

The production of word-final geminates in Maltese within a communication-based approach

Beth Hume, The Ohio State University

While typologically rare in the world's languages, word-final geminate consonants are widespread in Maltese, appearing in over 400 lexical items and occurring at most manners and places of articulation. Although word-final position is a generally a weak segmental location for distinguishing words in many languages, a study of the production of final geminate vs. singleton consonants reveals that this is not the case in Maltese. Rather, I show that speakers use a variety of both distinctive and otherwise predictable information to convey Maltese words with final geminate vs. singleton consonants thus creating a robust message for listeners to recover. The results are consistent with the predictions of communication theory concerning the role of redundancy in conveying more and less predictable information (Shannon 1948).