Documenting Luyia Together: Siginyi Talking Wordlist

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What is Siginyi?

Siginyi is a language that belongs to the Luyia language cluster and is primarily spoken in Uganda. Not much is known about Siginyi, which does not bode well for its long-term preservation. In fact, Minah Nabirye's 2016 work: *A corpus-based grammar of Lusoga* seems to be the only prior work ever published about this language.

What does this project entail?

I have spent this semester creating IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcriptions of Siginyi recordings and subsequently adding them to a Siginyi wordlist. Lately, I have been drafting my final report about what the current wordlist means for this language.

An example conclusion:

Vowel	Swadesh #	IPA	Gloss
a	9	wakuba	because
a	10	ekidam	stomach
a	89	okugona	to lie (down)

Vowel	Reference #	IPA	Gloss
aa	72	haano	here
aa	89	okubaaho	to tell a lie
aa	199	omwaaka	year

Given the two above examples, I can arrive at the conclusion that Siginyi words can contain short vowels and/or long vowels. Another conclusion that is not as easy to showcase on a slide is that out of the hundreds of words in the current list, only one contains a geminate (long) consonant; given this, it seems geminate consonants are nearly non-existent.

Why is this project important?

The reason this preservation project matters is because, lacking proper research and documentation, if a language were to become extinct, the culture and history it holds would be lost forever. Hence, it is of the upmost importance that recordings and wordlists are collected and analyzed as soon as possible.

What does future research hold?

Much has been observed from the current Swadesh wordlist, however, it would be immensely useful to have more data to work with. For example, there was one example of a geminate (long) consonant. Was this one example simply an error on the part of the speaker in the recording, or was this one of the few examples of geminate consonants in the language? Only more data could reveal the true answer.

Works Cited

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