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Documenting Luyia Together: Tone in Kabaras

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The ASH Scholars: Documenting Luyia Together project was started in 2016 for the purpose of describing understudied languages in Kenya and Uganda, most of which fall into the same cluster. Kabaras is an understudied member of the Luyia language cluster of western Kenya, spoken by approximately 250,000 native speakers as according to the 2009 Kenya census. This poster presents the work of Elizabeth Kujath and Miya Russell, two student researchers on the ASH: Documenting Luyia Together team, during the Fall 2020 semester, building off of previous research done in 2018 by Kujath and 2020 by Russell as well as previous data collection by Kristopher Ebarb in 2016.

The current documentation of Kabaras began in the Spring Semester of 2020 and was based off the ASH Talking Wordlist project. The Talking Wordlist project is a collection of audio pronunciations of written words in a language, with each language composing of a set of 600+ words that require processing to create what is essentially an audio dictionary. After processing the full list of Kabaras words that were available, a sound inventory of the language was established, and Russell and Kujath began work on identifying and creating categories for tone in Kabaras verbs and nouns. The tonal categories found have been presented with examples. Further study would explore words from these categories in differing contexts, I.e. paired with modifiers of different tonal patterns.