

Notes on Waima'a Metrical and Intonational Structure

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The paper begins with some general observations on gathering prosodic data on an unwritten language. It then reports some preliminary findings regarding the metrical and intonational structure of Waima'a, an Austronesian language spoken in eastern East Timor. Two major hypotheses are advanced. The first hypothesis pertains to the intonational level and involves the claim that Waima'a lacks prominence-lending tones (aka PITCH ACCENTS), i.e. all intonational tones are restricted to boundary positions. Apart from boundary tones proper there is also an edge tone (or phrase accent) at the right boundary of an intonation unit. The second hypothesis claims that Waima'a, which clearly is not a tone language, also lacks lexical accents in the sense of a lexically specified major prominence in a prosodic word (aka STRESS).

Evidence for these hypotheses comes from both elicited and discourse data and involves F0 and syllable reductions.