

# Attitudes Towards Exogenous and Endogenous Uses of English: Ugandan's Judgements of English Structures in Varieties of English

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## Abstract

Uganda is a former British protectorate, where English has contributed to the country's linguistic ecology since 1894, when the British established a protectorate over the area of the Buganda kingdom. Over time, Ugandan English has developed as a nativised second language variety, spoken by Uganda's indigenous population. At the same time, due to migrations, globalisation and the influence of international media and the Internet, its speakers have increasingly been in contact with varieties other than British English: American English, Indian English, Kenyan English, and Nigerian English may all influence Ugandan English. This paper looks at how Ugandan English can be conceptualised as a variety shaped by other varieties. It reports on the results of acceptability tests carried out with 184 informants in the North, the Central and the West of Uganda and discusses how speakers assess individual grammatical structures used in Ugandan English and in those varieties they are potentially in contact with.

**Keywords:** Uganda, varieties of English, acceptability tests, models of world Englishes

## 1. Introduction

Uganda is a country in East Africa, adjacent to South Sudan in the North, Kenya in the East, the Democratic Republic of Congo to the West and Rwanda and Tanzania in the South. From 1875, the English language has been making inroads in the country's linguistic ecology, starting with a few explorers, then missionaries, and eventually, when the British extended a protectorate over what today is Uganda in 1900, administrative personnel, traders etc. (cf. Meierkord, 2016a). As in most countries that, as a result of similar histories, have English as a second language (L2), a nativised variety of English, Ugandan English (UgE, cf. Meierkord et al., 2016) has developed over time. While it has been influenced, on the one hand, by its speakers' 39 indigenous languages, it has, historically, been shaped by British English (BrE) and, more recently, increasingly by those Englishes that reach the country via the Internet and migrations.

This paper presents a first step towards assessing how these Englishes influence Ugandan speakers of English, through discussing the results of 184 acceptability tests that probe into how speakers in different parts of the country judge individual English structures that express futurity, obligation, ability and spatial as well as temporal relations. For these five areas, differences exist as regards the way they are expressed in three of the major first languages (L1): Acholi, Luganda, and Runyankore, spoken in the North, the Central and the Western parts of the country.

## 2. Research on Ugandan English

As is the case with many other former British and US American protectorates, Uganda has, until recently, not received a lot of attention from within English linguistics (Note 1). Up until the 2000s, scholarly research on UgE was restricted to passages in the somewhat outdated Lagefoged et al. (1972). Since 2000, a few isolated individual book chapters (i.e., Ssempuuma, 2013; Nelson & Hongtao, 2012) and journal articles (Fisher, 2000; Isingoma, 2013, 2014a; Nassenstein, 2016) have been published, but these cater for limited aspects of UgE only and are sometimes sketchy and not based on empirical evidence. Given these limitations, Uganda and UgE are also largely missing from most compendiums and handbooks of World Englishes (e.g., McArthur, 2002; Kortmann & Schneider, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Schneider, 2007, 2011; Filppula et al., 2017, although it is briefly mentioned in the latter two). Merely Kortmann and Lunkenheimer (2013) include a dedicated chapter that

covers UgE. At the same time, a number of dissertations describe both the structure and usage of English in Uganda (e.g., Mugumya, 2013; Nakayiza, 2013; Ssentanda, 2014a; Tukwasibwe, 2014; Bayiga, 2016), and several of the authors subsequently disseminated their research results in internationally accessible journals (e.g., Isingoma, 2013, 2014a&b, 2016a; Namyalo & Nakayiza, 2014; Ssentanda, 2014b; Ssentanda et al., 2016).

In 2016, a dedicated volume (Meierkord, Isingoma, & Namyalo, 2016) provided a first detailed description of the sociolinguistic situation and individual features of UgE. More recent research includes Ssempuuma (2019) and Isingoma and Meierkord (2019), both continuing to describe the variety, with the aim of understanding how it is (dis)similar to other varieties of English spoken in East Africa and how this can be reflected in models of world Englishes.

The publications on UgE reveal characteristics that set it apart from other East African Englishes. Besides lexical borrowings, which are largely from Luganda rather than from Kiswahili, progressives are used significantly less often in UgE than in data from Kenya and Tanzania (Ssempuuma et al., 2016), and analyses of diphthongs reveal significant differences across L1 backgrounds (Meierkord, 2016b). This is in contrast to earlier discussions of UgE under the label 'East African English' (cf. Schmied, 2004a, 2004b; Wolf, 2010; but see Schmied 2006 and 2017 for more diversified accounts acknowledging lexical and morphosyntactic differences), which were based on the assumption that the Englishes of the area share an influence of Kiswahili. Research has revealed that this influence is very limited in Uganda (Rosendal 2010). Despite its status as a co-official language and the resulting institutional support (particularly as regards Kiswahili as a school subject), Kiswahili seems to play a negligible role in the media, print publications, religion and informal private interactions (Namyalo et al., 2016) and to only have some currency in the Northern province. In fact, Fisher (2000, 58f.) had already concluded that "although genetically similar, in the same way that Australian and New Zealand English share a common ancestor, UE [UgE, cm] has diverged from the other East African varieties", claiming that it is mainly influenced by Luganda, the L1 of 17.98 % of Uganda's population and a widely used L2 in the country.

Whilst Ugandan English thus is interesting as a distinct variety in itself and in comparison to other East African Englishes at a descriptive level, it is also, and maybe particularly, of theoretical interest, as it lends itself to further refining current models of world Englishes.

### 3. Ugandan English in Recent Modelling of World Englishes

Models of world Englishes are numerous and have been proposed for over half a century now. Whilst some of these focus on how speakers' L1s influence their variety of English and how this leads to nativisation and potentially to acceptance of local forms, others assume that varieties of English are influenced by other varieties. Moving on from the somewhat static earlier models offered by Quirk et al. (1985) and Kachru (1985), which classified speakers as using English either as their native (ENL), as a second (ESL) or as a foreign (EFL) language and assigned countries to an Inner, Outer and Expanding Circle, respectively, recent models aim at accounting for the dynamic character of varieties of English, and for their interaction with and impact on each other. As Schneider (2011, p. 32) argues, the two older models "fail to reflect the vigorous spread of English and changes of its status in many regions over the last few decades" and do not fully reflect the complex realities of many areas (Note 2). In fact, countries assigned to the Outer Circle frequently exhibit characteristics of the Expanding Circle, as the use of individual features as well as the sociolinguistic realities cut across the ESL-EFL divide (see e.g. Biewer, 2011, p. 11; Michieka, 2009). In Uganda's capital Kampala, English pervades the lives of people, and individual families have been found to raise their children in English, whilst the rural area of Karamoja is more representative of the Expanding Circle, given the very limited use of English there.

Models which currently seem apt to describe the realities of UgE, but which would benefit from further refinements and/or cross-fertilisation to better cater for post-protectorate Englishes seem to be Schneider's (2007) *Dynamic Model*, Mair's (2013) *World System of Standard and Non-standard Englishes*, and Meierkord's (2012) *Interactions across Englishes*, in conjunction with Mufwene's (2001) feature pool model.

Schneider's (2007) highly influential *Dynamic Model* assumes that postcolonial Englishes follow a uniform trajectorial development, comprising the five stages of "(1) foundation, (2) exonormative stabilisation, (3) nativization, (4) endonormative stabilization, and (5) differentiation" (2007, p. 30). As shown in Ssempuuma, Isingoma and Meierkord (2016), Isingoma (2016a & b), Meierkord (2016b) and Meierkord (2016c), UgE is in its nativisation phase, linguistically characterised by heavy borrowing, phonological variability and structural nativisation (cf. Schneider, 2007, pp. 44–47).

Mair's (2013) *World System of Standard and Non-Standard Englishes* further allows to integrate aspects of globalisation (cf. Blommaert, 2010) and the, assumed, spread and influence of other varieties on UgE. Mair (2013, p. 256) argues that "at least in principle, all Englishes are everywhere" and assigns varieties to four

hierarchical categories, depending on their transnational impact in terms of their demographic weight and institutional support (through their use as official language, codification and/or their presence in the media). Crucially, the model makes the novel assumption that a number of non-standard varieties of English have a higher influence on others than some of the standard varieties. In particular, Mair discusses Jamaican Creole as spreading through its presence in popular music, which has resulted in borrowings from this variety (e.g., words such as “*yard* for ‘home’, *bashment* for ‘party’ and the pronunciation [a:ks] for *ask*”) by London teenagers (Mair, 2013, p. 265). In Uganda, it is particularly Indian English (IndE), Nigerian English (NigE), Kenyan English (KenE) which may exert an influence on UgE (Note 3). Exposure to KenE, spoken in the neighbouring country, is via trade and other businesses. IndE has been endogenous in the country ever since the return of parts of the Asian community and the arrival of new Asian immigrants and is reflected for example in the word *chapati* that is regularly used in UgE (see Isingoma & Meierkord, 2019). Further, IndE (Note 4) and NigE have spread to Uganda via Bollywood and Nollywood films and TV series, which are popular in the country.

Both Schneider (2007) and Mair (2013), however, treat UgE as a homogenous single entity. Yet, since L2 speakers of English in Uganda have Bantu (66.4 %) Nilotic (27.2 %), Central Sudanic (6.3%) and Kuliak (0.1%) L1s, the country seems to be home to several Englishes, albeit sharing a ‘national’ core (cf. Isingoma, 2013, 2014a, 2016b). Meierkord (2012) caters for this *and* for exogenous influence in that her *Interactions across Englishes* (IaEs) model assumes that speakers of English as an L2 potentially bring their very own varieties of English into an interaction conducted with speakers who have different L1 backgrounds. Not dissimilar to what happens in dialect contact, the features of these various varieties enter into a feature pool (Mufwene, 2001), where they are available for selection by the other speakers and for recombination into new linguistic systems. Generally, IaEs take place in very diverse contexts and may be between a Chinese and a Mexican participant at a scientific conference, or between a Sri Lanka-born chef and a Ukrainian room maid at a hotel in Cornwall. For the East African context, Schmied (1991, p. 420) observes this for Kenya and finds that, e.g., “a Luo hotel manager may talk in basilectal English to his Kikuyu cleaners and in acrolectal English to his foreign guests”. S/he may choose a variety of English to “suggest a distinct identity [or social disposition] to the hearer”. In Uganda, IaEs are highly likely to take place, given the multilingual nature of the country. They may, for example, involve speakers whose L1s are Acholi, Luganda and Runyakitara (see Namyalo et al., 2016 on details for Uganda’s languages). Since these interactions typically occur in very diverse constellations of speakers, a heterogeneous array of linguistic systems is the result, rather than one stable variety. Only prolonged contact, potentially, results in new emergent varieties (Note 5).

One factor that constrains whether speakers use a particular feature or not is whether they deem it acceptable. In fact, Hundt (2013) submits that verifying influence of one variety on another must take a mixed-methods approach, including attitudinal data. Acceptability tests are generally held to provide insights into informants’ prescriptive attitude towards individual grammatical structures or lexical items (e.g., Loewen & Reinders, 2011).

We focus on attitudes towards expressions of futurity, obligation, ability and spatial as well as temporal relations, which are indicated through different surface structures in Acholi, Luganda and Runyakitara, and which speakers of these L1s potentially realise differently in their L2 Englishes. Moreover, these features have also been found to differ across world Englishes (cf. the synopses in Kortmann & Schneider, 2004 and the overviews in Kortmann & Lunkenheimer, 2013), so that we have also been able to test, albeit to varying degrees, whether structures typical for the exogenous varieties of English mentioned above are acceptable to Ugandan speakers of English.

The expressions included in the acceptability tests cover what Mair (2013) has labelled the hyper-central, or ‘hub’, form American English (AmE), said to exert influence on all other varieties, several super-central and central varieties as well as the endogenous variety (UgE) itself to uncover what the results of our attitudes studies reveal about Ugandans’ normative preferences and what we may deduce from their judgments regarding the modeling of English. Whilst AmE is today encountered via media, particularly music, films and the Internet, BrE has been the target of English language teaching ever since the country’s history of English presence.

#### 4. Data and Methodology (Note 6)

The acceptability tests were conducted with a total of 184 speakers of diverse L1s, with one third of these being year six secondary students (aged 18 or 19), another third being university students and a final third being professionals ranging from hair dressers and seamstresses to mobile money agents and sales representatives. All participants had received English instruction until the end of secondary school. Data were collected in Gulu, Kampala and Mbarara. The choice of these three locations was motivated by the differences in the likelihood of an influence of the English of Luganda L1 speakers on the Englishes of speakers with other L1s. Whilst the

schools and universities in Kampala and Mbarara have, due to their prestige, sizeable intakes of pupils with Nilotic L1s as well as Luganda, Luganda-speaking students hardly ever enrol in schools or universities in the Gulu area, since prestigious institutions exist closer to their homes. Hence, direct influence from regular interaction with Luganda L1 speakers can be ruled out to some extent here, and if speakers still displayed Luganda influence, then this would indicate nation-wide influence from Luganda through e.g., the presence of Luganda speakers of English in the media (which results from the fact that many Baganda hold official positions) and the fact that Luganda is learnt as a second language by many Ugandans.

Each of the participants rated 52 sentences on a 4-point Likert scale from "fully acceptable" (1), via "somewhat acceptable" (2) and "somewhat unacceptable" (3) to "completely unacceptable" (4). In addition, they were given the option of ticking a box stating "I do not understand the sentence", to avoid their ticking a box without being able to rate the sentence at all.

## 5. Ugandans' assessment of grammatical structures in various Englishes

Based on the assumption that Ugandans' assessments of a structure's acceptability is constrained by a) the structures that are available in their L1s, which they potentially transfer into their L2 English and thus find acceptable, and by b) regularly encountering the structure in the English of other speakers, both of UgE and of various other varieties of English, futurity, modals of obligation and ability, and spatial as well as temporal prepositions were chosen as features of analyses.

### 5.1 Assessments of Expressions of Futurity

As is well known, English does not have a future tense but employs various strategies to express future time: "future time is typically marked in the verb phrase by modal or semi-modal verbs such as *will*, *shall*, *be going to*" (Biber et al., 1999, p. 456), but also through the use of the simple present or the present progressive.

In the Bantu languages, futurity takes two tenses: Luganda has a general and a near future, whilst Runyankore has a near and a far future. In Runyankore, the 'near future' is formed with the progressive form of the verb *-ija* ('come'), preceding the infinitive of the main verb, whilst the 'far future' is formed by the infix *-rya-* (Taylor, 1985, p. 153). Somewhat different, in Luganda both 'near future' and 'general future' are formed through infixes, *-naa-* and *-li-* respectively (Ashton, 1954, p. 124). The degree to which these distinctions transfer into the speakers' L2 Englishes is unclear (Note 7). For UgE, however, Ssempuuma (2013) rates the use of different modals for distant future, i.e., *would* for (distant) future in contrast to *will* as extremely rare. In Acholi, there is only one future tense, which is only formed in the indicative and expressed through the marker *-bi-* (cf. Kitching, 1932, p. 15). Furthermore, the etymology of individual future constructions (all are grammaticalised verbs originally meaning 'come') found in all three languages seems to be reflected in the 'come-based future/ingressive marker', which Huber (2013) identifies as one of four features that are "considerably more widespread in African Englishes as a whole as opposed to the rest of the world's Englishes" (2013, p. 823). In fact, the form is typically absent in British English varieties and in KenE and Tanzanian English but widespread in West African Englishes. Ssempuuma (2013) holds it to be somewhat frequent in UgE.

The twelve test items presented to the informants included sentences that contained a standard English (BrE or AmE, following Biber et al., 2000) construction that expresses future time (those items that have no comments in the lists below) as well as forms that have been attested in Trudgill and Hannah (2017), Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) or McArthur (2002) for IndE, mentioned above as a potential contact variety.

- 2\_FUT1: I wish that can happen soon.
- 4\_FUT2: We are going there next Tuesday.
- 7\_FUT3: We are to discuss this next week.
- 11\_FUT4: It is coming to rain. (UgE)
- 18\_FUT5: We will be meeting next week.
- 21\_FUT6: I would visit my parents tomorrow.
- 30\_FUT7: She is coming here next week.
- 35\_FUT8: I buy a new dress for the wedding.
- 39\_FUT9: We shall need the money on the 15th.
- 45\_FUT10: When you will arrive, please visit me. (IndE)
- 48\_FUT11: The city would be building a new hospital in 2025. (IndE)

52\_FUT12: I am going to travel to Kampala next week.

As Figure 1 displays, the informants in Gulu, Kampala and Mbarara rated the various test items drastically different from each other.

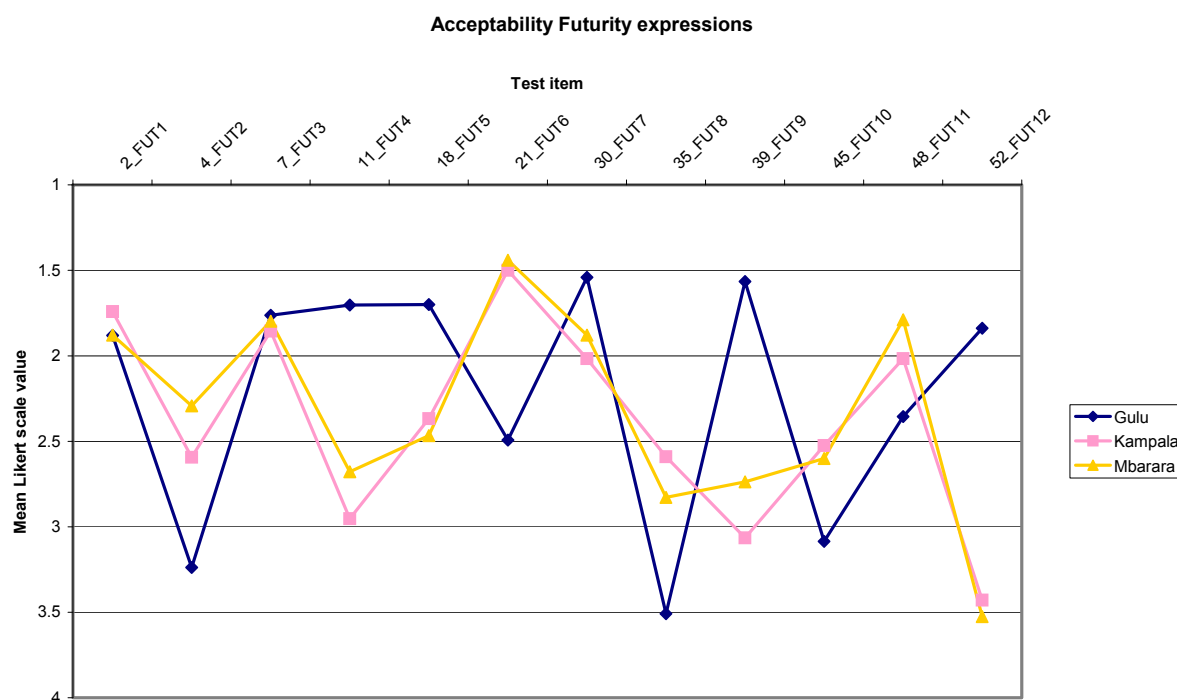


Figure 1. Acceptability ratings for expressions of futurity

Crucially, there are items, where the Gulu informants had ratings that were almost opposite to those of the respondents from Kampala and Mbarara. These are test items 11\_FUT 4, 18\_FUT 5, 21\_FUT6, 39\_FUT9, and 52\_FUT12, i.e., *coming to*, *will* + progressive, *would*, *shall* and the *going to*-future. Forms with *coming to*, *will* + progressive, *shall*, and *going to* were rated fully acceptable by the Gulu respondents but less acceptable by the others. On the other hand, the sentence containing *would* was rated considerably less acceptable by Gulu respondents than by the others. Items that received, on average, the best ratings were 2\_FUT1, i.e., the use of *can* to express futurity, and 7\_FUT3, *BE to*. It seems that speakers with a Nilotic L1, i.e., the respondents from Gulu, assess the individual structures considerably different from speakers who have a Bantu L1. Interestingly, the *going to*-future, which is increasingly replacing the *will*-future in AmE and BrE, does not seem to be a popular choice among the Bantu speakers.

### 5.2 Assessment of Expressions of Modality

Whilst English uses various modal verbs to express modality (in this study, obligation and ability), modality is mainly expressed by grammaticalised verbs that have developed, at different degrees, into modality markers in Luganda, Runyankore and Acholi (cf. e.g., Devos & van Olmen, 2013). For example, in order to encode ability, Luganda uses the infix-like verbal derivative *-sobola-* (originally meaning ‘manage’, followed by a main verb in its infinitive form). Similarly, Runyankore uses *-baasa-* (also followed by a main verb in its infinitive form). But unlike what is the case with Luganda *sobola*, its lexical meaning (‘manage’) is still prevalently attested. The fact that a verb serves as both a lexical verb and a modality marker may have an impact on the variety of English spoken by L1 speakers of the language where the phenomenon is attested, e.g., Runyankore. Additionally, modality is also expressed through suffixes indicating subjunctive mood in a system of simple, complex and compound tenses. In Acholi, e.g., obligation is expressed by the use of the grammaticalised but free-standing verb *myero*, whose lexical meaning, ‘to be fitting’, has been lost. Whilst the Acholi modality gram for obligation *myero* requires the verb following it to be in the subjunctive mood, Taylor (1985, p. 164) states that “no special mood is used for obligation” in Runyankore. These differences may result in further variability as regards how

speakers of these languages express modality in English as an L2. As regards L2 Englishes in general, Mesthrie (2004) explains that there seem to be different uses of modal auxiliaries, with the African L2 varieties substituting *will* for 'would', *can* for 'could', *shall* for 'should', and *can* or *may* for 'might' (the latter in Nigerian English only) but IndE using *would* for 'will' and *could* for 'can'. Modal verb usage has also been found to differ between BrE and AmE, with e.g. *shall* and subjunctive *should* considered archaic in AmE.

### 5.2.1 Modals of Obligation

Ten test items were used to investigate the acceptability of various modals of obligation as below. Whilst the majority contain forms that are used in BrE and AmE (*must*, *should*, *have [got] to*, *need to*), 51\_OBLIG10 has a use of *may* that, according to Trudgill and Hannah (2017, p. 131), is used to express obligation in IndE.

3\_OBLIG1: She must call the doctor.

5\_OBLIG2: He should know the terms of his employment contract.

10\_OBLIG3: The training must start from the university.

17\_OBLIG4: Students have got to clean the blackboard.

27\_OBLIG5: The Chinese teachers at Makerere shall also teach Chinese culture.

34\_OBLIG6: They don't need to write the exam. (AmE)

37\_OBLIG7: He needn't come early. (BrE)

41\_OBLIG8: I need to write reports on the students' behaviour.

47\_OBLIG9: You shall pay your tuition fees before the exams start.

51\_OBLIG10: These mistakes may please be corrected. (IndE)

Similar to what is the case with expressions of futurity, responses to the test items containing the various modals of obligation also differ between the Gulu respondents and those from Kampala and Mbarara, as Figure 2 shows.

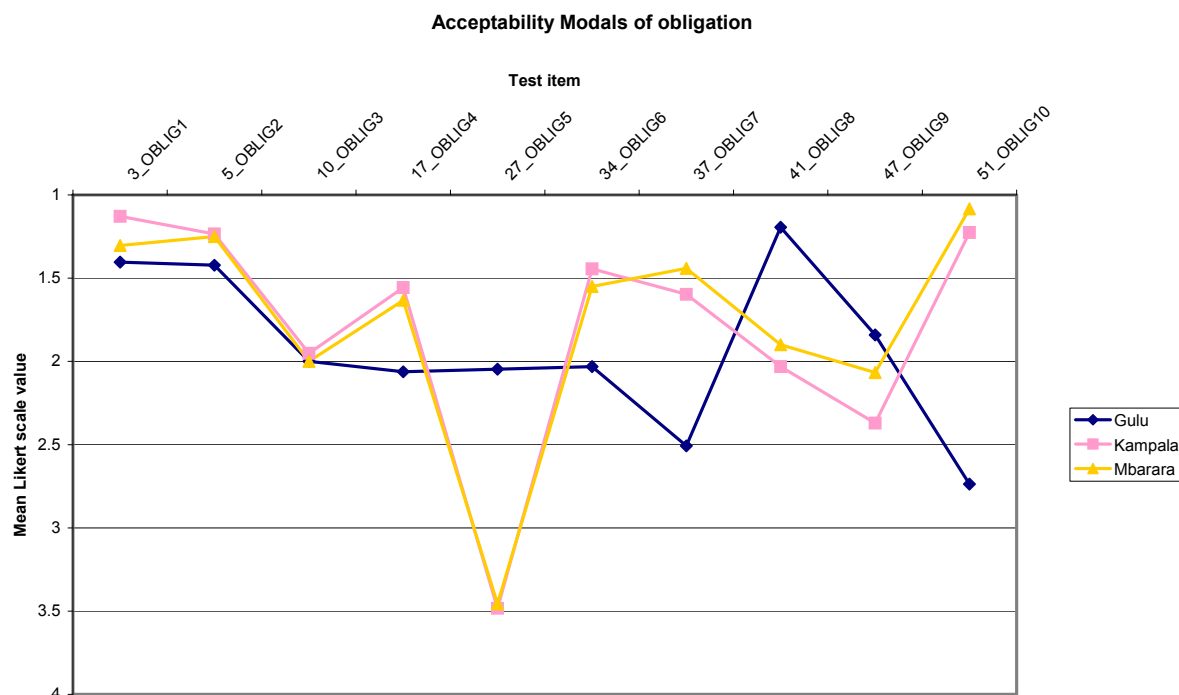


Figure 2. Acceptability ratings for modals of obligation

In the case of the modals of obligation, the main differences are found with 27\_OBLIG6, 37\_OBLIG7, 41\_OBLIG8 and 51\_OBLIG10, i.e., with *shall*, two test items that contain *need to* in an affirmative and in a negated sentence, and the item containing *may*. Interestingly, *shall* has traditionally been a modal verb associated

with politeness in BrE. Despite this fact, it receives very negative ratings, between “somewhat unacceptable” and “completely unacceptable” from respondents in Kampala and Mbarara, which are predominantly Bantu speakers. Overall, all respondents ranked items 3\_OBLIG1 and 5\_OBLIG2 to be the most acceptable, showing a preference for the modals *must* and *should*. Potentially, the fact that the L1s use only one structure to express obligation triggers the focus on just two English surface forms.

### 5.2.2 Modals of Ability

For the inquiry into Ugandan’s acceptance of various modals of ability, six test items, as shown below, were used. Whilst 23\_ABIL2, 26\_ABIL3 (*may* and *BE able to*) are encountered in the Standard English varieties BrE and AmE, the other test items have their origins in IndE, NigE and Black South African English (BSAfE).

8\_ABIL1: After the referee might have arrived the match will begin. (NigE)

23\_ABIL2: Vocabulary may be learned well by careful studies.

26\_ABIL3: People are often not able to see a doctor without delay.

28\_ABIL4: I could do well in my exams this afternoon. (IndE)

42\_ABIL5: Let’s finish now so that we could be there early. (IndE)

50\_ABIL6: You are from Arua, so you can be able to speak Lugbara. (BSAfE)

In some contrast to the findings reported so far, the judgements for modals of ability are somewhat similar across all three locations and, thus, across speakers with Bantu and Nilotic L1s. It is only test item 26\_ABIL3, *to be able to* in a negated sentence, for which assessments differ, with respondents from Gulu rating it more acceptable than the others, for whom the sentence is between the “somewhat unacceptable” and “completely unacceptable” end of the Likert-scale.

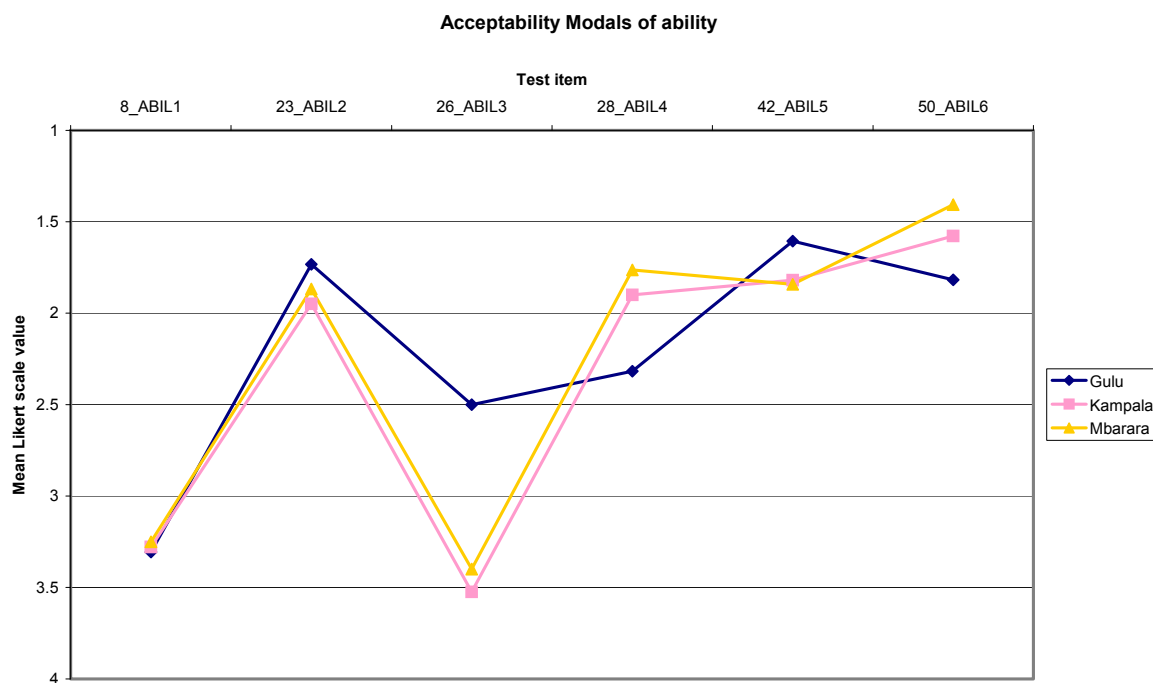


Figure 3. Acceptability ratings for modals of ability

Overall, 50\_ABIL6 was rated most acceptable, closely followed by 42\_ABIL5, one of the two being a form frequently reported for various African Englishes, *can be able to*, and the other *could*, having often been attested in IndE as a polite alternative to *can*. Interestingly, the Standard English *BE able to* was ranked negatively by the Kampala and Mbarara respondents and 8\_ABIL1, the NigE form, worst altogether.

### 5.3 Assessments of Uses of Prepositions

Expressions of spatial and temporal relations are complex in the Bantu languages. Ashton et al. (1954, p. 414) state that “[b]eyond the - A of Relationship (sic!), it is doubtful if Luganda has any true prepositions.” In fact, prepositional content may be expressed by the verb itself, by adverbial particles, by locatives with nominal properties, by applied verbs or by the prefix *na* to mark a noun as an instrument (expressing *with* or *by*). Similarly, in Runyankore, adverbs function as prepositions, yielding five simple prepositions and a number of compound ones (Taylor, 1985, p. 181). Acholi, on the other hand, possesses a complex system of prepositions, albeit with meanings not fully overlapping with the English expressions. Despite this complexity, Mesthrie (2004, p. 1140) finds that “[p]repositions are underdifferentiated in all the (L1 and L2) varieties reported on.” There are also individual differences between BrE and AmE, e.g. using *at the weekend(s)* and *on the weekend(s)*, respectively. Relatedly, “[p]hrasal and prepositional verbs are subject to immense variation in L2 Englishes” (Mesthrie, 2004, p. 1135). In fact, UgE has also been shown to have developed a number of what Nelson and Hongtao (2012) call “innovative particle verbs”, with *into* being particularly frequent in their formation.

Our test items probed into both spatial as well as temporal prepositions.

#### 5.3.1 Spatial Prepositions

The following six test items were employed to probe into the acceptability of spatial preposition uses. 14\_SPAT1, contains a characteristic use of *from* in UgE. 19\_SPAT2 contains a use of *in* instead of *into*, in 24\_SPAT3, *in* is used instead of *along*, and 46\_SPAT6 contains a zero preposition.

14\_SPAT1: He decided to eat from the restaurant. (UgE)

19\_SPAT2: Many tourists come in the country. (KenE)

24\_SPAT3: He lives somewhere in the coast. (KenE)

36\_SPAT4: He sells clothes at the market. (UgE)

43\_SPAT5: He wears closed shoes in school.

46\_SPAT6: Actually, this place I have not been. (IndE)

Similar to what is the case with the modals, the spatial prepositions are ranked similar by the Gulu, the Kampala and the Mbarara informants, with the exception of 46\_SPAT6, i.e., the sentence containing the zero preposition. This was ranked considerably less acceptable by the Gulu respondents than by the others, for whom the sentence was fairly acceptable.

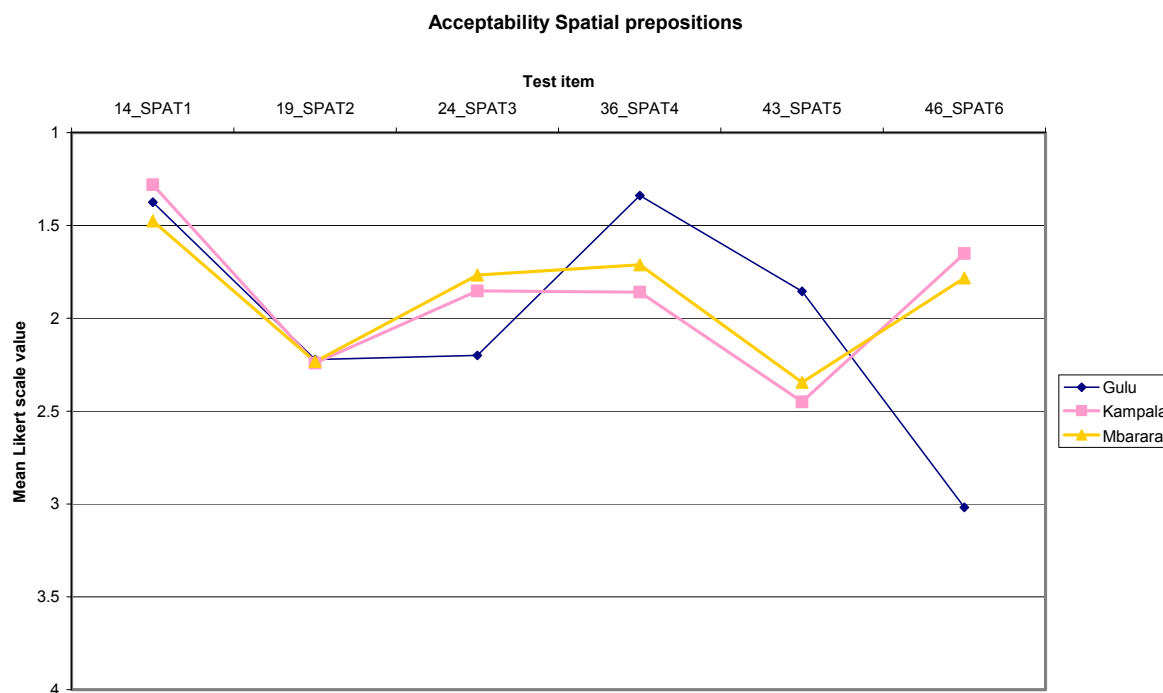


Figure 4. Acceptability ratings for spatial prepositions



Overall, 14\_SPAT1, i.e., the use of the UgE use of *from* instead of *at* was ranked best, close to “completely acceptable” by our informants, pointing to an acceptability of an endogenous form here. Again, the ratings for the various test items differ noticeably between the informants in Gulu (with Nilotic L1s) and those in Kampala and Mbarara (with mainly Bantu L1s). This is most pronounced as regards the assessment of the zero preposition.

### 5.3.2 Temporal Prepositions

For the study of Ugandans’ acceptability of uses of temporal prepositions, four test items were used as below:

12\_TEMP1: The musicians performed on the weekend.

16\_TEMP2: He went to visit his parents at the weekend.

22\_TEMP3: I am going on vacation during the next term break.

40\_TEMP4: The musician’s new video became popular over the holiday.

12\_TEMP1 and 16\_TEMP2 contain the two standard prepositions, with the former being the American and the latter the British preference. Interestingly, as Figure 5 documents, the American form *on the weekend* was ranked more acceptable than the British *at the weekend*, despite the fact that BrE continues to be the model taught in schools. This seems to confirm Mair’s (2013) assumption that AmE, via the media, exerts more influence on varieties than BrE does.

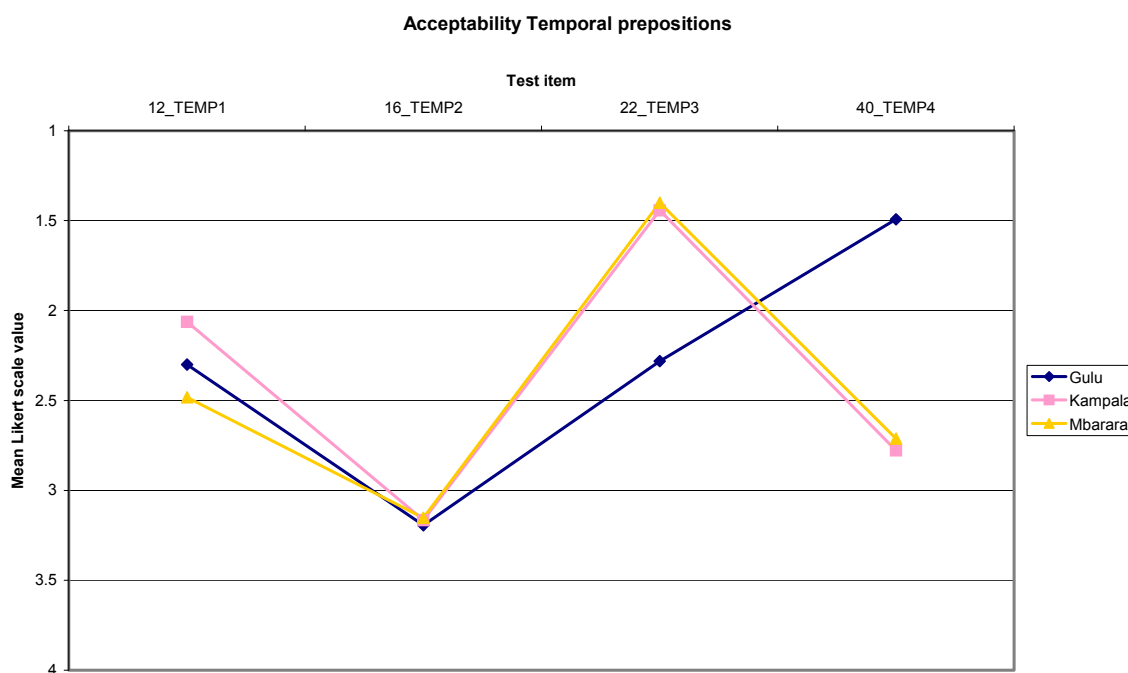


Figure 5. Acceptability ratings for temporal prepositions

As regards *during* and *over* in test items 22\_TEMP3 and 40\_TEMP4, we again find considerable differences across the Gulu versus Kampala and Mbarara divide, with speakers in Gulu ranking *during* less acceptable than *over*, whilst the opposite is the case with respondents from Kampala and Mbarara.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper has reported on the results of acceptability test that collected the assessments of various expressions of futurity, obligation, ability and of uses of spatial and temporal prepositions from various varieties of English in three locations in Uganda. The results reveal how acceptable or unacceptable structures from various varieties of English are held to be by Ugandans. Interestingly, although not unexpectedly, it was at times a structure used in a second language variety that received good ratings towards “completely acceptable”. This is the case with

*can* to express futurity, *can be able to* and *could* in the case of modals of ability and the spatial preposition *from* where BrE and AmE would use *at*.

Crucially, the acceptability ratings made in those locations where respondents are speakers of Bantu languages often differ considerably from those obtained in Gulu, where respondents are speakers of Nilotic languages (Note 8). Respondents from the two locations where a Bantu language is spoken by the majority of the population, and also by our informants, cluster together, even if these show micro-variation as regards the different structures investigated here. This is the case with many of the expressions of futurity, *shall* to express obligation, *BE able to* to express ability, the deletion of a spatial preposition and the use of the temporal preposition *over*.

The various results also indicate that some of the predictions made by recent models of world Englishes do not seem to be reflected in Ugandans' assessments of the various test items. For example, the rather negative rating of the *going to*-future is in contrast to the influence of AmE assumed in Mair's (2013) model. On the other hand, the findings for the temporal prepositions *on* and *at* document a clear preference for the AmE *on the weekend*. Also, the ratings for items that have their origins in NigE or IndE point towards a rather low influence of these two varieties on Ugandan's preferences for English expressions and structures. At the same time, other findings, i.e., the positive rating of the preposition *from*, may reflect endonormative stabilisation in the sense of Schneider (2007), at least as regards individual grammatical areas.

However, whether individual structures are deemed acceptable or not does not necessarily mean that speakers will employ these themselves or not. Rather, familiarity with the features following regular exposure to them, e.g. through interaction with speakers of those varieties for which they are typical or through their encounter in films or on the Internet may be a factor triggering positive evaluations. Studies have shown that acceptability judgements are sensitive to various sociolinguistic and social variables of which one is the respondents' proficiency level in English. Lee and Collins (2006), in a study on linguistic acceptability of Hong Kong English, found that acceptability judgements of secondary school students with high English proficiency showed a stronger preference for options that adhere to prescriptive norms. The authors explain this by a potentially higher orientation towards prescriptive attitudes as encountered in grammar books, which high proficiency students may consult more often (Lee & Collins, 2006).

As Phillips (2009) emphasises, any acceptability judgements need to be understood in relation to factual linguistic behaviours. Future analyses of the language productions captured in our interviews need to show how the acceptability ratings correspond to real behaviour.

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## Notes

Note 1. This is different only with regard to the former US-American protectorate of The Philippines, for which a considerable body of publications as well as a component of the International Corpus of English exist.

Note 2. However, Kachru (1985, p. 17) mentions potential overlaps between the different circles in passing.

Note 3. Mair (2013, p. 258) categorises IndE and NigE as “super-central” varieties and KenE as “central varieties”, assuming that higher ranking varieties will make a transnational impact, e.g. in terms of borrowing (2013, p. 261) on the lower-ranking “peripheral varieties” in the system, such as UgE.

Note 4. Contact with IndE is, potentially, also possible through interaction with Uganda's Asian population. In the past, before the earlier Asian population was expelled from the country by Amin, however, such contact hardly existed, and if it did, it did not take place in English (cf. Rathore & Schreier, 2016), and judging from informal comments, contact today also is very restricted.

Note 5. Probably, these processes will mostly not be conscious, particularly when speakers of English need to be considered as learners and are unaware of the influence their L1 exerts and of the particular features, phonological, grammatical, lexical and pragmatic, that characterise their English.

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Note 7. But see Meierkord (in preparation).

Note 8. This is true for the vast majority of our respondents. However, both the Kampala and Mabarara data contain Nilotic speakers and the Gulu data individual speakers of Bantu languages.

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