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Documenting Luyia Together: Bukusu Verb Tone

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Bukusu is an understudied language of the Luyia language cluster of western Kenya, spoken by approximately 1.4 million speakers (2009 Kenya Census). The current project builds on work done by Elizabeth Kujath in Winter-Spring 2001, and by Dr. Marlo and other members of the *Documenting Luyia Together* team in previous years.

Bukusu is a tonal language, which has high (H) tones, low (L) tones, and falling tones, which are analyzed as the combination of a H and a L. (We analyze L tones as the absence of H tones.) All verbs fall into one of two categories which are categorized by an abstract H tone in one category and a lack of H tone in the other category (toneless). All tense-aspect-mood constructions can be split into 7 distinct tonal patterns, which have high tones on different positions of the verb. Two of the 7 tone patterns are illustrated by the Near Future vs. the Distant Future tenses. In the Near Future, the H verb *a-lá[βotooxana]* 'he will go around' has a H tone on the tense prefix *la-*, while the toneless verb *a-la[loleelela]* 'he will watch' is pronounced without any H tones. (In these examples, the verb stem is indicated inside brackets [].) In the Distant Future, the H verb *a-li[βotóoxana]* 'he will go around' has a H tone on the second syllable of the verb stem, and the toneless verb *a-li[lóleelela]* 'he will watch' has a H tone on the first syllable of the verb stem.

This project analyses the seven patterns as identified by our team and compares our results to those of other researchers. Our results are generally the same as those of Hyman & Khisa (1997), but Mutonyi (2000) describes a different dialect with different tonal properties.