

Repetition reduction in Papuan Malay prosody

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It has frequently been shown that speakers prosodically reduce repeated words in discourse. This phenomenon has been claimed to facilitate speech recognition and to be language universal. In particular, the relationship between the information value of a word in a discourse context and its prosodic prominence have been shown to correlate. However, a literature review provided in this paper reveals that virtually all evidence comes from English, where prosodic marking of information status often coincides with repetition reduction. The current study investigates to what extent repetition reduction occurs in Papuan Malay, spoken in the western part of Papua (Indonesia). The limited work on Papuan Malay prosody suggests fundamental differences compared to well-studied languages. An acoustic analysis is carried out on repeated words in short stories produced by native Papuan Malay speakers. The results show that upon repetition words were shortened and produced with higher pitch. In a subsequent word identification task, it was found that first and second mentions were equally intelligible. Conclusions partially confirm previous work and challenge theories on how the prosody and information value of a word are related.