

---

## Individual strategies in marking focus within Djambarrpuyŋu noun phrase

---

**Kathleen Jepson**

*Institute of Phonetics and Speech Processing (IPS), LMU Munich*  
k.jepson@phonetik.uni-muenchen.de

Speakers of Djambarrpuyŋu, a Pama-Nyungan language of northern Australia, can employ a number of strategies to mark information structure and status within noun phrases (NPs). These include, but are not limited to 1) word order variation (Jepson, 2023; Wilkinson, 2012; see also Mithun, 1992), 2) the occurrence of discontinuous nominal expressions (NEs), 3) an optional “prominence” morpheme which reportedly has many of the functions of focus (Tchekhoff & Zorc, 1983), 4) phonetic prosodic marking such as greater acoustic prominence of focused words, and 5) phonological prosodic marking such as deaccenting of given information, which is unusual for Australian languages (Jepson, 2023; Jepson & Fletcher, *accepted*). Of interest here are relative order of the target nouns and adjectives, use of different NE types, deletion, (de)accentuation, and the acoustic measure of  $f_0$  peak. In this paper, individual speakers’ strategies for encoding information structure within NPs in Djambarrpuyŋu are considered.

Thirteen Djambarrpuyŋu speakers completed a game designed to elicit NPs with different information structure patterns: focus on the adjective, the noun, or the whole NP. There is considerable variation in how speakers mark focus within NPs in Djambarrpuyŋu. Through a combination of NE type, deletion of a target word, relative word order, peak  $f_0$ , and deaccenting, the speakers distinguished the focus conditions; however, irrespective of strategies, the NF- and NPF-conditions often patterned more closely together, while the AF-condition was most often distinct. It appears that the focus/givenness status of words are distinguished using a combination of possible strategies, with prosodic means such as deaccenting and  $f_0$  modulated by syntax.

**References:** • Jepson, K. 2023. Prosody and word order in marking focus within Djambarrpuyŋu noun phrases. Poster. *ICPhS*, Prague. • Wilkinson, M. 2012. Djambarrpuyŋu: *A Yolŋu variety of northern Australia*. Munich: LINCOM Europa. • Mithun, M. 1992. Is basic word order universal? In Payne D. (ed.), *Pragmatics of word order flexibility*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 15-61. • Tchekhoff, C. & Zorc, D. 1983. Discourse and Djambarrpuyŋu: Three features. *Linguistics* 21, 849-878. • Jepson, K. & Fletcher, J. Accepted. The intonation of Djambarrpuyŋu. In Jun, S.-A. & Khan, S.D. (eds), *Prosodic Typology III*. Oxford: OUP. • Swerts, M., Krahmer, E., & Avesani, C. 2002. Prosodic marking of information status in Dutch and Italian: A comparative analysis. *JPhon* 30, 629-654. • Burdin, R.S., Phillips-Bourass, S., Turnbull, R., Yasavul, M., Clopper, C.G., & Tonhauser, J. 2015. Variation in the prosody of focus in head- and head/edge-prominence languages. *Lingua* 165, 254-276.