

ISW Colloquium – Fall Semester 2024

07.10.2024 | 16:00-17:00 | UniTobler F 003

Uta Reinöhl (Universität Freiburg): Lexical tone in Kera'a

This talk presents the first phonological analysis of lexical tone in Kera'a. The evidence suggests a 5-way level-tone, syllable-based system of high functional load. These characteristics make Kera'a tonal phonology stand out in several respects. Firstly, 5-way level tone contrasts are rare typologically and appear to mark the upper end of phonologized pitch levels. Secondly, Trans-Himalayan languages of Northeast Indian normally show tonal systems of low or very low functional load. Thirdly, Trans-Himalayan languages of this region normally display a 2-way or maximally 3-way contrast, if they are tonal at all. Fourthly, lexical tone in Kera'a is indeed primarily - if not exclusively - characterised by pitch differences, rather than by other cues as is typical in Northeast Indian languages. This talk presents data from monosyllabic and disyllabic, monomorphemic and bimorphemic, sets of lexemes, in isolation contexts as well as in connected speech. I will also provide data on the role and challenges of clanlectal variation in researching Kera'a tonal phonology.