Parallel words for cross-Germanic comparison of lexical stress

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Given two languages, some translation equivalents may intuitively be recognized as 'parallel' by a naïve speaker of both, that is, as representatives of the 'same' word. Parallel words in languages A and B are typically due to either historial cognateship or to loan: direct loan between them; or, in what we will term *pseudocognates*, to both from some common source C (possibly with some other language as go-between).

Whatever the mechanism, parallel words provide a kind of comparative linguistic litmus test. The adaptation to the receiving language may provide interesting views on its orthography, morphology, phonology, prosody, etc. The pseudocognate subset is international by definition; this property facilitates cross-linguistic comparison. For instance, with main stress marked:

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Finnish        English        Spanish        Swedish
'matematiikka  mathe'matics   mate'máticas   matema'tik
'katedraali    ca'thedral     cate'dral      kate'dral
'konvertteri   con'verter     converti'dor   kon'verter
'periferia     pe'riphery     peri'feria     perifer'i
'parametri     pa'rameter     pa'rámetro     para'meter
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The present study concentrates on pairwise comparisons of placement of main lexical stress in parallel words (where this property is well-defined and non-fixed). More precisely, we have earlier proposed a method which, given a set of translation equivalents can identify parallel word pairs automatically. If we also have a pronunciation dictionary in which we can look up stress placement for those words, or if we otherwise can predict it from orthography, then we can compare languages quantitatively across the entire set of parallel words. We report from a few studies based on this idea, with focus on Germanic languages.