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Documenting Luyia Together: The Gwere Talking Wordlist

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This presentation describes my research activities for the ASH Scholars team *Documenting Luyia Together* in 2020. My work is part of the *Luyia-Soga Talking Wordlists* subproject, which studies the vocabulary, sound patterns, and basics of grammar of the 30+ Bantu language varieties in the Luyia and Soga language clusters spoken in western Kenya and eastern Uganda.

My project focuses on the development and analysis of Gwere linguistic materials. Gwere is spoken in eastern Uganda near several other Bantu languages, including Masaaba, Nyole, Kenyi, Lamogi, Siginyi, and Soga. The 621,000 members of the Gwere ethnic community (2014 Uganda Census) are said to use Gwere "vigorously" (Eberhard et al. 2020). Like many languages in the region, Gwere is underdocumented, with few published works describing its linguistic properties.

The research materials for the Gwere Talking Wordlist were collected in January 2020 and include 650 sound files representing about 400 Gwere words, which I extracted from the original interview recordings using Audacity. I then transcribed the words in the list using the International Phonetic Alphabet, which provides essential phonetic detail for further analysis.

Using the transcribed wordlist as a database, I am analyzing the Gwere sound system and the morphological structure of words. I have identified the phonetic inventory of consonants and vowels in the language, I have identified prefixes that mark the noun class (singular, plural, and gender) of each noun, and I have begun to study how the pronunciations of words change as different types of sounds combine. Soon, I will prepare a questionnaire for the collection of around 200 additional Gwere words for the list. This preliminary work will provide greater insights into the linguistic structure of Gwere and will allow us to compare its features with other languages in the region to better classify them and study their history.

References
Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, & Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2020. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. 23rd edn. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. http://www. ethnologue.com.