

The Intonational Realization of Information Structure in Singapore Malay

The interaction of information structure and intonation in Malay is a little studied topic. Recent work by Hamzah (2012; 2015) within the Autosegmental-Metric framework postulates two levels of phrasing higher than the word level. On the AP level, an L and H tones are associated to the left and right periphery respectively (Hamzah 2015:82). On the level of IP, L or H is associated to the right periphery.

Using a controlled dataset of Singaporean Malay, Hamzah (2015) established the final syllable of the constituent under focus carries a bitonal pitch accent H*+L. In post-focus constituents, the H tones are lowered (p. 82).

In this study we extend the study of intonational contours associated with information structure into natural speech. We are using a semi-controlled elicitation environment by presenting 10 participants with the Getting the Story Straight stimuli set (San Roque et al. 2012). This set consists of sixteen pictures narrating a story of a family conflict. The outcome is a parallel text in which the topic and focus can be identified in each sentence.

In the next step, the information structure values are compared with the pitch tracks of the recordings. We use Praat and visual inspection to determine the pitch peak alignment of each sentence.

The goal of this paper is to assess whether the focus intonation identified in Hamzah (2015) is robustly represented in the data and whether other contours can be identified for other functions, such as the sentence topic.

References

Hamzah, D. (2012). A study of focus and accent in Singapore Malay. Unpublished Honor's thesis, Nanyang Technological University.

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San Roque, L; Carroll, A; Evans, N; Gawne, L; Hoenigman, D; Rumsey, A; Spronck, S; Miller, J.C. (2012). 'Getting the Story Straight: Language Fieldwork Using a Narrative Problem-Solving Task', *Language Documentation and Conservation*, vol. 6, pp. 135-174.