

Discourse particles in Papuan Malay

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Abstract

This paper will discuss discourse particles of Papuan Malay used in both oral and written form by West Papuans using electronic media. The analysis presented here is based on a search for electronic documents conducted between January 2013 and July 2013 to discover any related articles, stories, reviews and comments in Papuan Malay. In this respect, 10 websites using Papuan Malay were selected as the primary source of information to search from. As a result, 200 West Papuan jokes (locally known as ‘Mop Papua’) were collected and studied in connection with discourse particles in Papuan Malay.

The analysis of 200 jokes indicates that discourse particles in Papuan Malay exist in every joke presented by a speaker or a writer or a webmaster. In general, their functions are to emphasize or to intensify, to confirm, to defend, to convince, to warn, and to remind. Interestingly, one particular discourse particle can perform more than one function in a sentence or utterance depending on the context where it exists. Without these particles, conversational exchanges between West Papuan interlocutors in each dialogue of a joke are not meaningful and entertaining. Therefore, these discourse particles serve as in-group markers for the speakers of Papuan Malay.

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