



Dinka (Thuɔŋjäŋ)

The language of the Dinka people is called Thuɔŋjäŋ locally. Translating phrases into the language was challenging. To start with, there are 5 dialects of Thuɔŋjäŋ spoken by the Dinka. I have used a phrase from the “Rek” dialect

Beyond the difficulties of translation, understanding the pronunciation was even more challenging. Thuɔŋjäŋ has 13 different vowels. Those vowels can also be contrasted by length, voice quality, and tone. That’s truly mind-boggling, and will require quite a bit more research before I can guarantee absolute accuracy.

Nevertheless, I feel moderately confident that I’ve found a phrase with the intended meaning, and that doesn’t require any of the features that rattle my poor English-speaking brain.

There is only one sound that will probably feel completely unfamiliar, and that is the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/. There are two ways to approach this. If you’re familiar with the /x/ sound in German (as in *ich*, or *Bach*) you can try to make this with voicing. Another way to think of the sound is as a soft, fuzzy /g/.

English	No	<i>I have eaten too much.</i>
Thuɔŋjäŋ	Yei	Yen anek kuei
IPA	yei	ɣen anek ku. ei
Audio		
	<i>yei</i>	<i>Yen anek kuei</i>
		
	<i>Yei, yei! Yen anek kuei.</i>	