Caroline Topham

Louisville, KY

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Michael Marlo, English, LInguistics; Dr. Rebecca Grollemund, English, LInguistics

Documenting Luyia Together: Soba Talking Wordlist

Caroline Topham, Rebecca Grollemund, and Michael Marlo

The purpose of this project is to provide linguistic documentation of Soba, a language spoken in Eastern Uganda and a part of Masaba/Gisu cluster. This work has been conducted as part of the ASH Scholars research team under the guidance of Drs. Grollemund and Marlo. Soba is an understudied language; little research or documentation of it exists. This means that its long-term stability is threatened. This project aims to provide transcriptions and a talking wordlist to contribute to the preservation of Soba.

Throughout this semester, I have worked to create a database of transcriptions of vocabulary in the Soba language. At first, my work consisted primarily of renaming and organizing audio files of interviews with a native Soba speaker. Many of the files had previously been named incorrectly or were inconsistent in format, making them difficult to work with. I standardized and organized the files to facilitate more efficient use of them in the future. The next portion of my work involved creating phonetic transcriptions of the audio files. This process involved practicing and improving my skills in transcription by comparing my work against that of Dr. Marlo, before moving on to creating transcriptions of my own in the International Phonetic Alphabet. My process of transcription for Soba should be complete by the end of the semester.

The work in this project will be a base for future research and analysis. I intend to create a phonemic inventory of Soba, as well as morphological analysis involving identifying affixes of the language relating to different parts of speech. This work will contribute to the long-term stability and vitality of Soba by providing documentation and analysis of a severely understudied language.