

Documenting Luyia Together: Marachi Talking Dictionary

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This presentation describes research to develop the first talking dictionary of the Marachi language as part of the ASH Scholars research team *Documenting Luyia Together* during the 2019-2020 academic year. Our joint effort contributes to the documentation of Marachi, a member of the Luyia language cluster in western Kenya. The 2019 Kenyan census identified about 65,000 members of the Marachi ethnic community, although it is unknown how many speakers of the language there are. Marachi is an under documented language, with very few prior publications or research on the language, and no published dictionary to date. Our research builds on an effort by Dr. Michael Marlo in 2012 to collect Marachi dictionary materials from a speaker of the language. Prior research generated a list of about 4000 words with corresponding translations and around 4500 sound files with pronunciations of those words. In Fall 2019, we added an identification number and spelling of the word in Marachi to the file names of the sound files in order to link the sound files with the dictionary entries to create the first talking dictionary of the language. We also helped edit the audio archive and the dictionary by checking all of the sound files to ensure that they represented words in the dictionary. In some cases, we found sound files with no pronunciations inside, so we removed those files from the archive. In other cases, we found words to add to the dictionary and translations to update. Our work helps to ensure that the language is preserved and documented and supports future research efforts on the language and the development of pedagogical materials for the teaching of the language in schools.