1. Overview of the project

- We give a modal typology for 6 (out of 18) Luhya languages. Luhya is a subfamily of Bantu (ISO: luy; Guthrie: JE 32) spoken by approximately 5 million people in western Kenya and Tanzania.

- Our data was collected using a modified version of Vander Klok’s (2014) modal fieldwork questionnaire.

- We situate our findings within the modal typology of van der Auwera & Plungian (1998) and Nauze (2008), who distinguish between three categories:
  - Participant-internal (PI) modality: expresses an ability or need of a participant of the action.
  - Participant-external (PE) modality: expresses a possibility or obligation on the part of someone external to the action. (Includes the subclasses deontic and goal-oriented.)
  - Epistemic modality: expresses a judgment towards a proposition based on knowledge.

We show that the Luhya modal subtypes can vary in expressing modal category, but not in modal force. We additionally show that there is substantial inter- and intra-speaker variation.

2. Modal verbs

Luhya languages use three verbs to express modal meanings. They have both modal and non-modal uses. We categorize these verbs into three classes (I, II, and III), and give rough (Kratanian) modal meanings. All examples on this poster are from Llogoori.

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<td>(Weak) necessity</td>
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<td>Luwanga</td>
<td>okhunya</td>
<td>okhunya</td>
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3. Class I: Existential force

(1) PI: Ability

Sira a-nyal-a ku-tema mandazi.
1-sira 1-MOD-1.FV 15-cook 6-mandazi
‘She can cook mandazi.’

(2) PE: Deontic possibility

1-kageha a-nyal-a ku-voliza.
1-kageha 1-MOD-1.FV 15-date
‘He/she may go on a date.’

(3) Epistemic possibility

professor a-nyal-a ka-zu mu kilasi.
1-professor 1-MOD-1.FV 15-come in 7-class
‘The professor might come to class.’

4. Class II & III: Universal force

(4) PI: Circumstantial necessity

n-enya a n-voholek-e.
1Sg-MOD.11-FV 1Sg-relieve-SBJV
‘I need to pee.’

(5) PE: Deontic weak necessity

g-a-enya-ka-e.
6-MOD.11-AC-FV 1Sira 1-ask-SBJV amawaavo.
1-brother
‘Sira should ask his brother.’

5. Modal typology

The Luhya languages lexically distinguish between existential and universal force modals and between weak and strong necessity.

Support for Nauze’s typology:

1. Variation occurs along one axis: flavor (here, “categories”), not force.
2. No “skipping” categories; i.e. if a modal expresses need and necessity, it also expresses obligation.

Problems for Nauze’s typology:

1. Class III can vary in both modal category and force, since it can express both weak and strong epistemic modality.
2. Volitional modality appears to play an important role in Luhya’s modal system, as the class II modals in their non-modal use mean “want.”

6. Variation

Variation #1: Non-cognate modal verbs. Not all modal verbs are cognate. For instance, class III: khoya (Lubukusu) vs. kuduka (Llogoori).

Variation #2: Expletive subjects. We observe inter- and intra-language variation with respect to the choice of expletive subject agreement. Different agreement morphemes reflect differences in modal force, as shown in (8) (Gluckman & Bowler, to appear).

7. Non-verbal modals

- All languages have (at least) one pure possibility adverb (haondi in Llogoori).

- All languages have (at least) one general purpose necessity “adverb” borrowed from Swahili: mpaka, which means ‘until’ in Swahili. It distributes like an adverb, but selects for subjunctive mood, like the modal verbs.