

## Harvard Linguistics Talk Series

**Title:** How to be a word in Atara Imere

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

**Time:** Friday November 17<sup>th</sup> 12pm

**Location:** Emerson 305

**Abstract:**

Many languages impose a binary minimum on words, of at least two syllables or two moras. In McCarthy and Prince's (1993) Prosodic Morphology, such minima follow from general constraints on metrical structure. However, a number of authors have noted mismatches between metrical constraints and minimality in specific systems (Garrett 1999; Gordon 1999; Downing 2005, 2006). Downing (2005, 2006) argues that binary minima may arise because of a pressure to ensure that morphological prominence, such as of roots, correlates with phonological complexity (Dresher and van der Hulst 1998). This talk presents novel data from the Polynesian outlier Atara Imere (Vanuatu), gathered in Vanuatu in June 2023. Atara Imere supports a metrical approach to minimality in at least two ways. First, Atara Imere imposes a trimoraic minimum due to strict antepenultimate stress (Clark 1998, 2002). At first glance, the trimoraic minimum holds only of roots, supporting Downing's observation. But we show that apparently subminimal functional items trigger obligatory prosodic integration into the preceding prosodic word, diagnosed by stress shift (see also Gordon and Applebaum 2010 on Kabardian). In fact then, all morphemes are subject to the trimoraic minimum. The apparent lexical-functional divide derives from the distribution of affixation.