of Pakistan into the north-eastern parts of Afghanistan. In Jammu and Kashmir State of India, Shina is spoken in two areas; Gurez and Drass. The valley of Gurez lies at the extreme north of Indian Kashmir in the Bandipora district. On its northern side the valley is demarcated from the areas falling under the control of Pakistan through concertina wires signifying the Line of Control (LOC). The river Kishenganga with its principal stream originating from the high altitude Gangbal lake, nestled in the Harmukh mountains, flows in east-west direction and runs through the middle of the valley. The river known by the name of Neelum in Pakistan serves as LOC towards the lower areas of Gurez. The valley is around 95 kilometers long and at few places half a kilometer wide at the most. The rest of it is very narrow with sloping mountains on either side of the river giving it a characteristic V-shaped appearance. The villages are inhabited over flat pieces of land on either side of the river. For administrative purposes, the valley is sometimes divided into three sectors; western Bakhtor, central Dawar and the eastern sector of Tiliel.

### **Pitch Accent in Shina**

Shina has been defined as a pitch accented language. The observation that Shina is a pitch accented language has been made with reference to Gilgiti<sup>7</sup>, Kohistnai<sup>8</sup> and Palula<sup>9</sup> varieties. It means every word in these varieties of Shina has one syllable that is accented or prominent in comparison to the rest of the syllables. This is true of all the grammatical categories of words<sup>10</sup>.

In Shina accent is carried by both short and long vowels. In syllables with long vowels the accent is carried by either the first part of the vowel or the second part<sup>11</sup>. So the accent bearing unit is mora.<sup>12</sup>

Data collected for the present study indicates that pitch accent in Gurezi Shina behaves in the same manner as in Gilgiti, Kohistani and Palula. Every word in Gurezi has one and only one accented syllable, irrespective of whether the word is monosyllabic or polysyllabic. Complex words comprising of a root morpheme and one or more suffixes can have the accented syllable either in its root morpheme or the affixed morpheme. Thus as in other varieties of Shina, pitch accent in Gurezi is a lexical feature.

Accent in Gurezi much like Gilgiti Shina as reported by Radloff<sup>13</sup> is reflected as high pitch and lack of accent as absence of pitch. This high pitch is always local, relative to the other syllables of the word and is unaffected by normal declination over the course of an utterance. However, the high pitch of the accented syllable may not be seen as a level pitch rather there is always a kind of associated contour. It may be a rise from an unaccented syllable to an accented syllable or a fall from an accented syllable to an unaccented one. Like other varieties of Shina, it has been found in Gurezi that syllables having a long vowel always carry the accent, irrespective of their position in a word.

As already stated, in Gurezi like other varieties of Shina, a long vowel always attracts accent and this can be placed on either of the two moras.

Consider the pitch accent in the following words; the vowel/mora with the superscript / ' / indicates the accent.

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<sup>7</sup> Bailey 1924, Radloff 1999

<sup>8</sup> Schimdt and Kohistani 2008

<sup>9</sup> Liljegrin 2008

<sup>10</sup> Radloff 1999, P 57

<sup>11</sup> Radloff 1999, P58

<sup>12</sup> Liljegrin 2008, P 74

<sup>13</sup> Radloff 1999, P 57-63

<b>Gurezi</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Gurezi</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
záa	brother	mújal	earthquake
síi	beautiful	ífi	air
ázu	clouds	juún	moon
páaj	cave	aʃip	horse
haŋoó	egg	tʃ <sup>h</sup> imu	fish
boón	utensils	ánu	this

### Pitch Accent contrast in Minimal Pairs

Following are presented some minimal pair of words contrasted by pitch accent. The words in each of the pair have similar phonological structure except the placement of pitch accent which causes the meaning to change.

<b>Gurezi</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Gurezi</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
ʃíilu	a wild vegetable	ʃiilu	loose
daál	ashes	dáal	carefree walk
p <sup>h</sup> aál	tip of ploughshare	p <sup>h</sup> áal	initiate a marriage proposal
síi	beautiful	síi	sewed
tʃ <sup>h</sup> eén	a local tree	tʃéen	send (imp)
baái	twelve	báai	after recovery from illness
líi	after cutting	líi	addressing a girl
laái	partial hiding	láai	addressing an elder woman
waái	expression of grief	wáai	contraction of body muscles

### Pitch Accent Graphs

Following is presented the waveform and the pitch graph of some of the words of Gurezi Shina. Since the pitch accent is easily perceptible on long vowels, words having long vowels have been chosen to show the rise and fall in the pitch pattern. As already mentioned above the rise and fall in the pitch pattern makes either of the two moras accented; if there is a rise in the pitch then the second mora of the long vowel is accented and if there is a fall then the first mora is accented.

<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
záa	brother

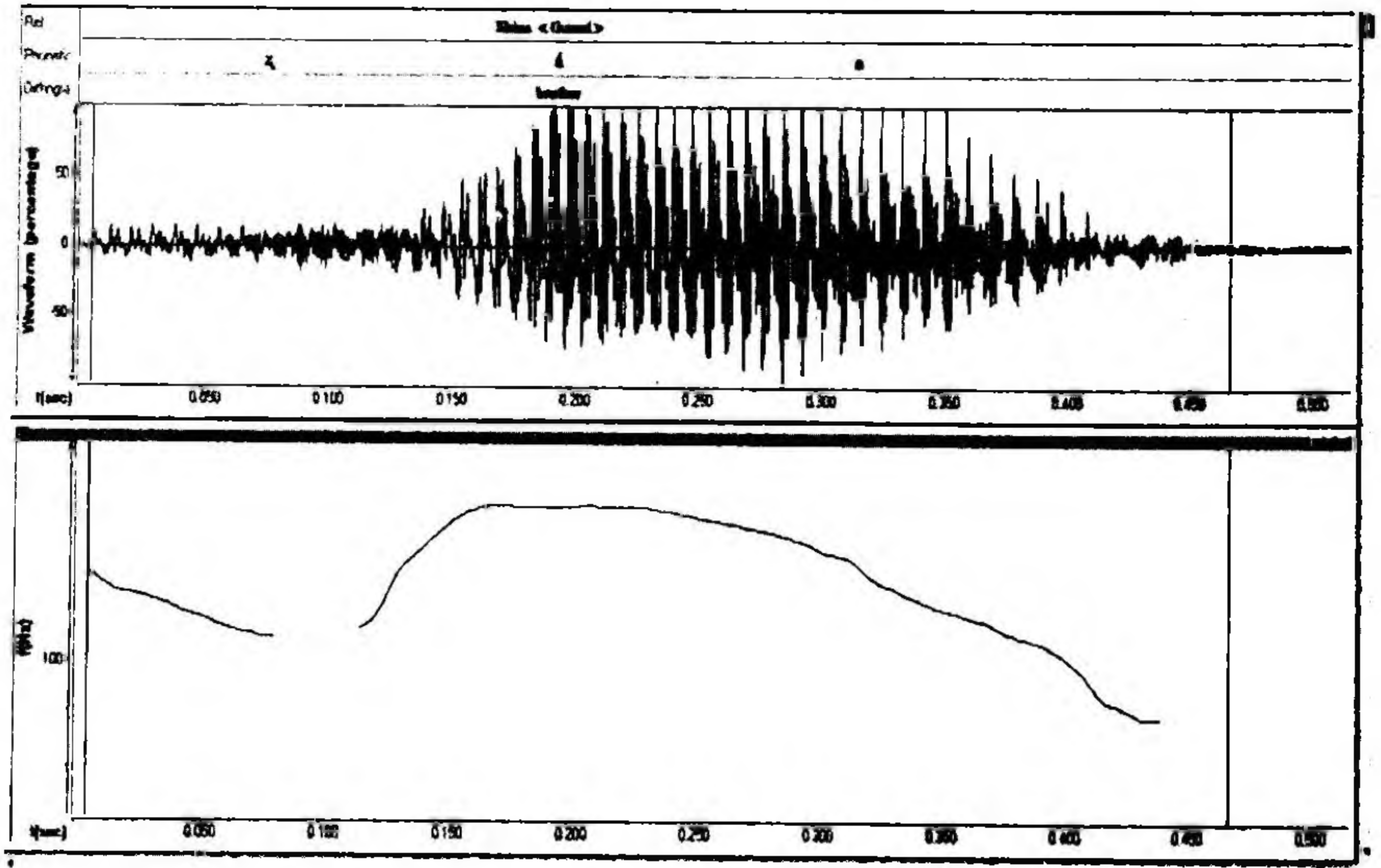


Fig 1

**Gur**  
baaf

**Gloss**  
lungs

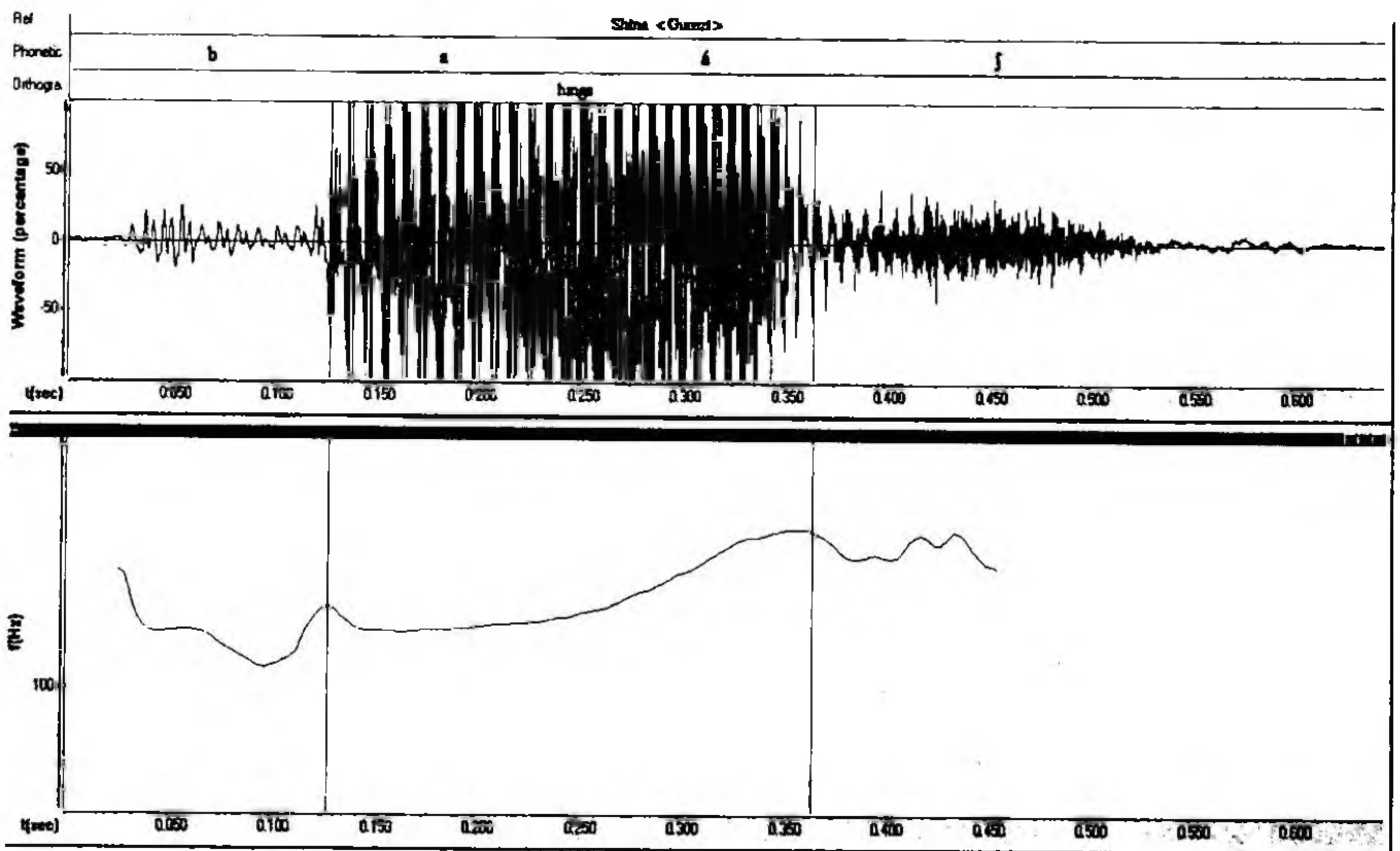


Fig 2



In Fig 1, the spectrograph and the pitch curve of Gurezi word /zâa/ meaning 'brother' is shown. As is clear from the pitch curve, during the course of long vowel /aa/ there is clearly a fall of pitch from the first mora to the second mora. As such the first mora is accented in comparison to the second mora which is unaccented.

Fig 2, presents the pitch curve and spectrograph of the word /baáf/ meaning 'lungs' in which there is rise from the first mora of the long vowel to the second mora that is accented.

<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
t <sup>h</sup> uúŋe	tethering peg

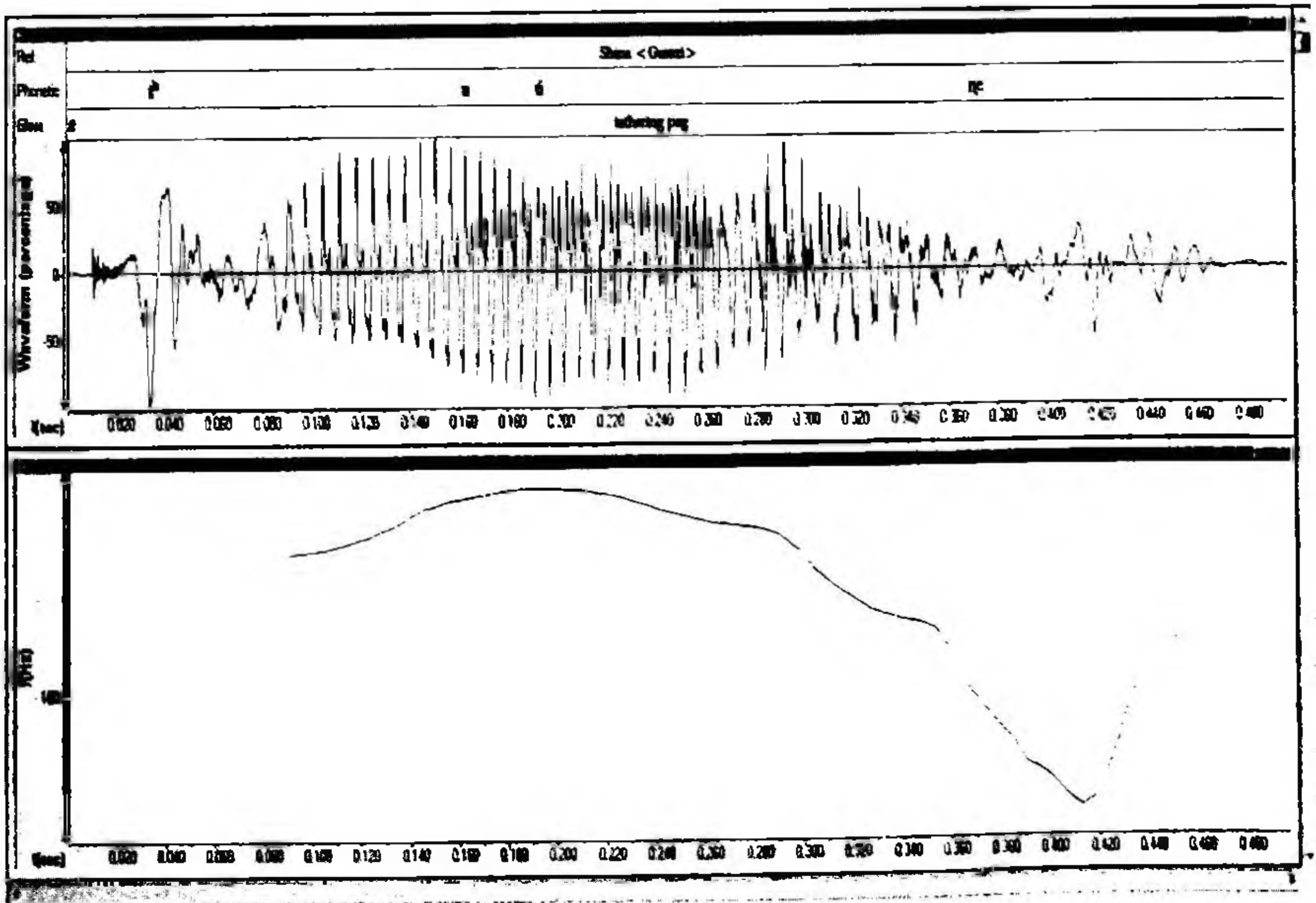


Fig 3

<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
p <sup>h</sup> iipi	father's sister

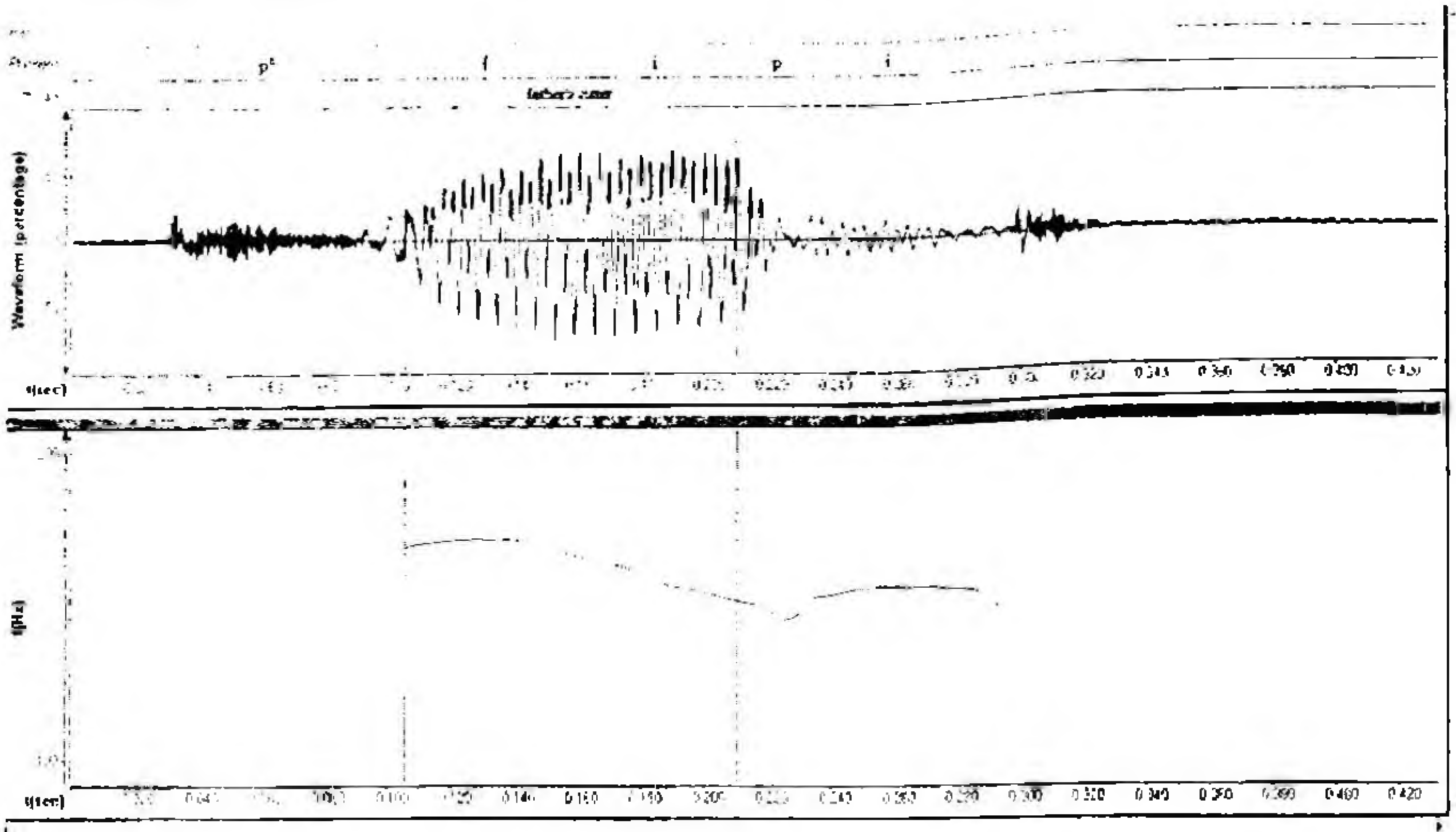


Fig 4

Fig3 and Fig 4 shows two disyllabic words with a long vowel in the first syllable. As already mentioned long vowels carry always carry accent; there is a rise from the first mora to the second mora of the long vowel in the former and a fall from the first mora to the second mora in the latter.

<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
pʰaál	tip of ploughshare	pʰáal	to
initiate a marriage proposal			

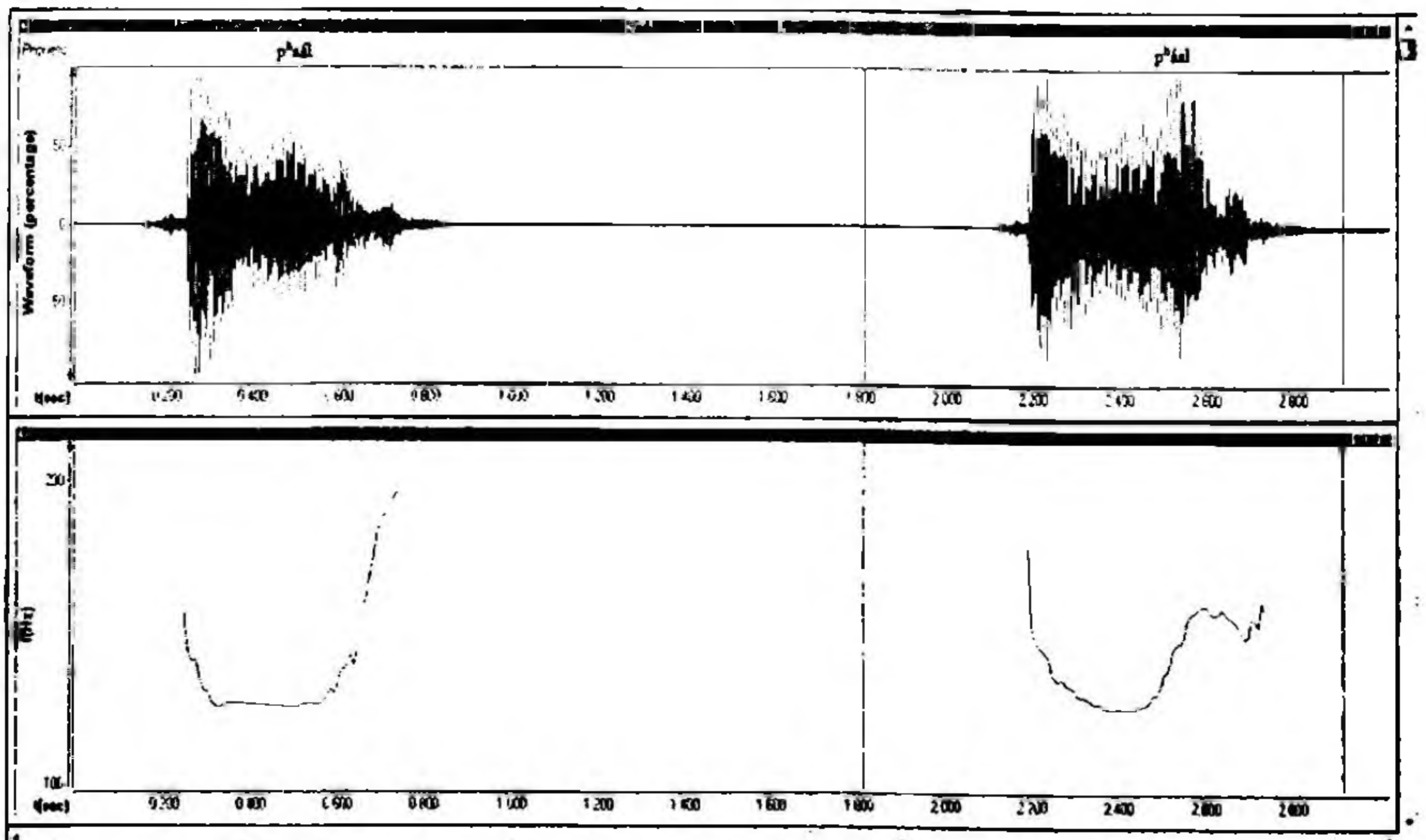
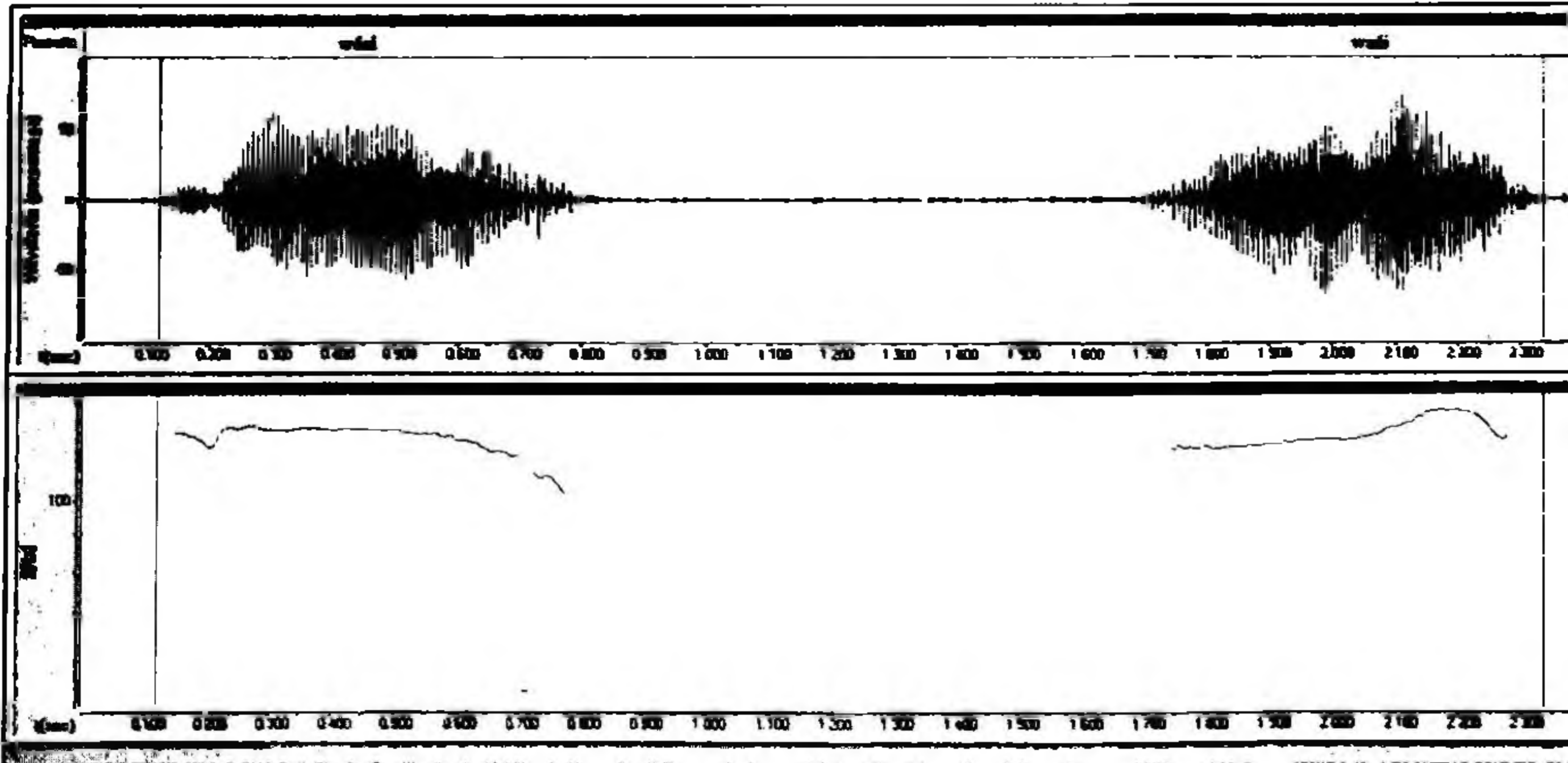


Fig 5

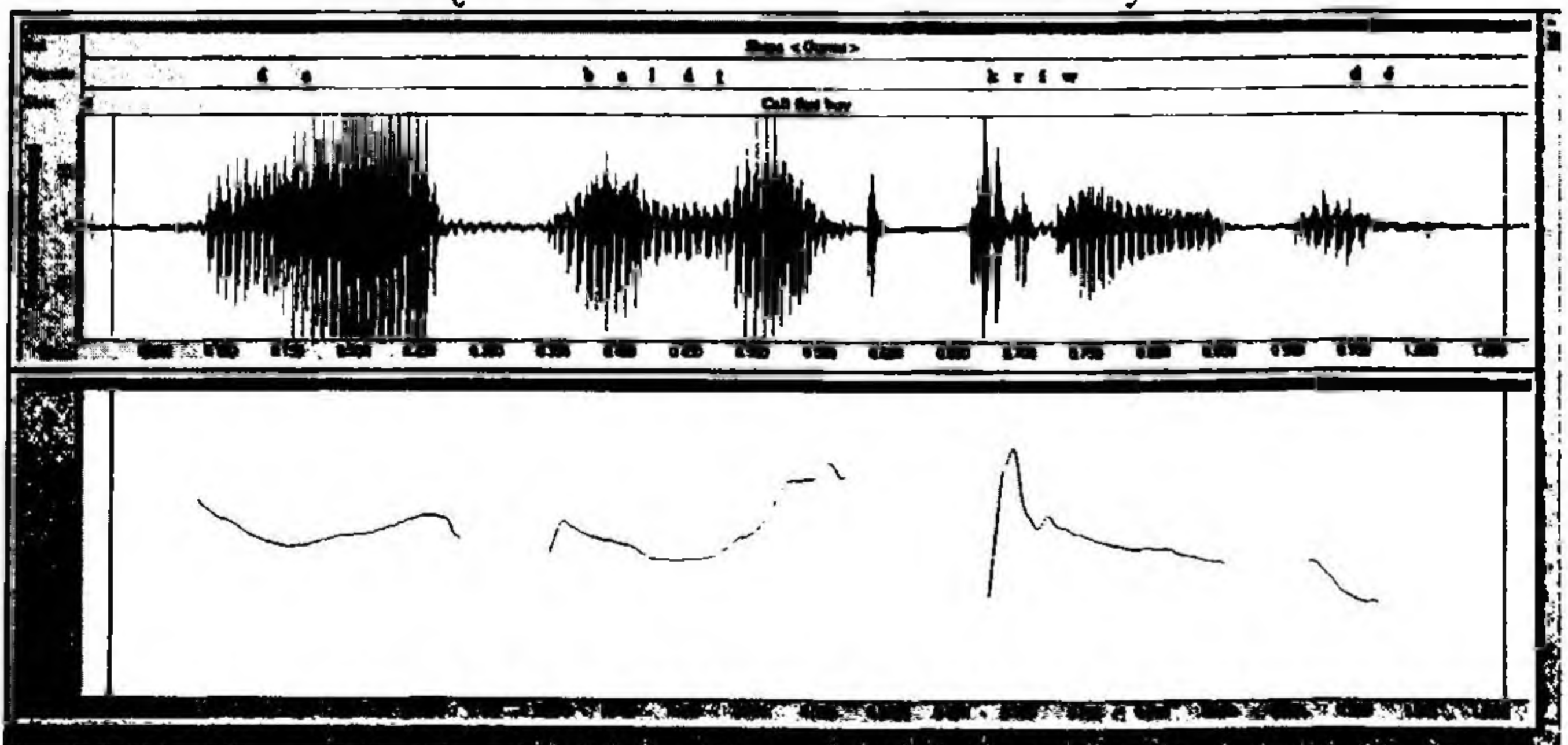
Fig 5 presents the pitch accent pattern of a minimal pair of words that are contrasted on the basis of pitch accent. In the figure read from left to right, the first pattern reflects the pitch accent in the word /p<sup>h</sup>aál/ that falls on the second mora of the long vowel. The next pattern is that of the word /p<sup>h</sup>áal/ where the pitch falls from the first mora to second mora making the former accented.

<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Gur</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
wáai	contraction of body muscles	waái	
expression of grief			



**Fig 6**  
**Gloss**  
call that boy

**Gur**  
áa balát kriw dé



**Fig 7**  
**Gloss**

**Gur**



mó hóõs guraátʃi

I am from Gurez

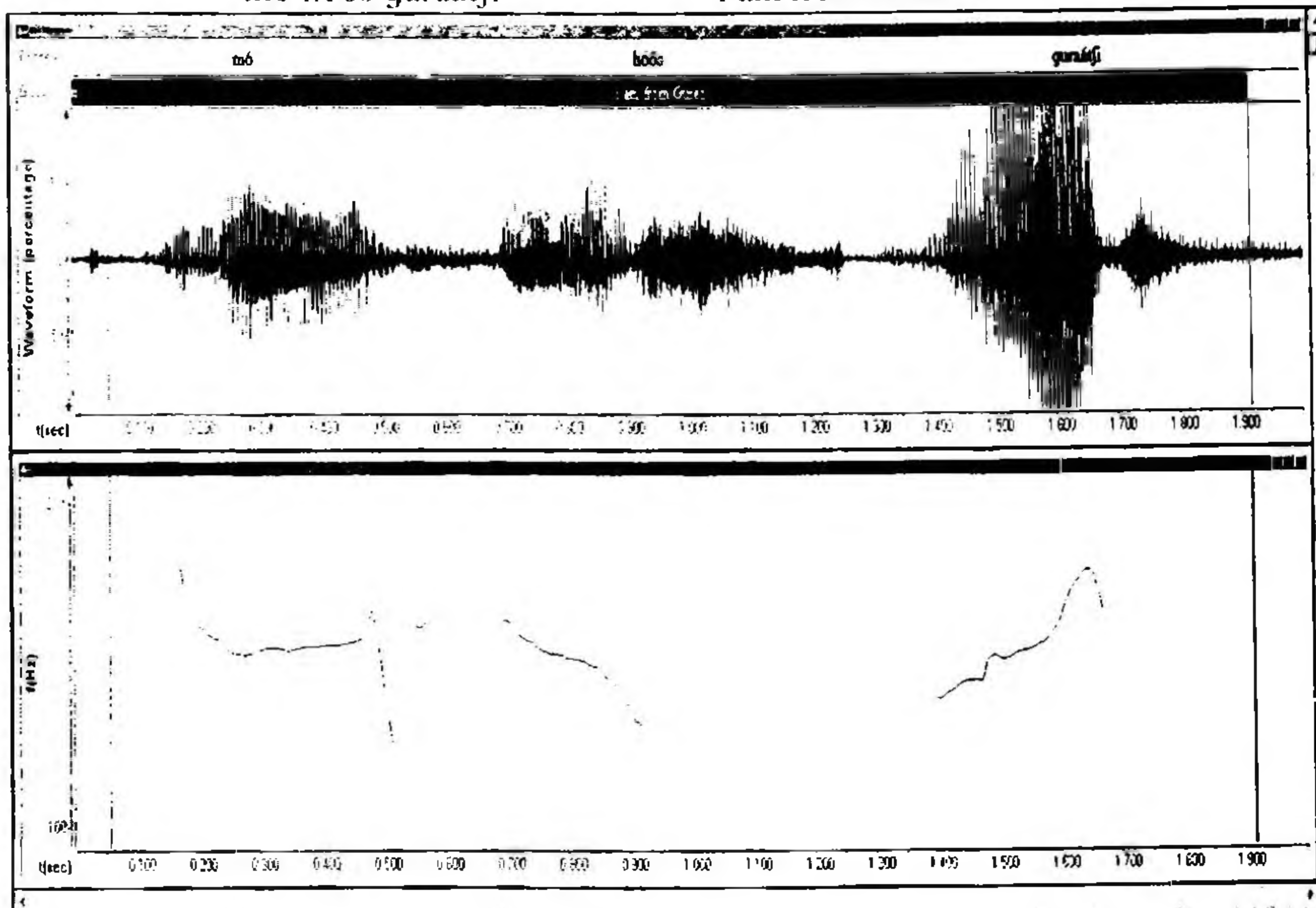


Fig 8

Fig 6 and Fig 7 present the pitch pattern of two complete sentences. In Fig 7 there is a series of falls and rises in the pitch pattern over the course of the sentence /áa balát kriw dé/. As can be seen, the first word has a long vowel and the pitch accent falls on the first mora, in the second word the accent falls on the vowel of ultimate syllable and in the third word which is monosyllabic the pitch rises for the vowel and in the final word which is again monosyllabic the pitch falls after the word.

Likewise in Fig 8 there is series of rises and falls; there are two long vowels one in second word /hóõ/ and other in final word /guraátʃi/. In the former, the pitch accent falls on first mora and in the latter word it falls on the second mora.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Like other varieties of Shina, Gurezi also makes use of pitch accent distinctively as indicated by the minimal pair of words. While it was observed that most of the words in Gurezi have an accented syllable, but only twenty minimal pairs contrasted on the basis of pitch accent could be found in a database of several thousand words. This may be reflective of the decreased use of the pitch accent and may be a consequence of widespread bilingualism among the Shina speakers of Gurez. Most of the people of Gurez are fluent Urdu speakers and many can converse in Kashmiri as well. This is true of all Shina speakers of Gurez except

for the people of some villages in Tileil, who are relatively less exposed to outside world in general and Kashmiri in particular, due to its remoteness. In the speech of elderly Shina speakers, perceptible rise and falls of pitch could be observed, but the speech of many younger speakers seem to lack such rise and fall. The observation may be substantiated or refuted by studies based on additional data.

Since a trend of migration has set in among the people of Gurez<sup>14</sup> and many people have migrated to other parts of the valley, including Srinagar, the summer capital of the state. Consequently use of Shina is restricted to home domain among these immigrants<sup>15</sup>. This is besides the fact that many people like government employees and students of higher education have to leave their native place Gurez for extended periods of time and have to use either Kashmiri or Urdu in the social domains. Apart from this, the use of Urdu and English among the student community of Gurez is also on rise, for these languages being the medium of school and higher education. Collectively all the above factors seem to be having a detrimental impact on the use of Shina in general and pitch accent in particular.

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<sup>14</sup> Ahmed 2014.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, 10 -11.

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