

Harvard Linguistics Colloquium Talk Series
(Talk to follow on Friday, November 17)

Mini-lecture

Title: Explaining the preference for nonconcatenative morphology in Dinka

Speaker: Coppe van Urk (Queen Mary University of London)

Time: Wednesday November 15th 5:00–6:30pm; Thursday November 16th 3:00–5:00pm

Location: Boylston 103 (Wednesday), Boylston 303 (Thursday)

Abstract:

Dinka (South Sudan; Western Nilotic) has been cited as a problem for item-based approaches to morphology, because of its apparent preference for nonconcatenative processes (e.g. Aronoff and Fudeman 2011:54; Inkelas 2014:72; Arkadiev and Klamer 2018:450). Dinka has complex verbal and nominal paradigms, in which most morphological categories are marked solely through changes in vowel quality, tone, voice, and length in a monosyllabic root. In this mini-course, based on joint work with Adam Chong, I present a complete concatenative analysis of Dinka verbal morphology. I demonstrate that Dinka morphology in fact provides evidence for an underlyingly item-based view of Dinka. First, all Dinka nonconcatenative morphology is additive (see also Trommer 2015, 2022), once we allow for bimoraic templates and replacive grammatical tone. Second, all four properties that express morphological categories in the root are restricted in overt affixes. On this basis, I argue for an approach in which bans on contrast in vowel quality, tone, voice, and length drive the realization of an affix in the root. In this way, Dinka provides evidence for a direct relationship between the wellformedness of affixation and nonconcatenative morphology. Finally, I develop a new account of Dinka tone, showing that grammatical tone is always inward-looking (Inkelas 1998, Alderete 2001, Rolle 2018), contra claims in Trommer (2011, 2022).