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# Prominence in Indonesian

## Stress, phrases, and boundaries

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### ABSTRACT

Many (Western) languages have word-based stress, which entails that one, predictable syllable per word is more prominent than all the other syllables in that word. Some linguists claim that such stresses also occur in Indonesian. In this article, we set out to investigate that claim using experimental, phonetic methods. The results confirm our hypothesis that Indonesian lacks word-based stress. Yet, we do observe some kind of prominence pattern. In the last part of this article, we search for the phonological phenomenon that generates this pattern, exploring the level of the phrase to see whether phrasal accents or boundary markers are likely candidates.

### KEYWORDS

Indonesian, phonetics, prominence, stress, accent, and boundary tone.

## 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In many course books for Dutch learners of Indonesian (see Teeuw 1984; Steinhauer 2001), you will find a short paragraph about word stress roughly stating that “stress is on the penultimate syllable unless the vowel in the penultimate syllable is schwa (*pepet*), in which case stress is final”. This implies that, for instance, *garúda* (*ú* indicating stress) is the correct way to pronounce

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