

## The interaction of tone and vowel length in Bor South Dinka

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It is well-documented that the citation form of a lexical item may not reveal its underlying representation (Hyman 2010:186). Work on Dinka (e.g. Andersen 1987, Remijsen & Ladd 2008) suggests that the surface realization of a nominal citation form consistently matches its underlying representation. However, in the four-toned Bor South dialect of Dinka, this is not always the case. Some nouns with High-toned citation forms are realized with the Rise tone when preceded by the copula *ée*, as seen in (1);<sup>1</sup> this alternation is not due to nominal inflection.

|                     |          |                  |          |
|---------------------|----------|------------------|----------|
| (1) a. /ǎ-nòŋ       | bǎn/     | b. /ée           | bǎn/     |
| DECL.SG-have        | chief.SG | DECL.SG.COP      | chief.SG |
| ‘There is a chief.’ |          | ‘He is a chief.’ |          |

In addition to following the copula, the Rise-toned form of the noun appears following the unmarked, first person singular, and third person singular inflections of many auxiliary verbs. I argue that the High/Rise alternation on the nouns represents a loss of contrast in the dialect between the High and Rise tones on short vowels; with only two exceptions, all of the nouns with the High/Rise alternations are short in vowel length. Preliminary data suggest that the High/Rise alternation is mirrored in the verbal system as well, supporting the hypothesis that there is a loss of contrast on short vowels.

A loss of tonal contrast due purely to vowel length has not been seen in other dialects of Dinka. The surface realization of the nouns may have to do with the realization of a contour tone (i.e. the Rise) on a short vowel. Therefore, this phenomenon provides further material for the study of the interaction of contour tones and vowel length in Dinka. The nouns that exhibit this alternation in Bor South also vary in terms of their tonal specification in other dialects of Dinka—specifically, they vary between specification for High tone and Rise tone.

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<sup>1</sup> In the examples, slashes indicate surface phonological form.

## References

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