

Title: Tone Neutralization in Bukusu and Soba Languages
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The Gisu language is part of the Luyia language family and is spoken in eastern Uganda by more than 2 million people. Within Gisu there are six dialects, Soba, Teza, Yobo, Fumbu, Walasi, and Hugu, which are understudied and underdocumented. All six dialects are closely related to the Kenyan Luyia language of Bukusu. Of these dialects, Soba is spoken in the far eastern town of Mbale on the border with Kenya, closest to the area where Bukusu is spoken. The data used in this study was collected by the author in Mbale in June 2018. This study compares the tonal systems of Bukusu and Soba, observing that Soba words consistently have High tones at the beginning of words that lack any High tones in Bukusu and other Luyia languages in the region. The addition of High tone in these words in Soba has neutralized what was historically two distinct tonal categories of words.

Previously, work done on historical changes in Luyia tone systems has been focused on verbs, however this study incorporates both nouns and verbs in order to get a more holistic analysis of the change between Bukusu and Soba. This analysis is important to the field of linguistics because there has been little study done on tone in northern Luyia languages, and very little on Ugandan Luyia languages, so by investigating Soba a more detailed understanding of tonal changes in the language cluster can be gained.

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