

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Factors Contributing to The Emergence of Lexical Units Exhibiting Homonymy in Hindi

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Abstract

This study explores the main factors contributing to the emergence of lexical homonyms in Hindi, focusing on nouns and adjectives. It examines key mechanisms such as semantic divergence (the splitting of polysemy), phonetic convergence, word formation (including conversion), and borrowing.

Using etymological and comparative-historical methods, the research shows that most homonyms arise from semantic divergence, while other processes play a secondary role. The findings also highlight the importance of historical Indo-Aryan stages (Pali, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha) in this development.

The study concludes that homonyms, despite posing difficulties in distinguishing them from polysemy, significantly enrich the lexical system of Hindi.

KEY WORDS

Homonymy, Hindi, semantic divergence, phonetic convergence, borrowing, conversion.

INTRODUCTION

Like all linguistic phenomena, homonyms arise through conversion and various grammatical processes. Their emergence is closely linked to the enrichment of a language's vocabulary, being formed both from internal linguistic resources and through borrowings (loanwords). Such borrowings reflect changes in social, economic, and cultural life.

As L.V. Malakhovskiy notes, homonymy is an absolute linguistic universal, and its existence in natural languages is both necessary and law-governed. He further emphasizes that the inevitability of linguistic change, combined with the randomness of its outcomes, makes the emergence of homonyms a natural and inevitable process within the language system.

In the case of Uzbek, lexical enrichment has also occurred through contact with neighboring peoples. Borrowed words

often contain non-native phonetic features, which are typically adapted to the phonological system of the language. This process, known as convergence, can also lead to the formation of lexical homonyms.

In linguistic studies, several main sources of homonym formation are identified, and these are common across languages:

In linguistic literature, the following main sources of the emergence of homonyms are identified, and these sources are common across languages:

- a) semantic development of a word (the splitting of polysemy);
- b) phonetic changes;
- c) borrowing of words;

d) word formation and other morphological processes (divergence and conversion).

According to A.Y. Shaikevich, in the English language:

- 42% of all lexical homonyms arise from word-formation processes;
- 27% result from borrowings;
- 8% emerge through phonetic changes;
- 5% are formed due to the splitting of polysemy.

According to the Hindi linguist M. Jain, lexical homonyms in the Hindi language are formed through the following three processes:

1. Words borrowed from foreign or neighboring languages that share identical pronunciation may coexist within the same language and form homonymous pairs. For example: स्त्री *strī* "woman" and इस्तरी *istrī* "iron".
2. In some cases, words with identical forms but different meanings also occur. For example: पाला *pālā* 'boundary'; पाला *pālā* — 'frost'.
3. In certain instances, nominal forms and inflected verb forms within the same language may coincide phonetically, resulting in homonymy. For example: दीया *dīyā* 'lamp'; दिया *diyā* 'gave' (past tense form of the verb). A similar phenomenon can be observed in English: rose — 'a flower'; rose — 'went up'.

Such words are considered an embellishment (aesthetic feature) of the language rather than a defect. Even if regarded as a shortcoming, it is an inevitable one that cannot be avoided.

Based on the considerations outlined above, the sources of the formation of lexical homonyms belonging to the noun and adjective categories in Hindi were analyzed with reference to The Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary and A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages.

Building on this theoretical framework, we now proceed to examine the process of homonym formation through specific examples, focusing on their etymological roots, semantic development, and criteria of differentiation.

1. Semantic divergence, i.e., the splitting of polysemy, represents another source of homonym formation in Hindi.

Homonyms of this type arise as a result of semantic divergence (from Latin *divergere* — 'to separate, to diverge'). This process involves the separation of meanings of a single word, whereby polysemy breaks down into several independent lexical units that remain identical in form.

At the early stages of language development, words typically function with a single meaning; however, in the course of linguistic evolution, new meanings emerge. These meanings either fill gaps in the lexical system of the language or, over time, some meanings may disappear.

As E. V. Sevortyan emphasizes, "the emergence of a new meaning does not occur in a random (chaotic) manner, but is governed by the inherent regularities of the language system. This regularity lies in the fact that one of the existing meanings of a word becomes associated with a new concept through associative links based on similarity or contiguity. The development of a word's semantics may lead to its expansion or narrowing, and in some cases, to the loss of its original meaning."

Such words present particular difficulty in distinguishing between homonyms and polysemous units. Polysemy develops as a result of the transfer of a name from one object or phenomenon to another based on similarity, associative links formed in the speaker's cognition, or contiguity (real-world connection). Accordingly, depending on the basis and features through which the transfer occurs, polysemy is classified into three types: metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche.

The emergence of homonyms, on the other hand, may be caused either by the complete loss of the primary meaning of a word or by the disappearance of an intermediate (bridging) meaning that connects different senses within a polysemous word.

Thus, one of the most widespread mechanisms of homonym formation is the splitting of polysemy.

Based on the above considerations, in identifying lexical homonyms in Hindi that belong to the group of semantic divergence, particular attention was paid to their homogeneous (common-origin) nature. This is because a defining feature of polysemous words is their derivation from a single source.

The analysis revealed that the majority of lexical homonyms in Hindi arise as a result of semantic divergence, with a total

of 498 items (79%).

कान I kân, m. [cf. karna — 'ear'; Pali kanna — 'ear, edge of an object'; Prakrit kanna — 'ear'; Sanskrit kānu], 1) ear; 2) hearing; 3) a protruding part, handle;

4) the sewn edge of a fabric.

कान II kân, m., 1) simplicity, modesty; 2) respect;

कानूँ kânū, pronominal variant (Braj) = कान्ह and काँह (kāñh) [kã:h], m. dark blue, black.

दावन I dāvan, m. [cf. dāmayati; Hindi dāmnā], 1) the process of threshing grain; (Braj, Avadhi, metaphorically: destruction, devastation).

दावन II dāvan, m. = दाव (dāv), 'sickle'.

कलाइ I kalāi, m. [Prakrit kalāiā; Persian kalāi; Hindi kalāi], 1) wrist; 2) (pl.) ankle joint.

कलाइ II kalāi, m. [Pali/Prakrit kalāya], lentil (a leguminous plant).

Thus, a certain group of semantic homonyms arises as a result of the splitting of meanings within polysemous words. The emergence of such homonyms is influenced by several factors:

- the loss of semantic connections between meanings;
- the formation of new words through lexicalization;
- the distribution of newly formed words across different lexical groups (general vs. specialized vocabulary, active vs. passive layers).

Thus, it should be emphasized once again that numerous examples demonstrate that, in Hindi, many homonyms arise as a result of the splitting of polysemy. It has been established that the majority of homonyms belonging to the noun and adjective categories in Hindi are formed through semantic divergence, making this group the most productive. Although such homonyms create difficulties in distinguishing them from polysemous words, they nevertheless significantly enrich the lexical system of the language.

2. Phonetic convergence (from Latin convergere — 'to approach, to come together') refers to the convergence or coincidence of two or more linguistic units. In this context, it denotes the process by which words that were previously distinguished by their pronunciation become identical in form.

As a result of the historical development of speech sounds, the pronunciation of one word may come to coincide with that of another, leading to the formation of lexical homonyms from originally distinct words.

As a result of accidental phonetic coincidences, homonyms may arise from words that are entirely unrelated in origin. In Hindi, homonyms formed on the basis of phonetic convergence are considered moderately productive, accounting for 160 items, or 20% of the total.

क्रम I kram [Sanskrit; cf. Pali kama — 'step, path'; Prakrit — 'foot, trace; movement, sequence'; Hindi — 'method, process'], m., step, pace; level, stage.

क्रम II kram, m., = कर्म (karm) [Sanskrit], action, work, occupation, activity.

कूट I kūṭ [Sanskrit; cf. Pali kūṭa — 'peak'; Hindi kūṭi — 'iron helmet'], m.,

peak, summit.

कूट II kūṭ [cf. Hindi kūṭnā], m., papier-mâché — a lightweight, moldable composite material made of paper fibers and binding substances.

कल I kal [Sanskrit], adj., soft, low, and melodious (voice); pleasant, charming.

कल II kal [cf. kalya — 'dawn, sunrise'; Pali kali; Prakrit kalla; Hindi kal — 'yesterday/tomorrow'], adv., yesterday, the past day; tomorrow, the near future.

कल III kal [cf. kalā — 'art, craft'; Dravidian origin; Pali/Prakrit kalā — 'mechanical or fine art'], m., tool, instrument, machine; water pipe.

Although these three words originate from different etymological sources, in the course of historical development they have converged into an identical phonetic form. This phenomenon is explained by phonetic convergence.

Therefore, such units formed as a result of phonetic convergence belong to the category of heterogeneous homonyms, i.e., lexical items that are unrelated in origin but coincide in form.

3. Homonymy arising from borrowed words

Borrowings are an integral part of language development;

therefore, the emergence of homonymy through borrowing is a natural and law-governed process. Borrowed words are typically adapted to the phonetic and phonotactic norms of the recipient language, acquiring a modified form.

During this process, a borrowed word may coincidentally coincide in pronunciation with an existing word, resulting in formally identical but etymologically unrelated units. Such homonyms, which lack semantic connection, are commonly referred to as etymological homonyms.

For example, in Hindi, certain units borrowed from different sources (Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, or Dravidian languages) may converge into identical phonetic forms while remaining completely unrelated in meaning, thus forming homonyms.

Thus, homonymy arising from borrowings contributes to the enrichment of the lexical system, intensifies the complexity of form–meaning relations, and promotes semantic differentiation.

The analysis of this group was carried out using the etymological method, the aim of which is to determine when, in which language, and on the basis of which structural pattern a given word originated, as well as its original form and meaning. The principal method of such analysis is the comparative-historical approach, which relies on phonetic laws, morphological rules, and patterns of morphological change. The primary objective of etymology is to study ancient sources and to reconstruct both the process of the formation of a language's lexicon and its earliest state. It is well known that, in Hindi, words are etymologically classified into four groups.

a) Tatsama (lit. "the same"). This group includes words directly borrowed from Sanskrit through the literary tradition, which have largely preserved their original orthographic form, similar to native lexical items. The term is derived from तत् ('that') and सम ('same, similar'), thus meaning "identical to that," i.e., "similar to Sanskrit." In Hindi linguistics, this term is used for words adopted directly from Sanskrit without significant modification.

b) Tadbhava (lit. "derived from that"). This group represents one of the etymological categories consisting of words that have evolved from Sanskrit through the Middle Indo-Aryan languages, undergoing phonetic and morphological changes over time. Words of this type have undergone long-term

phonetic changes, passing through the stages of Prakrit and Apabhramsha, and constitute a core component of the Indo-Aryan languages derived from Sanskrit.

c) Videshi ("foreign words") refers to lexical items in Hindi borrowed from Arabic, Persian, English, and other languages.

Foreign homonyms, in turn, can be divided into three distinct groups. This classification will be discussed in detail in the following section.

· English borrowings: This group includes words borrowed in varying proportions from languages such as Portuguese, Dutch, and especially English, reflecting the growing influence of English since the nineteenth century. Alongside the social and economic changes of that period, the rapid development of industry and technology in modern life, as well as the role of English as an international language in the region, have intensified this process. English has served as a primary channel for the introduction of international socio-political and scientific-technical terminology into regional languages.

· Arabic–Persian borrowings consist of lexical items adopted through historical contacts with Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran, beginning in the early centuries of the second millennium CE, as well as through the Arab conquest of Sind in the 7th–8th centuries and the subsequent spread of Islam.

Their proportion is particularly significant in languages such as Urdu, Sindhi, and Saraiki, where they may constitute up to 70–80% of the vocabulary. In Hindi, Arabic–Persian borrowings also form a considerable part of homonymous words.

c) Deshi (lit. "local, indigenous"). These are words that are non-Sanskritic in origin; some derive from Dravidian and Munda sources, while others have an unknown origin. The etymological analysis of homonyms did not reveal examples belonging to the deshi category.

The role of homonyms in the historical development of the Hindi language

In linguistics, the historical-phonetic development of lexical units enables a deeper semantic analysis. In particular, the Indo-Aryan languages such as Pali, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha are genetically related, and phonetic changes among them have led to semantic expansion and the formation of homonyms.

In Hindi, genetically related homonymous series belonging to the tadbhava group can be classified into three groups according to their period of formation:

Group 1: 2nd–1st centuries BCE. Pali, the language of Buddhist texts, represents a simplified spoken form in comparison with Classical Sanskrit. Research shows that Pali developed from vernacular speech forms characteristic of the central regions of India. By the 2nd century BCE, the linguistic influence of these central dialects had extended as far as

Nº	Pali	Hindi	Meaning
1.	आसा	आशा	आशा- 1) hope; 2) A golden or silver rod; a mace.
2.	ऊनत्त, ऊनता	ऊनी	कमी, न्यूनता-1) deficiency, insufficiency; 2) woolen; relating to woolen fabric.
3.	कसि	कसी	कृषि खेती-बाड़ी- 1) agriculture, farming; 2) plough tip; spade.
4.	गमक	गमक	जानेवाला- 1) one who goes; 2) drumbeat; vocal timbre of a singer.

The analysis conducted at this stage led to the following conclusions:

- no words containing the letters श and ष were identified;
- diphthongs are absent;
- retroflex (cerebral) consonants are used very rarely;
- words containing ligatures are limited in number;
- homonyms whose semantic components are entirely tadbhava or tatsama were almost not attested at this stage.

Nº	Prakrit	Hindi	Meaning
1.	अहिवास	अधिवास	बासना- 1) hope, desire;; 2) dwelling, residence.
2.	कागी	काकी	कौए की मादा -1) female crow; 2) younger uncle's wife (aunt-in-law)
3.	कुट्ट	कोट	किला, नगर -1) fortress; city; 2) coat; overcoat

eastern India, including the region of Orissa (modern Odisha).

All homonymous units in this group were identified on the basis of B. A. Kaosalyayan's Pali–Hindi Dictionary. All homonymous units were analyzed on the basis of B. A. Kaosalyayan's Pali–Hindi Dictionary, and their total number amounted to 268 (16.96%).

Examples illustrating the analysis at the Pali stage are presented in the table below:

Group 2: 6th–5th centuries CE. Prakrit is considered a dialect widely used in the Maharashtra region, which later developed into Marathi. The Prakrit speech form described by Vararuchi around the 4th century CE is Shauraseni, which had already entered the second Middle Indo-Aryan stage at that time. For the analysis of lexical items at this stage, K. R. Chandra's Prakrit–Hindi Dictionary was used." According to the results of the analysis, the identified examples amount to 250 items, accounting for 15.8%.

Examples illustrating the analysis at the Prakrit stage are presented in the table below:

4. चूला चूल

विद्याघरों का एक नगर - 1) city of knowledge centers; 2) short arrow; short shaft

At this stage, the following phonetic features were observed:

- a predominance of words containing anusvara;
- the presence of words beginning with the retroflex consonant ण;
- the occurrence of aspirated consonants;
- extensive use of ligatures;
- phonetic changes affecting consonants in certain words.

Group 3: Apabhransh represents the medieval stage of the Indo-Aryan languages and serves as a transitional link between Prakrit and modern Hindi. Its period is generally

dated from 500 to 1000 CE, although literary works continued to be produced in this language until the 15th century. Sanskrit scholars referred to it as apabhraṣṭa ("corrupt" or "deviated" language), though in reality it reflected a synthesis of various regional dialects.

Modern Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, and Punjabi developed from Apabhransh. The analysis of lexical items at this stage was carried out using Dr. Naresh Kumar's Apabhransh–Hindi Dictionary". According to the analysis, the number of identified examples is 200, accounting for 12.6%. Examples illustrating the analysis at the Apabhransh stage are presented in the table below:

Nº	Apabhransh	Hindi	Meaning
1.	अमाण	अमान	अमाप, अमन्त, असंख्य- 1) infinite; very large; 2) security; protection;
2.	आसा	आशा	आशा-1) hope; 2) gold or silver rod; mace;
3.	ऊन	ऊण	न्यून, हीन - 1) scarcity; insufficiency; small quantity 2) wool;

At the Apabhransh stage, the following phonetic features were identified:

1. In Apabhransh texts dating to the 11th century, the suffix -अल (-al) was used to express past tense meaning, as seen in forms such as ओढ़िअल and पैहिरअल. This suffix has been preserved in modern Eastern Indo-Aryan languages, particularly in Bengali, Bhojpuri, and Maithili.
2. In modern Hindi, the short vowel अ (a) is not represented by a specific diacritic (matra), but is inherently present in consonant letters and is often omitted in

pronunciation at the end of words.

Word formation and other morphological processes (divergence and conversion). In derivational homonymy, both components of the derived word—the base (root form) and the derivational affix—may coincide formally. In such cases, identical forms of the base and/or affix give rise to words with different meanings. However, in word-formation homonymy, both components (base and affix) may be homonymous, or only one of them (either the base or the affix) may display homonymy.

In the process of word formation, new words are created by

adding prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are attached before the base, while suffixes are added after it. Neither of these affixes functions independently.

A prefix is a morpheme added to the beginning of a word that modifies or specifies its meaning. In Hindi, prefixes are classified into three types: Sanskrit prefixes (tatsama), Hindi prefixes (tadbhava), and Urdu (Arabic–Persian) prefixes.

Examples of homonymous words formed through prefixation are presented below. The analysis revealed 17 homonymous words formed with the Sanskrit prefix अ- (a-), 2 with the prefix अव- (av-), and 3 with the prefix आ- (ā-).

Sanskrit prefixes:

अ-a: अमल I [a-mal] अ- [a-] +मल [mal] [S.], (adj.)

अमल II [amal] [A .amal], (noun, m.)

अजात I [a-jāt] [S.], अ- [a-] + जात [jāt] (adj.)

अजात II [ad ajātt-] (noun, m.)

अव- av-: अवधावन I av-dhāvan [S.], (noun, m.)

अवधावन II avdhavan [S.], (noun, m.)

अवसान I av-sān [S.], (noun, m.)

अवसान II avsān (noun, m.)

आ – ā:

आराम I ārām [P. ārām], (noun, m.)

आराम II ā-rām [S.], (noun, m.)

आगत I ā-gat [S.], (adj.)

आगत II ā-gat [ad. āgati], (noun, f.)

1) pure; clean; clear; 2) innocent; faultless; sinless

1) action; act; 2) process; operation

3) application; petition

1) unborn; not yet arisen

2) member of the lowest caste; outcaste

1) running after; pursuing

2) washing; cleansing; purification

1) end; conclusion; outcome 2) death; 3) boundary; limit

2)Brbh.= औसान self-control; restraint

calmness; composure

1) rest; relaxation; peace; 2) well-being; prosperity

1) small grove; garden 1) arrived; reached 2) present; existing 3) occurred; taken place

1) income; wealth; 2) courtesy; attentiveness; respect

b) Hindi prefiksleri:

नि - ni: नियत I ni-yat [S.], (adj.)

नियत II niyat [A. niyat], (noun, f.)

निपात I ni-pāt [S.], (noun, m.)

निपात I nipāt [nispattra-](adj.)

1) self-restrained; calm; subdued; 2) agreed; determined;

1) intention; purpose; plan; 2) desire; wish;

1) to attack; to destroy; 2) death; disaster; 3) gram. a form not analyzable in Sanskrit;

2) Leafless;

A suffix is an affix in the morphological structure of a word that is added after the base to form a new meaning. The formation of homonymous words through suffixation is

नज़दीकी I nazdīkī [P.nazdīkī], (noun, f.)

नज़दीकी II nazdīkī [P.nazdīk + H.-ī], (adj)

पंजरी I panjarī [H. panjar], (noun, f.)

पंजरी II panjarī [P. Panj-H. -ri] (noun, f.)

According to V. Kumar, conversion is the phenomenon whereby a word is used across different parts of speech without any change in its form, even though its meaning remains the same. If the meaning changes, the word can no longer be considered the same lexical unit. For example, the word मत means 'do not / no', but if it is used in the meaning 'opinion', it becomes a different word.

According to A. G'ulomov, word formation through conversion is attested in all historical monuments of the Uzbek language. Before other word-formation methods emerged, it served as a primary means of enriching the Turkic lexicon. This process has also functioned as a source for the formation of lexical homonyms.

Conversion has several types, including verbal conversion, substantivization, adjectivization, and adverbialization. However, since the present study is devoted to the lexical analysis of homonyms belonging to the noun and adjective categories in Hindi, particular attention is given to substantivization and adjectivization. Examples related to these types were collected and analyzed accordingly.

The table below presents examples illustrating the phenomenon of conversion:

a) As a result of substantivization, 97 homonymous words (12%) were identified, and an example is provided below:

नील I. – sifat: [nīl] [nīla] blue; sky-blue (resembling the color of the sky); blue color; bruise mark (a bluish spot); indigo

considered the least productive method. Only two examples formed with the suffix -ई (-ī) were identified.

**1) Proximity; 2) nearby area; surroundings;
2) nearby area; surroundings;**

**Rib;
the number five in the Chaupar game¹;**

(plant and dye). फिर अगर नील के दाम ही चुका दें तो भी बहुत-कुछ तकलीफ़ मिट जाए । [Phir agar nīl ke dām hī cukā den to bhī bahut-kuch taklīf miṭ jāe]. Even if the price of indigo (nīl) had been paid later, many difficulties would still have been reduced.

नील II. – noun: [nīl] [A. nīl] the Nile River;

नील नदी के युद्ध का निकट समय आ ही रहा था । [nīl nadī ke yuddh kā nikat samay ā hī rahā thā]. The war along the Nile River was approaching.

दानी I. – sifat: [dānī] [S.], saxiy, muruvvatli. वही स्त्री और उसका पति बड़े दानी बन गए और उसका नाम पता ये कोई क्रिया जारी रखते हैं । [Vahī strī aur uskā pati baṛe dānī ban gae aur uskā nām patā ye koī kriyā jāri rakhte hain]. That woman and her husband became very generous, and they have continued to carry out certain activities under their own name.

दानी II. – noun: [dānī] [dāniya-], tax collector; tribute collector. - गाँव का दानी हर घर से कर वसूल करने आया । [gāv kā dānī har ghar se kar vasūl karne āyā]. The village tax collector came to collect taxes from each household.

As a result of adjectivization, 74 homonymous words (9%) were identified and analyzed on the basis of relevant examples:

पाक I. – noun: [pāk] [S.], 1) cooking; food preparation; 2) cooked food; 3) medicine; digestion- शीत ऋतु में शक्ति संचय

¹McGregor R.S. Oxford Hindi-English Dictionary. — Delhi, 1993. — p. 1106.

के लिय यह अत्यंत पौष्टिक पाक है । [śīt ṛtu meṃ śakti sañcay ke liye yah atyant pauṣṭik pāk hai]. This is a highly nutritious dish for building strength during the winter season.

पाक II. – adj: [pāk] [P. pāk], clean; pure; clear. - कट्टरपंथी
पाक का झंडा लहरा रहे हैं लेकिन कांग्रेस हिन्दू आतंक का ढिंढोरा
पीट रही है । [Kaṭṭarpanthī pāk kā jhaṇḍā lahrā rahe hain lekin
kāngres hindū ātaṅk kā ḍhiṇḍhorā pīt rahī hai]. Radical groups
are waving the Pakistani flag, while the Congress is raising
alarms about "Hindu terrorism."

गमक I. – noun: [gamak] 1) drum sound; 2) the singer's vocal
vibration; 3) pleasant smell; fragrance; - अस्पताल में घायल
आदमी को लाया गया । [Aspatal meṃ ghāyal ādmī ko lāyā
gayā]. A lizard is walking on the roof of your wall.

गमक II. – adj.: [S.] 1) moving; in motion; 2) explanatory;
indicative;

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the emergence of homonyms in Hindi is determined by factors such as phonetic changes, semantic shifts, word formation (including conversion), and borrowing from other languages. These processes play a significant role in enriching the lexical system of the language.

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