

This project assesses the language vitality of three Luyia language varieties spoken in Western Kenya: Bukusu, Wanga, and Tiriki. Previously, 72 language vitality questionnaires were distributed to speakers of 9 different Luyia varieties by members of the ASH Documenting Luyia Together team at the University of Missouri. In this project, the results of these questionnaires were studied to synthesize an overall assessment of language vitality. Parameters included the average age of speakers, the prevalence and place of language use, language transmission, language use through different forms of media, and pride in language use. We conclude that Bukusu, Wanga, and Tiriki all have a high degree of language vitality. In the homelands of these subtribes, the local languages are the primary mode of public communication and virtually all children growing up in the rural environments learn to speak their native language fluently. A variety of media are used in the languages, such as social networking, writing, TV and radio, and newspaper. There are varying levels of vitality in the use of oral literature, though in none is the ongoing transmission oral literature completely safe, due to more frequent movement into urban environments and competing forms of entertainment like TV. Private schools are universally cited as a danger to the local languages, discouraging and even punishing students for using languages other than English or Swahili. Survey respondents commonly want more education to be taught in the local language; both for language vitality and for easier learning of students whose first language is for example either Bukusu or Wanga or Tiriki. These results suggest that a community-led effort towards language revitalization will help the long-term vitality of the languages. Because of the current population-age distribution in Western Kenya, language vitality will be affected greatly by how the youth continue to use the languages.