Uglish

Understanding the Variety of English Spoken in Uganda

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

This paper is aimed at highlighting the main features of Ugandan English (hereafter referred to as Uglish) focusing on its characteristics and sociolinguistic factors.

The sociology of language in Uganda is another factor that should be discussed in order to understand why some languages rank higher than others in the Ugandan society, keeping into consideration that the English language is a second language (hereafter referred to as L2) but in some cases, it is the first language (hereafter referred to as L1) possibly due to its influence in the education sector and the notion of linguistic imperialism.

It is also worth noting that among East Africa’s inhabitants, the English language is an L2, a third language and even a forth language. Given that fact, I will consider factors such as the formation of the English language and give the binding reasons for its popularity in Uganda.

The English language has progressively been used as a mode of bridging the communication gap between Ugandan regions. And its steadfast progress was inspired further by the fact that it became the major language used in the education sector with many people preferring to learn English as a unifying factor in the elite class. Secondly, Uganda’s approach to language use strategically sets English above other languages.

History is another factor that has aided the formation and development of the English language in Uganda. With the arrival of the colonial masters in Uganda came English which was limited to a selected few and mostly used for administrative work.

Ragnarsson (2011) provides a theory accounting for the creation of the variety of English spoken in Uganda in which he claims that speaker’s mother tongue is partly responsible for the creation of the English variety that exists in Uganda, given that the phonological and grammatical features of the speaker’s L1 limit the variety spoken just as it does other varieties spoken in East Africa.
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1. Introduction

From 1894 when Uganda became a British protectorate to this day, English has been a language of dominancy for the official system in the country.

English is the official language in Uganda as stated by Bernard Sabiiti, the author of *Uglish: A Dictionary of Ugandan English* (Sabiiti 2014). He acknowledged the need for tourists within the country to effectively communicate with the locals and decided to write a dictionary that would them understand the variety of English spoken in Uganda. Additionally, he points out that it is easy for a visitor to Uganda to identify that the variety of English spoken is unlike the British or American variety of English and claims that local flavours are the norm wherever Uglish is spoken. Sabiiti also observes the existence of the substratum effect between the speaker’s mother tongue and Uglish. Ragnarsson (2011) claims that East African Englishes have a “limited number of vowels and syllable stressed pronunciation, but, there are also other distinctive features related to vocabulary and grammar” (p.3), which is undoubtedly a distinguishing feature of Uglish.

In the article “Uglish Gets Its Own Dictionary in Uganda” (2015), Sabiiti states that:

there are certain periods when Ugandans coin words and claims that one of those periods is the election season…. Some politicians in Uganda have an entire vocabulary almost made up of only Uglish…. These politicians are very successful people in the country but cannot use Standard English, from business people to high-level politicians, nearly everybody in Uganda uses Uglish.

Additionally, Sabiiti provides us an example of Uglish use:

When a Ugandan has not seen you for a while, like after a long time, the first thing they tell you is that: you are lost. This doesn't mean that you are in a wrong place, it simply means, he or she hasn't seen you in a while.
More detailed information on the usage of Uglish will be discussed later in the paper.

Uganda is claimed to have forty-one individual living languages (Ethnology 2016) and fifty-six ethnic groups according to a report in the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census (Uganda Bureau of Statistics). And as a result of the multilingual status of Uganda, each group of a given local language takes up the English language and makes it their own which in turn leaves us with a unique strange variety of English.

2. The linguistic status quo

The first clause of article six of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda states that the official language of Uganda is English, and the second clause goes on to say that:

Subject to clause (1) of this article, any other language may be used as a medium of instruction in schools or other educational institutions or for legislative, administrative or judicial purposes as may be prescribed by law (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995. p.29).

The use of other languages as a medium of instruction has been largely used in educational settings as will be discussed in detail later, however, little information is available on the use of local dialects for administrative or even purposes of governance.

Having mentioned that local dialects are used in schools in Uganda, it is worth pointing out that all formal communication in educational institutions, the judiciary, politics, and government administration is monopolised by the English language.

On the other hand, Uganda’s integrity and loyalty towards the regional intergovernmental body of the East African Community has kept Swahili on the list of languages spoken in Uganda but its presence is more symbolic than functional, yet Swahili and the language spoken in the capital region (hereafter Luganda) still serve as languages of inter-ethnic communication. Swahili, on the other hand, “is more symbolic than functional mainly because of Uganda’s association with the regional intergovernmental body of the East African Community”, while Luganda and Swahili are used as languages of inter-ethnic communication; however, Luganda is considered a lingua franca for the people of Uganda (Ssentande & Nakayiza 2015).
3. The status of English

In 2002, an estimated of 30 percent of Uganda’s population spoke English and it was recorded as the official language. (Nassenstein 2016. p.398).

However, in 2006/2007, a local language policy was introduced in Uganda allowing primary schools to choose a local language familiar to all students to use as a language of learning and teaching from Primary 1 (P1) to P3. Then in P4, the students transition, and P5 to P7 there is an English only policy.

This policy has widely been used with exception of rural primary schools which are filled with multi lingual students, and these schools wish to be associated with the high-class status and prestige that has always been attached to the English language ever since the colonial period when it became the language of government and aristocrats. Rural schools have no formal obligation to use local languages; however, they teach the dominant mother tongues as separate subjects

The process of identifying a local language to be used for educational purposes is assigned to The District Language Boards and the schools are required to use the language selected as language of learning and teaching in primary schools in each district.

Thirty-five languages had been approved by the National Curriculum Development Centre by the year 2009 as languages of learning and teaching in primary schools (Ssentanda 2014).

It is worth noting that from one region to another, the morphological features of Ugandan English are subject to change, hence Uglish cannot be considered as a homogenous entity.

Nassenstien (2016) refers to a study carried out by Innocent Mwaka where he observes speakers of English across different parts of the country. He claims that:

the variety spoken and diffused in and around Kampala is mainly influenced by Luganda, for instance when it comes to the diminutive and augmentative proclitics ka and gu (p.397).

He further states that:
Ugandan English as realized in Gulu (northern Uganda) where Lwo-Acholi constitutes the main lingua franca would not reveal the same morphological patterns due to the highly deviating structures of the substrate languages. Diminutives in Gulu would thus not be expressed by a borrowed proclitic *ka*- , but through the adjectival use of *small*. Ugandan English from the southwestern parts of the country (where Rufumbira and Nyankore-Kiga are spoken, also including Nyoro-Tooro) would reveal less morphological deviations than Gulu English due to the fact that all these are Bantu languages like Luganda, but have more phonological deviations, for instance when it comes to the alternation of /l/ and /h/ and general intonational features. Lexical deviations are a regional feature of Ugandan English too when it comes to borrowing (397).

Nassenstien tries to further explain the usage of lexical borrowings between different regions by providing us with an example of a loan word that is used interchangeably between the regions. He states that:

Kampala residents would use the expression *to prepare the kwanjula*, [marital introduction ceremony] … Ugandans from the western parts of the country would use the term *to prepare the okuhiingira* and speakers of Lwo-Acholi (in the north) would tend to use *to prepare the nyɔm(Acholi)* (p.397)

He also claims that Ugandan English can be classified under East African English especially because of the shared phonological features, but he points out that no studies have been made on regional ethnolects of Ugandan English (Nassenstien 397).

4. **Swahili**

Swahili is a lingua franca around East Africa; however, its presence in Uganda has always raised mixed emotions among the Ugandans.

Ssentande and Nakayiza (2015) tell us that in 1877 around the time the European Protestant explorers arrived in the south-central region of Uganda which is present day
Buganda kingdom, and later followed by Catholics in 1879, Swahili was in use as a language of communication between different tribal groups, in the courts, and also a language for trade in East Africa. But in 1928, Swahili officially became the language of administration and education, however, this was met with a great resistance from the Baganda and the bishops to the extent that they sent a petition to the colonial secretary, who in turn revised the policy and reinstated Luganda as the official language of administration.

The argumentation for the reinstatement of Luganda as a language of administration was that the people who occupy the south and central region of Uganda (hereafter Baganda) regarded Swahili was “a language of slaves and of bondage, and detested it because it was associated with Islam a possible rival to Christianity” (Assibi 1995. p.53), a view that is still held among Ugandans.

It is however interesting to note that, with exception of the Baganda who are conveniently located in the state capital, and the people of the northern region who have always been the majority in the Ugandan army, there exists little or no information on what the other regions of Uganda feel about the use of Swahili.

After dictator Idi Amin Dada became president of Uganda, he declared Swahili again as the national language and made it compulsory on radio and television, and even took it a step further and ordered government employees to use it. This was mostly due to the fact that Idi Amin lacked competence in the English language. On writing Idi Amin’s obituary, Patrick Keatley (2003) stated that Amin was neither well educated nor particularly intelligent.

However, since Idi Amin’s presidency was fundamental to the reestablishment of Swahili, the collapse of his regime also saw the end of the official use of Swahili. This was accompanied by hostility towards Swahili from the Baganda, and its use by reckless soldiers during the war period between 1970 and 1985 further shattered its image. Nevertheless, the people of the north held Swahili in high regard, and this is mostly due to the fact that when they returned home from serving in the King’s African Rifles between 1902 and the 1960s, they brought along with them a souvenir: the new language Swahili. To this day, Swahili is used in Northern Uganda as a lingua franca (Ssentande &Nakayiza 2015).
Nassenstein (398) obverses that the “so-called Bongo Flava and Genge music from Kenya and Tanzania as well as [...] the musical oeuvre of Ugandan artists Jose Chameleone and Radio & Weasel” have marginally changed the youth’s attitude towards Swahili for the better, yet a large number of Uganda’s inhabitants refuse to acknowledge Swahili despite the government’s proposal in a bill that was passed in 2005 to have Swahili as Uganda’s second official language.

5. Luganda an option for a lingua franca

The use of Luganda is estimated to be at approximately 18 percent of Uganda’s population with most of its speakers situated alongside the shores of Lake Victoria in the south-eastern part of Uganda. The percentage of people using Luganda make it the most widely spoken language next to English.

The Baganda are suitably located in the capital city where most of Uganda’s economy revolves, giving an advantage to their language over the other Ugandan languages hence making it a countrywide language of business, transport, media, and the language of inter-ethnic communication. In addition, Swahili’s profile in Uganda has also contributed to the increasing popularity of Luganda, however, the Baganda have constantly promoted their language by encouraging publication and research into the language. And thus, Luganda is considered an unofficial lingua franca.

The people of Uganda have always had mixed emotions towards position of Luganda within the country. Ssentande and Nakayiza (2015) tell us that in 1912, Luganda was declared the official language of Uganda, but due to inter-ethnic battles it was replaced by Swahili in 1928. The other tribal groups believed or thought that the Baganda and their language were being favoured above others. However, the Baganda being a strong people, they contested the decision, and got Luganda reinstated as the official language of administration. Medadi and Judith state that recent studies indicate that many Ugandans prefer Luganda as a language of education over their own languages. This might account for why it become the language of literacy and education, and the language of the church shortly after it was reinstated as the official language.
Despite Luganda’s popularity among Ugandans, attempts to make it a national language have always been turned down because the other tribal groups are irritated by the strong ethno-linguistic identity displayed by the Baganda. However, even though Ugandans do not accept Luganda as an official language, unofficially, Luganda has been seen to play a big role as a language used by Central government officials and politicians within the Central region to the public. It is noted that during political campaigns, Luganda is used in the Capital; Kampala. And in the National government policies and campaigns, Luganda slogans are used as it is believed that Luganda is more appealing to Ugandans than English as noted by Anchimbe and Mforteh (124-125).

Table 1. Some Luganda slogans used in National politics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slogan</th>
<th>English gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entandikwa</td>
<td>Initial capital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonna bagaggawale</td>
<td>Richness for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonna basome</td>
<td>Education for all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okulembeka</td>
<td>Tapping resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ollilimbi</td>
<td>One’s task or duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekisanja</td>
<td>Presidential term limit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Languages of Uganda

Uganda is a heterogeneous nation with different cultural units which are separated by the language they speak. A report from *Ethnologue* (2016) shows that:

[the] number of individual languages listed for Uganda is 41, [and they] are all living languages. Of these, 39 are indigenous and 2 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 5 are institutional, 26 are developing, 6 are vigorous, 2 are in trouble, and 2 are dying.
Some of these languages are similar in phonological, syntax and lexical expressions especially those that fall under the same ethnic group. However, 40 of these languages are distinct and they are principally spoken in different regions.

Uganda’s ethnic groups are partitioned according to the areas they inhabit. The largest group of Uganda’s inhabitants are the Bantu speakers who are concentrated around the central, southern and the western regions respectively. The Nilotic which includes the Acholi and the Langi reside in the north, whereas, the Karamojong and the Iteso are in the northeast. And one of the smallest ethnic group is the Sudanic speakers who occupy the northwest part of the country. The National Population and Housing Census 2014 states that the Baganda are the largest tribal group who are concentrated around the shore of Lake Victoria from the north. They are estimated at about 17.7 percent of Uganda’s population, and their language; Luganda is the only indigenous language that is extensively used within the country. It is followed by the Runyakitara, Ateso, and Lwo respectively. The second largest group are the Banyankole who constitute 10.0 percent of the population, followed by the Basoga at 8.9 percent, then the Bakiga at 7.2 percent. Next are the Iteso at 6.7 percent, the Langi are estimated at 6.4 percent, the Acholi account for 4.9 percent of the population, followed by the Basoga who constitute 4.8 percent, while the other ethnic groups make up 31.4 percent of Uganda’s population.

As earlier stated (see p.5), English gained its status as the official language shortly after Uganda’s declaration of independence from the British colonial rule, and it has since been taught in and used as a medium of instruction in schools, it is also used in the judicial system, and immensely dominates media production. Among the different reasons for its popularity is the fact that the level of English proficiency is higher than that of the indigenous languages within the country.

Swahili could be the language next to English in terms of the community of its users and this culminated from the economic bondage created for smooth running of regional trade amongst the East African Regions. It was upon this foundation that Uganda’s parliament recommended the use of Swahili in 2005 to be the second function.
6.1. Map of Uganda

(Ethnologue: Languages of the World 2016)
6.2 The Languages of the Central and South regions of Uganda

The inhabitants of the southern part of the country commonly use Luganda and their proficiency in this language makes it their lingua franca. Additionally, it is used as a foundation in the education field. In primary schools, especially those in Buganda region, Luganda is considered as one of the languages that stimulate and promote understanding in young ones. Luganda has a strong system of associations among the discourse sounds that establish the fundamental components of other Bantu language spoken in Uganda therefore making a strong phonological similarity with other Bantu languages in the country. Looking at a systematic arrangement of the Lusoga language for example, one would easily acculturate these two languages. The popularity of Luganda and its proficiency has existed since the colonial period, this is the reason why it was marked as the indigenous official language after Uganda gained its independence. However, there is a concern among the native users of Luganda who worry about dilution of the language in case its used outside of their region. The non-native speakers of the language are said to be having issues with its grammar, and they mispronounce certain key words subjecting the language into total dilution which could devastate the original contents of the language (Encyclopedia of the Third World 1992).

The Bantu-speakers entered Uganda through the southern part around the end of the first millennium A.D and by the fifteenth and sixteenth century, they had established centralised kingdoms. At the time of Uganda’s independence, they had the highest denomination approximated at about two thirds of the country’s inhabitations, and most of them share cultural similarities through their syntax, lexical and phonological expression. Kurian and George state that the Bantu languages:

are classified as Eastern Lacustrine and Western Lacustrine Bantu in reference to the populous region surrounding East Africa's Great Lakes (Victoria, Kyoga, Edward, and Albert in Uganda and Kivu and Tanganyika to the south). Eastern Lacustrine peoples include the Baganda, the Basoga, the Bagisu, and many smaller societies in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya (Encyclopedia of the Third World 1992).
They go on to claim that the Baganda represent the largest group in Uganda with an estimated percentage of 16.7 of Uganda’s inhabitants. Their name originates from the word Buganda following the Swahili translation of the word “Buganda” into “Uganda”. The British officials in 1884 adopted the name during their convention of the Uganda Protectorate which was concentrated in Buganda. Buganda is an agricultural land because of its advantageous location, Lake Victoria is to its south, the Victoria Nile River boarders it from the east, while Lake Kyoga is in the north of the region.

From *The Encyclopedia of the Third World* (1992), we are told that the cultural group that is next to Baganda are the Basoga who are located in the Eastern part of the country and make up approximately 8.9 per cent of the population. Basoga were found to be subsistence farmers during the arrival of the Europeans. One of their economic activities included cattle rearing, sheep, and goats tethering. Their gardening was mainly meant for domestic consumption which mainly existed near their homestead. The next populous cultural unit is Bagisu who also occupy the Eastern region of the country and amount to approximately 4.8 per cent of the country’s population. This cultural group depends on cultivation as a means of survival, for subsistence, they grow bananas, millet and corn, and as cash crops, millet and cotton are grown. There area of occupancy is the western slopes of Mount Elgon, and because this region has fertile soils, the area has accommodated the highest population in the country.

### 6.3 Languages of the West and the South-Western parts of Uganda

Uganda has languages with close syntax, lexical and phonological expression. Huttner, Erica (1970) tells us that:

[These languages] generally belong to the Bantu and Nilotic language families. Two prominent Bantu languages are Chiga and Nyankore. Chiga, also known as Kiga, is spoken by over 1.68 million Ugandans, while the closely related Nyankore language is spoken by over 2.33 million people in southwestern Uganda. A few other languages with over 1 million native speakers in Uganda include varieties known as Acholi and Lango that are dialects of the Southern Luo language, and Teso, which are all members of the Nilotic language family.
There are also over 1 million speakers of the Bantu languages known as Masaaba and Soga (Country Profile: The Languages of Uganda).

The western Bantu tribes are; the Banyankole, Batoro and the Banyoro. These tribes identify themselves as being from two cultures, the “Hima” (Bahima) and the “Iru” (Bru). These two cultural groups have always conflicted because of their classification. The Bahima consider themselves to be of a higher class because they are herdsmen and cattle is considered to be of great value. On the other hand, the Bru are an agricultural folk who entirely depend on cultivating the land for cash and subsistence. Because of the toil involved in cultivating the land, the Bahima view the Bru as a people of a lower class.

The Bunyoro Kingdom was once one homogenous body like Buganda kingdom but before the 19th century, the Batoro separated themselves from this group, forming a land of two cultures. The two cultures; Batoro and Banyoro have languages that share features to the extent that it could be argued that the languages are dialects, and they also share cultural traits. Their area of residence is the western border of Uganda in the south of Lake Albert and they are estimated to be about 3.2 percent of the country’s population (Encyclopedia of the Third World 1992).

6.4 Languages of the East and Northern Uganda

Another ethnic group recognised for the overall formation of the heterogeneous nation Uganda, is Nilotic-language speakers. This group entered the country through northern Uganda and it is believed that they entered the country perhaps towards the start of A.D. 100. This group concentrated on being herdsmen and also did some subsistence farming to supplement their cattle keeping.

The ethnic groups that constitute the Nilotic are the Karamojong and Iteso who are speakers of the Eastern Nilotic languages, and the Luo, Acholi and Langi who are speak the Western Nilotic languages. This group is believed to have some of its descendants in the neighbouring countries of Kenya and Sudan where the biggest number of the Karamojong are located. They are comprised of the Karamojong proper,
the Jie, and the Dodoth, plus a population of small related groups which is estimated at about 12 percent (Nyeko 1996).

The Teso land extends to the south from Karamoja to Lake Kyoga and its inhabitants, the Iteso are part of the Eastern Nilotic people who make up 6.7 percent the county’s population. The Iteso are agriculturalists whose economy depends on cash crop cultivation of coffee and cotton, which has led them much wealth through agriculture and commerce. The Kakwa people are located at the border of Southern Sudan in the northwest and north-eastern Zaire, and they constitute about less than 1 percent of the country’s population.

The western Nilotic language groups account for 15 percent of Uganda’s population with the biggest group being the Acholi, followed by the Langi, then the Luo (spelled Lwo), then a number of small ethnic groups respectively. The majority of western Nilotic languages are related to the Lwo language group in Kenya and their languages are categorised as Low Nilotic. The largest ethnic groups of this region are the Acholi and the Langi whose languages can be argued to be dialects. The Lwo are situated in the west of Acholi land and west of Langi land, they are also said to have similar cultures to those of the neighbours in the West Nile region where Central Sudanic languages are spoken.

6.5 Sudanic Languages

Uganda has a few Central Sudanic languages whose speakers entered the country through the north. The language is spoken by the Lugbara who occupy the highlands of a plateau that is situated between the Congo River and the River Nile and their coverage constitutes about 6 per cent of Ugandans. It’s also spoken by Madi who settled in the eastern lowlands, plus a couple of interrelated brothers in the north-western corner of Uganda. Both groups have similarities in terms of cultural norms and their subsistence farming. They both raise millet and sorghum grains, legumes, and a number of root crops. Cattle rearing is important in this region as well as goat keeping. The growth of tobacco is of importance to their cash crop economy and the corn grown is used for brewing beer. (Nyeko 1996).
6.6 Nubi Language

The number of Ugandans who are believed to have originated from the Nuba mountains ranged between 95000 to 10000. This group is classified as Nubians because of their point of origin which is close to the Nuba mountains found in Sudan. They are part of the lineage of Sudanese military recruits who were employed in the colonial army and they are said to have migrated to Uganda in the late nineteenth century (Tribes in Uganda). They have many cultural groups but the common languages spoken are the Western Nilotic languages which are similar to that of their relatives, the Acholi found in Uganda. In their preface, Wellens and Werner (2005) claim that Nubi is considered an Arabic creole since its vocabulary constitutes 90 per cent of Arabic. At present 25,000 Nubi live scattered around Uganda and Kenya.

7. Uglish

Krachu’s Concentric Model, indicates that Uglish, like other outer circle varieties of English, is linked to colonial history hence British English. But despite the historical connection, Uglish is not a native variety; it has its own syntax and morphology, phonology and usage. The transfer between Uganda’s indigenous languages and Standard English is partly accountable for the existence of this variety. Odlin (1989:27) defines transfer as:

the influence resulting from the similarities and differences between the target language and another language that has been previously acquired.

Because Uglish consists of non-native features of standard English or one might claim that it contains errors, this might lead to a conclusion that there has been negative transfer hence indigenization of the English spoken in Uganda.
7.1 Features of Ugandan English

When listening to Uglish, one acquainted with the indigenous languages of Uganda will soon identify the existence of a strong local flavour which makes the variety unique, especially when compared to other English varieties in Africa, and this is because of the multilingual status of Uganda. Every tribal group interprets Standard English and thus produce a unique variety of English, these varieties are later viewed as one variety from the perspective of an outsider.

It is also worth noting that Ugandans use a creative imagination to invent new words from the indigenous languages to replace those in Standard English. The influence of the indigenous languages on the variety of English spoken in Uganda is significant because many Ugandans are unable to speak English without transferring features from their mother tongues or code switching. Additionally, there exists a tendency for Ugandans to assume that many Uglish features are the correct alternatives to Standard English. Furthermore, the influence of indigenous languages has contributed much in creating and defining the features of Uglish.

7.1.1 Influence of indigenous languages

Ugandan languages have developed their own speech pattern and this is the main contributing factor to the English spoken within the country. The speech patterns produced are entirely dependent on the different languages that exist among the different tribes. The native languages possess modified foreign words usually intended to compose and flavour both the local language and the English spoken in Uganda. According to the Wikipedia article Ugandan English – Influence of indigenous Languages, we are told that:

the Bantu languages spoken in southern Uganda tend not to have consonants sounded alone without a vowel in the syllable. Indeed, the Luganda word for consonant is “silent letter”. Thus the letters l and d in Alfred (/ˈælfrɛd/) will be given sound by the addition of /i/, making the pronunciation of the word /ˈalifuredi/. Similarly, muscular is pronounced /ˈmɪsələr/. 

15
Luganda never has /t/ starting a word; it only appears following the letters /e/ and /i/ within a word. The /l/ sound, conversely, cannot follow these sounds. Thus the word *railway* gets its /t/ and its /l/ substituted, giving */leyirwe/*.

Luganda does not permit the sequence /kju/; any occurrence of this sound becomes /ʃu/. Thus *cute* is pronounced /ʃut/.

The initial /t/ is dysphonic to the Luganda speaker but is perfectly natural to the speaker of [the language spoken in the southwestern part of Uganda] Runyankole and [the language of the western part of Uganda] Rukiga, which have few instances of the /l/ sound. Additionally, /ʃ/ in Runyankole and Rukiga is more often heard as /ʃ/. The combination of the above three rules will transform *calcium* into */karuʃim/.

Ragnarsson (2011) also claims that the speaker’s mother tongue has an influence on how English is learnt (p.9). In East Africa, English is mostly acquired as an L2 and it is most likely that the features and strategies used in acquiring the first language are transferred; negative transfer is usually called interference. This kind of transfer has always been the main reason for the variation in African English, as it must have much influence on how words are pronounced.

Schmied (2014) claims that there is fear among Africans that when one generation of poorly-trained African teachers passes on their English to the next generation, mother-tongue interference could be cumulative so that with time, English could deviate more and more from acceptable norms (like the minimal five-vowel system). He points to one interesting fact; that some speakers of African English exhibit “interference features” although they do not derive from their mother tongues but from other languages used in the area (East African English Phonology 157).

7.1.2 Vocabulary

The vocabulary of Uglish can be said to be mystifying to many foreigners since it is full of peculiar meanings. In Uganda, when one says “extend”, they are simply requesting that one move over as a way of making room for someone else on a seat. And the word “pop” is used interchangeably with words like come and bring, for instance one could
be heard saying; Jenny, pop me that cup bottle or Brenda, will you pop to school later today? Therefore, the vocabulary used is also another contributing factor to the features of Uglish.

### 7.1.3 Borrowed Modal Particles.

The use of borrowed modal particles with semantic components is another factor to consider when discussing the features of Uglish. Nico Nassenstein 2016 claims that:

> [The] complex politeness strategies of Luganda are reduced to modal particles, often understood as ‘signals of personal stance’ in Ugandan English that have a very subtle inherent semantic connotation, all borrowed from Luganda. These markers which all stand in the first position of a clause decide how FTAs are either preserved or avoided and whether face loss is intended or not. The complexity of the below-listed discourse particles is their very explicit semantic notion that decides to what degree a sentence sounds ‘polite’ (revealing negative politeness patterns) or ‘impolite’ (revealing positive politeness patterns). These modal particles can be considered ‘pragmaticized’ particles that either offer a procedural or, more often, propositional meaning, reducing face-loss of either the speaker or hearer. These particles fill the pragmatic gaps for Luganda speakers for which English cannot suffice (p.414).

#### 7.1.3.1 The modal particle mbu

Nassenstein states that the marker *mbu*, is categorised as a ‘hearsay’ marker. *Mbu* is used when a speaker is not certain of the information they are providing, and in a way, it could be seen as a rumour, providing false information or simply gossiping. The use of *mbu* protects the speaker from the responsibly of owning semantic content they are providing. Sometimes *mbu* is used interchangeably with its English equivalent *I hear* (p.414).

Example of use of *mbu*
(i) Mbu he sued the school.
   ‘I hear he sued the school/ He is said to have sued the school.’
(ii) I asked her but she said she could not help, mbu she does not have money.
   ‘I asked her but she said she could not help, I hear she does not have
   money/She is said to be broke.’

7.1.3.2 The modal particle oba

Nassenstein goes on to list another particle that is evident in Uglish.
The use of the particle *oba* donates a notch of confusion and provides a number of interpretations of the spoken word for the hearer, which in turn transfers the responsibility of owning the meaning of what is spoken from the speaker to the hearer (p.414).
Example of use of *oba*

(i) Oba what did you do last night?
   ‘So, what did you do last night?’ (open choice answer)
(ii) Oba why did he call the meeting?
   ‘So, what is the meeting about?’ (confusion)

7.1.3.3 The modal particle nga

The discourse *nga* is a positive politeness strategy that involves using criticism towards the hearer and it is interpreted as ‘yet’ or ‘when’. The English equivalent for *nga* is ‘how come’ or ‘but how’ (Nassenstein 415).
Examples of use of *nga*

(i) Nga my office hasn’t been cleaned?
   ‘How come my office hasn’t been cleaned yet?’
(ii) Nga she has a new dree?
   ‘How come she has a new dress?’

7.1.3.4 The modal particle ate

Nassenstein explains that:
The clause-initial marker *ate* is also frequent in Kiswahili (realized as ati) and serves against the positive face of the hearer (‘is it true that . . .?’) or against the negative face of the speaker (‘it is claimed that . . .’). [...] *ate* takes a slightly different connotation in Luganda (and therefore also Ugandan English). It can express astonishment of the speaker who confronts the hearer with the request of a problem-solving approach (‘So, . . .?’). [...] The calqued discourse particle *now* (from Luganda *kati*) fulfils a similar pragmatic strategy (p.415)

Examples of use of *ate*

(i) Ate who is this?
   ‘So, who is this?’ (surprise, astonishment)

(ii) Ate what did you do?
    ‘So, what did you do (now)?’ (critical evaluation)

(iii) Ate when is she coming back?
     ‘So, when (at all) is she coming back?’ (being stressed)

7.1.3.5 The modal particle *nawe*

Nassenstein explains the use of the particle *nawe* by stating that:

the pragmatic discourse marker *nawe* is a borrowed element literally meaning ‘also you’ and can be interchangeably replaced by its English equivalent. It can be considered a negative politeness marker that reduces the face-threat against the negative face of the speaker by assuring a ‘polite’ and even begging tone of his utterance [in hope of] empathy on the hearer’s side (415).

Examples of use of *nawe*

(i) Nawe, give it to me!
    ‘Would you be so kind to give it to?’

(ii) Nawe, come with me.
    ‘Could you possibly come with me?’
(iii) Nawe, I cannot do that.
     ‘I surely cannot do that.’

7.1.3.6 The modal particle wama

Wama is used as an indicator for a will to compromise by the speaker, as it expresses empathy and appeasement. The German modal particle halt which is in English translated as ‘just/simply’ is an exact equivalent to the particle wama, and it is used to fill in a fundamental pragmatic gap that English cannot utterly realise (Nassenstein 416)

Examples of use of wama

(i) Wama you are beautiful!
     ‘I believe you are beautiful!’ (A girl/lady has been made to believe they are not pretty or there is cause for her to doubt her appearance; so, the speaker tries to appease her by affirming that she is beautiful.)

(ii) Wama Brenda give it to me!
     ‘Then just give it to me, Brenda!’ (The speaker needs something from someone he/she had a wrangle with and does not wish to address that person, so the speaker directs his/her request to another person.)

7.1.3.7 The use of the emphatic pronoun ggwe

According to Nassenstein,

the use of the emphatic pronoun of the second person singular ggwe when addressing somebody […] is considered rude, impolite and very direct. It constitutes a positive politeness strategy, which are to such an extent extremely scarce in Luganda and Uglish (416).

He concludes by claiming that it can be understood as an offensive salutatory address. The Icelandic pronoun heyrðu can be seen as an equivalent to ggwe since they both serve as positive politeness strategies.
Examples of use of *ggwe*

(i) Ggwe come here?
   ‘Hey, you there, come here?’

(ii) Ggwe what do you want?
    ‘You there, what do you want?’

### 7.1.4 Code Switching

Another feature of Uglish is code switching. Ugandans have a tendency of alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation. It is a natural practice for Ugandans to add an English word into a conversation when using a local language. However, this is also done by using borrowed subordinating conjunctions such as *anti* (because), which is a loanword from Luganda and often applied in Uglish.

### 7.1.5 Derivation

Another feature of Uglish is a lexica-grammatical feature and that is derivation. Uglish contains a large range of Standard English words which Ugandans change to suit their understanding of a situation from their local languages. Isingoma (2014) provides us with examples of such verbs:

(i) “dirten, to make dirty”, e.g. ‘Do not let the children dirten themselves.’

(ii) to ashamed “to shame”, e.g. ‘Ritah ashamed her friends yesterday.’

(iii) To cowardise “to behave like a coward”, e.g. ‘I am not going to cowardise in implementing what the council has approved.’

(iv) to louse “to idle, to laze”, e.g. ‘They could as well be just a bunch of five chaps lousing around.’

(v) to detooth (informal) “to fleece, to gold-dig”, e.g. ‘Out of 15 interviewees, only three people admitted to ever having actively detoothed a woman and one of them was female’. (Isingoma 52)
7.1.6 Singularizing and Pluralizing

In addition to the lexical-grammatical features that are present in Uglish, there is the tendency of singularizing plural words and pluralizing singular words. Sabiiti (2014) affirms this claim in the dictionary of Ugandan English, by stating that Uglish has singularized otherwise plural words and pluralized those ones that are singular (p.13), and Isingoma lists some examples this usage of Uglish: -

(i) trouser, pant, short, scissor, jean ‘(a pair of) trousers, pants, shorts, scissors, jeans’, e.g. ‘He’s in shiny blue exotic-looking reptile skin shoes, a light blue trouser, a yellow shirt.’ (Isingoma 2014).

(ii) pluralization of the word name when referring to one person, e.g. ‘What are your full names?’

(iii) offal used as a count noun, e.g. ‘Mixing groundnuts with small fish (mukene), dried meat, offal and chicken enhances the protein...’ (Isingoma 53)

7.1.7 Prefixes

The use of prefixes is another feature of Uglish. This is usually linked to diminutive and augmentative forms of speech. Nassenstein tells us that this is unlike the “British English where diminutives are either expressed with the adjective little or a range of suffixes” and that the diminutive prefix *ka* is used in Uglish and as well as “by most L2-speakers of Bantu languages when reducing the semantic extent of a concept” (Nassenstein 401). In Luganda, the diminutive is marked with the prefix *aka*. On the other hand, the plural form of the diminutive is marked by the prefix *obu*.

The examples below show the use of Uglish diminutives:

(i) I sat with a ka-small girl in class yesterday.
   ‘I sat with a very small girl in class yesterday.’

(ii) I saw his ka-car parked in front of our house.
   ‘I saw his very small car parked in front of our house.’

(iii) Please go to the ka-shop and buy a ka-matchbox for us.
   ‘Please go to the small shop and buy the small matchbox for us’
(iv) I asked you to give away this ka-bed.
   ‘I asked you to give away this very small bed.’

The augmentatives in Uglish are marked by the prefix *gu* with the plural form *ga*. The prefix *gu* is mostly realised as a notion of disproportion (disproportional big, large, huge) and abnormality (Nassentsein 402)

(i) Our neighbour’s gu-dog chased me all the way to school.
   ‘Our neighbour’s big/scary/ugly dog chased me all the way to school.’

(ii) Her son has a gu-big head.
    ‘Her son is very stubborn/her son has a big head.’

(iii) A gu-woman came to my office yesterday.
    ‘A very big woman came to my office yesterday’

7.1.8 Grammar

The grammar of Ugandan English is also worth discussing when accounting for the features of Uglish. Many natives of Uganda find it hard to articulate the endings of words. According to Ragnarsson (2011), Schmied’s list of the twelve grammatical tendencies which originate from The East African Component of the International Corpus of English agrees with this claim (Ragnarsson 30). When accounting for East African Englishes, Ragnarsson cites Schmied by stating that:

Speakers of [East African English] will not always add inflectional endings to verbs, instead they will use the regular, general, and unmarked forms. They also tend to avoid complex tenses – particularly conditionals and the past perfect participle. Continuous forms tend to be used excessively. The use of phrasal and/or prepositional verbs is arbitrary and verb complementation varies greatly with regards to infinitives and gerunds in particular. The use of –s plural markers tends to be generalized excessively (Ragnarsson 30).
Ragnarsson goes on to claim that:

the [East African English] speaker will tend to omit articles and other determiners in front of nouns. Pronouns may be left out, presumptive pronouns especially and gender distinction is lacking for pronouns. Prepositions lack differentiation and therefore the prepositions *of* and *in* are used to a significantly greater extent than in other varieties of English and adjective forms are sometimes used as adverbs. Finally, the question tags will occur frequently in a consistent form (Ragnarsson 30).

On the other hand, when using prepositions, Ugandans tend to alter, erase or add them. Their use of prepositions is characterized with phrases such as “increase on the volume” and not “increase the volume”, or “demand for respect” and not “demand respect”.

### 7.1.9 Calqued expressions

The use of calqued expressions is also a notable feature of Ugandan English. The key to its proper usage is to understand the context in which a word is used. Isigoma (2013 p.25) states that “calqued expressions or calques are also known as loan translations [....] what is loaned is a translation, not words”. Some examples of calqued expressions in Ugandan English include phrase such as: - *to eat money*, which has a translation “to embezzle money” or “to detooth” (to detooth meaning to “gold-dig”), however the idiom “to eat money” can also be translated as “to enjoy the pleasures of having money”. The expression “to eat money” is calqued from a Luganda term “kulya sente” which simply translates to “to eat money”. This same expression can be found in other languages, for instance in Runyankole “kulya seente”. Some calques are direct translations of plain expressions in local tongues, one of such is “to be lost” which is directly translated from a Luganda word “kubula”, and Runyankole word “Kuburaa”, (translates to not being seen for a while), other words such as cousin brother/ cousin sister (cousin in standard English) are explained by the addition of brother/sister since in Uganda a cousin is considered a sibling.
7.1.10 Loan words

In addition to calqued expressions, is the tendency to borrow words from indigenous languages and use them interchangeably with the Standard English words or in situations when one feels that the Standard English word does not fully represent what is meant. Sentences such as “She *kwangulade* her boyfriend yesterday” or “the *lumbe* is next weekend” can be heard in everyday conversations among Ugandans (*Kwangulade* (noun *Kwangula*) translates to formally introducing one’s potential future partner to the parents, and the noun *Lumbe* translates to a funeral or memorial service).

However, Ugandans do not only use loan words from local languages only but, they also make use of Swahili words. It was noted earlier that Swahili plays a relatively small role in Ugandan society today, but there is no denying that Ugandans enjoy using loanwords from Swahili.

Ragnarsson states that:

> there are different common lexicon features in [East African English]. The most obvious is the use of Swahili loans, the semantic extension of [Standard English] lexemes and idiomatic flexibility. Some very old borrowings such as *askari* meaning ‘guard’, *bwana* meaning ‘mister’ and *safari* meaning ‘journey’ were incorporated into general English and can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary. Normally they have a more specific meaning in general English than in East Africa. Then there are specific words, borrowed and used only as they do not apply in other contexts and [Standard English] contains no specific words for them, like *ugali*, the maize dish […] (Ragnarsson 29).

In some cases, one will notice that an English word is made to sound Ugandan. A word such as *okukomplininga* (to complain) is frequently used when one is switching between languages.
Across different tribes in the Uganda, the mother tongue of an individual has an influence on their English accent. The Bantu tribes particularly share common features when it comes to the way in which they speak English. And since the Bantu tribes can be found in many parts of Africa, one might claim that the phonological features of Ugandan English are similar to those of the Bantu languages in Africa. Ragnarsson agrees with this claim by citing Melchers and Shaw who state that African Englishes have some common features (p.14), and refers to the substratum in Bantu languages, he states that:

[African English] normally has a smaller vowel set than inner-circle varieties and its speakers tend to speak with spelling pronunciations and non-reduction of vowels. Spelling pronunciations are normal and predominant. Word stress is often according to the rules of the mother tongue and figurative expressions as well (p.14).

There as well is persistence in the pronunciation features of East African English. And what could be viewed as an obstacle, “acceptable” pronunciation is not restricted to East African English. Ragnarsson tells us that, Standard British English pronunciation is complicated and not difficult to know from just reading the written word. He goes on to state that, errors that are made in the form of phonetic spellings do permit certain conclusions on the way words are pronounced even by reading texts, and that the variances are essential because of the difference of lexical meaning. He also gives us some word pairs that could be pronounced the same way: “ram and lamb, beat and bit, show and so, and claims that many speakers of [East African English] would not make a clear distinction in pronunciation between these pairs” (p.24).
7.1.12 Word Invention

Finally, is the invention of words. Most of the words invented have ambiguity and polysemy, but to a Ugandan the denotation is clear depending on the conversation.

In 2015, a BBC correspondent in Uganda wrote an article “The Ugandan town selling rolex for 40p”, the emphasis here is on the rolex being sold. Without reading the whole article one is likely to assume that Chris Smith referred to a watch. However, in Uganda a “rolex” is a kind of street food that has some delicacies in it then rolled into a perfectly good shape. The name “rolex” was most likely derived from its appearance. Another example of a word to consider is the word “to beep”, one might say “Brenda just beeped me”. The Oxford English Dictionary defines beeping as “a short, high-pitched sound emitted by electronic equipment or a vehicle horn” (p.148). The meaning of the word beep will differ between a Ugandan and a foreigner depending on the message intended by the speaker. When one says “Brenda just beeped me”, what is implied is that Brenda called me and hang up on purpose before I could answer my phone. The message meant by Brenda is “I do not have enough credit on my phone to call but I need to talk to you, so call me back. Basically, what is meant is that one does not have enough credit to call but wishes to talk to you, hence the beep on your phone.


8.1 The dynamic model of postcolonial Englishes.

One explanation that one could consider to account for the existence of Uglish is what Edgar Schneider called the “dynamic model of postcolonial Englishes”.

Kirkpatrick (2007) explains this theory by claiming that “postcolonial Englishes follow a fundamentally uniform developmental process” (p.32), and he goes on to identify the phases in the cycle.

The first phase is the “foundation phase”. This is when a nation that has not previously been using English starts to use it, and this is a result of native English speakers settling in such a country (Kirkpatrick 32).
He goes on to state that the second phase is “exonormative stabilisation”. At this phase, we see that the kind of English spoken is directly formed on the kind of English brought by the settlers. Kirkpatrick further states that “Schneider distinguishes between the variety spoken by the settlers – which he calls STL strand, and the variety spoken by the indigenous people – this he calls the IDG strand”. We are further told that what happens at this phase is “the slow movement of the STL variety towards the local variety and the beginning of the expansion of the IDG variety”, however, what happens in this phase does not necessarily lead to creolisation like the earlier stages (Kirkpatrick 32).

According to Kirkpatrick, Schneider regards the third phase as being dynamic and of great importance. This is the “nativisation phase”. This phase deals with “the establishment of a new identity with the coupling of the imported STL and local IDG varieties, and then results in the heaviest effects on the restructuring of the English language itself, although the restructuring occurs mostly at the level of vocabulary and grammar” (p.32).

The fourth phase, that of “endonormative stabilisation” sees the gradual acceptance of the new variety making it the local norm, and this local variety can be heard being used even in formal settings (Kirkpatrick 32).

The final phase is the “differentiation”. The “differentiation” phase sees the emergence of a new variety that mirrors the indigenous culture and identity. This phase also sees the development of a more native variety (Kirkpatrick 32).

Schneider’s theory can easily be applied to the English situation in Uganda. For instance, we earlier noted Roosblad’s (2015) interview with Sabiti (see p.5), where we are told that high_level politicians, business people and nearly everybody in Uganda uses Uglish. What this tells us is that “the endonormative stabilisation phase” has occurred and the new variety of English has been accepted and has become the local norm.

8.2 Universal Education

The emergence of a universal education system both at the primary and secondary level can also be argued to be a contributing factor to the existence of Uglish.
Universal Primary Education (UPE) was introduced in 1997 following an announcement by the President of Uganda, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, in which he declared to the country that each family would have the opportunity to send four children at the primary level to school for free (Policy Brief 10. 2006. P.2). This was later amended and the limit to the number of children per family was removed so that anybody who wanted primary education under UPE could have access to it.

Later in 2007, the government of Uganda introduced Universal Secondary Education (USE). This was largely due to the large numbers of children graduating from primary schools and not being able to further their education due to high school fee costs in secondary schools. This initiative to avail education to all yielded positive results to such an extent that:

the gross enrolment in primary schools increased from a total of 3.1 million in 1996 to 5.3 million in 1997, an increase of 73% in one year. This compares with an increase in gross primary school enrolment, in the decade preceding the introduction of UPE, of just 39% (from 2.2 million in 1986). By 2003, gross enrolment in primary schools had reached 7.6 million. The national gross primary school enrolment ratio in 2003 was 127%, indicating that children beyond standard primary-school age had re-joined the primary education cycle (Policy Brief 10 p.3).

This also meant that the number of teachers had to be increased to accommodate the expanding number of pupils and we see that “the number of primary school teachers increased rapidly, from 81,564 in 1996 to 145,587 in 2003, an increase of 78%” (Policy Brief 10 p.3).

This however was no grantees for quality education as UPE is linked to a decline in the quality of education. The pupil to teacher ratio improved slightly from “65:1 in 2000 to 54:1 in 2003 in government primary schools” (Policy Brief 10 p.3), but the improved ratio is still considerably uneven due to the high number of students. This coupled with the claim that many teachers lack appropriate teacher training indicates that despite the pupil – teacher ratio improving, pupils were still not getting quality education. We are told that “in 2003, there were 145,703 primary schoolteachers, of
whom 54,069 (37%) had no formal teacher training. An additional 7,960 had just a teaching certificate, obtained after training on completion of primary education (p.3). Other factors such as pupil - class room ratios also show a slight improvement “from about 110 pupils per classroom in 2000 to 94 pupils per classroom in 2003” (p.3). However, this also shows congestion in the classrooms (Policy Brief 10. 2006).

With the information provided above, it is reasonable to assume that at the end of seven-year period, we have pupils graduating from government owned primary schools, with low grades yet still move on to secondary schools under USE.

Pallegedara and Yamano (2011) claim that “USE is a vast improvement in terms of access to secondary schools; however, the quality of education provided to Ugandan students is still questionable” (p.3).

It is also worth noting that Uganda produces two kinds of graduates at the end of secondary education. There are those from the government schools which are accessible to all and those from privately owned schools which are only accessible to the rich and those on scholarships. Privately owned schools employ highly educated teachers as they are able to pay high salaries and in return parents expect their children to access first class education which usually means using the Queen’s English and nothing less.

8.3 Analogy

Isingoma (2014) provides us with another explanation accounting for the development of Uglish, and this he attributes to the adoption of analogy. Isingoma states that:

The adoption of a given feature in [Uglish] is sometimes attributable to the fact that there exists a similar feature in [Standard English], such that either an interpretive resemblance or a formal resemblance is established between the two features, or both (p.54).

He goes on to provide us with examples of use of verbs in Uglish to explain his claim. He states that “the Uglish verb to dirten (dirty/ make dirty) seems to have been derived on the basis of a convergence of formal and interpretive resemblances with a number of other [Standard English] causative verbs like to strengthen, involving the notion of
causing something to change from one state to a different state” (p.54). He further defends his claim by giving another example, the Uglish verb *cowardise* which translates to ‘to behave like a coward’. He points out that this verb existed in Standard English as *cowardice*, but not as an intransitive verb (p.54). He also states that “it used to be a transitive verb meaning ‘render cowardly’”, and that it is rarely used today. The other example of verb use he provides is *to ashame*, which is hardly used in Standard English while ‘to shame’ is used instead. He concludes by suggesting that the use of these verbs is most likely a case of analogy (p.54).

8.4 Illiteracy

Last but not least is the fact that like other countries, Uganda has a fairly high level of illiteracy. A Uganda literacy report released in 2014 indicated that literacy had increased from 70.0 in 2002 to 72.0 in 2014 (*National Population and Housing Census 2014*. p.37). Despite the increase, this still means that since English is used for official duties, the group that is un/under educated and unable to use Standard English will become creative and invent new words or directly translate from their mother tongues as a way of merging with the rest of the society.


In as much as this paper is trying to discuss Uglish and its usage, the full extent of how it differs from other African verities of English could be hard to envision. In order for me to get the reader to understand the creativity in the use of Uglish, I will provide examples of common terminologies used. However, the terms provided in this paper are not enough to understand or learn Uglish. In 2014, Bernard Sabiiti published the first Uglish dictionary that presents more detailed information.

9.1 Phrases used in communicating

All mobile phone operators in Uganda provide prepaid services. Upon finding oneself with insufficient funds to make a phone call, one will deliberately dial the recipient and
hang up after the phone rings once. When the recipient hears his/her phone ring once then stops, the recipient comprehends that he or she has been “beeped”. Alternatively, one can say, “I have been flashed”, because the momentary flash that appears on the phone screen. (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.2 Phrases used in educational settings

The term Bukenya (/Boo.kenya/) is a slang understood by every student in Uganda. The use of the word bukenya follows Mr. Matthew Bukenya who has served the Uganda National Examination Board as Executive Secretary for twenty years but retired in 2016. A Student can be heard saying “I am facing bukenya at the beginning of the week”. What is meant is “I am taking the national examinations at the beginning of the week.” Another common term in regard to examinations is the word “bullet”. When students have illegal access to an examination before the time of the sitting, then it is said that the students received bullets. There was a time in Uganda when heads of schools indulged in examination malpractice (getting bullets to their students), this is the period that the term bullet was coined. However, today the National Examination Board has taken steps in preventing the leakage of examinations by imprisoning anyone involved and closing schools that are found to be involved in examination malpractice (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.3 Phrases for edibles.

An article from Wikipedia provides us with some terms used on edibles (“Ugandan English”). We are told that “drinking a beverage is often described as taking a beverage”, and “food” refers to food rich in starch, and not chips (French fries), these are referred to as snacks. On the other hand, beef, mutton and sometimes pork are the only ones considered to be meat, while chicken or fish are referred to as snacks especially when served with French fries. However, when chicken and fish are made into stew, then they are considered to be meat stew. “Macrons mean spaghetti, which is generally fried in oil. Irish means (Irish) potatoes, while “potatoes” means sweet
potatoes. Pawpaw or popo means papaya. And Sukuma wiki means collard greens” (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.4 Monetary terms

The phrase “eating money” is used in Uganda to refer to the act of spending money extravagantly. However, this phrase is also used when referring to “embezzlement, corruption, and misappropriation of funds” (“Ugandan English”). Another term regarding money is the use of the word “demand”. The dictionary defines “demand” as “asking with proper authority; claim as a right”, however in Uganda the word demand is used to mean some owes you money. For instance, one can be heard saying; “I demand David two thousand shillings”; what is meant is “David owes me two thousand shillings” (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.5 Terms for value

“Somehow” is a very common term in Uglish that is used to present doubt, but can also mean slightly or occasionally. Upon being asked if one likes something, or if he /she enjoys it, one can simply answer somehow.

The word “fake” can be used to refer to “duplicated documentations or false testimonies”, for example “Brenda gave a fake testimony about her husband’s involvement in the accident”. It can also be used to express disapproval for another’s unbecoming behaviour. For instance, if one’s best friend withheld useful information from his/her friend, the latter could be heard saying “you are so fake!” (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.6 Religious conviction

A person whose spiritual life depends on the grace of God, especially one in the Pentecostal church movement is referred to as a “save-dee”, while “Individuals who would be referred to elsewhere as atheists and agnostics are referred to as pagans” (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).
9.7 Words used for compliments and greetings

In social gatherings, the use of the word “congratulations” is hardly used but instead its short form Congs is used. The phrase Well be back is more acceptable than what is meant “welcome back” in a social setting (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

The term lost is used in reference to one who has not been seen for a while. For instance, if I have not seen Sandra for some time, I might be heard saying; “Sandra is so lost”.

When in agreement, or acknowledging what has been said, the hearer will respond “ok please”. Ok please can also indicate a transition. For example, when one wishes to leave, he or she might interrupt a momentary silence by saying ok please, which is then followed by the announcement that they wish to leave (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

A Ugandan would choose to say “thank you please” instead of “thank you”. The use of “Please” is never used as a polite way of requesting or questioning. When Ugandans want, or need something, they will use a direct phrase “You give me”, without adding “please” because the politeness is implied in the tone of their voice (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

9.8 Terms for transport and mobility

The term “means” to a Ugandan refers to the means and forms of transportation. For example, “Henry could not visit me at the hospital because he had no means.” What this means is; “Henry could not come to see me at the hospital because he had no car or money for transport.”

A “taxi” is a van usually carrying 14 passengers. While what is known in the Western world as “a taxi” or “a cab” is referred to as “a special hire” in Uganda. On the other hand, what is commonly known as “a tow truck” in Uganda is referred to as “a breakdown”. Motorbikes and bicycles used for commercial transportation are referred to as “bodabodas”. According to an article on Wikipedia, we are told that:
the term [bodaboda] originated at the Uganda–Kenya border in Busia district, where a kilometre separates the downtown area from the border post on the Ugandan side. Travelers dropped off at the bus/taxi station by buses or taxis, or those coming to Uganda from the Kenyan side, were ferried over this distance by enterprising cyclists, who would attract business by calling “border, border” (Wikipedia. “Ugandan English”)

When people walk, they say they “foot”. For instance, “I footed all the way from town to my house” while giving someone “a push” refers to escorting a person to given destination or for half the journey, for instance “I am going to give Brenda a push to her office”. When someone is said to having “slept outside”, what is meant is that; that particular person spent the night somewhere other than their home (Wikipedia. “Ugandan English”).

9.9 Terms for witchcraft

From a Wikipedia article, we are told that “practitioners of witchcraft and local medicines (e.g. herbal medicines) are called Witchdoctors”. “A night dancer”, is someone haunted by evil spirits that affect them in a way that makes them to dance naked while they run about in causing them to run and dance naked late in the night. Often, this is accompanied by defecating and smearing human excrement on people's door posts, and parting in endocannibalism and cannibalism. The word night dancer is known and used by all Ugandans irrespective of their tribe. For instance, one might be heard saying “do you want to be a night dancer?” to a child who does not want to dress up (Wikipedia “Ugandan English”).

10. Attitudes towards English

On English language attitudes in Uganda, Nassenstein (2016) states that “Ugandans today have a more positive attitude towards the use of English because it is the official language and it grants them the opportunity to attain better jobs and good standing in society” (p.399)
He however goes on to say that among the older generation English has a more negative status that labels it “a Whiteman’s” language due to its association with its political history in the country (399).

Nassenstein further states that:

among the young generation of urban speakers, these negative attitudes have disappeared and English is seen as a neutral medium of inter-ethnic and inter-linguistic communication. The community of individuals that uses English as a daily medium of communication in non-official language domains comprises speakers who have attended school and are financially able to get a basic education of school. Others, thus illiterate parts of the rural population (in Ugandan English described as local people), are often excluded from English-speaking communities and thus deprived from vertical chances of social progress (p.399)

10.1 English represents learning

Many parents in Uganda view a child’s ability to speak English as evidence for proper learning. Tembe and Norton (2011) carried out a survey into people’s perceptions of English. The participants were from different social, cultural, and educational backgrounds and all tribes of Uganda and both sexes were represented. One of the findings indicated that several parents opted for their children to be taught in English claiming that their children’s ability to communicate in English was evidence that the children were learning properly. Another parent was noted saying; “If you get a child of P2 [primary 2] speaking English, it pleases you, or a P1[primary 1] child speaking English. Then you actually prove that the child is actually learning.” (p.10). This line of thinking is explained by the fact that teaching at all educational levels is down in the English language.
10.2 English is the language of teaching and learning

Many parents in the urban regions generally agree to the use of the English language as a language of teaching and learning in schools. This of course has a lot to do with the fact that urban areas are populated by a large range of tribes making it impossible to choose a single indigenous language to serve as a language of instruction to all. Because of this, parents tend to agree on the use of English in schools as their children are exposed to their mother tongues at home. The issue of language multiplicity is not only a challenge at school but also in some homes as one parent is quoted saying:

We speak – both of us speak Ateso. I am from Soroti and my husband is from Tororo. However, we moved to Kenya and the children picked up Kiswahili from the house help we had, so they forgot the mother tongue. After three years, we came back to Uganda, they again picked up Dhopadhola from the neighbours. So, right now they speak English, Kiswahili, Dhopadhola and a little of the mother tongue, that is Ateso (Tembe and Norton 12).

10.3 English is a necessity for a successful future

Many Ugandans believe that for one to have a chance at a successful future, he or she should have a good command of the English language. English is not only viewed as a world lingua franca but also an official language to Uganda, and because of this the concept, success cannot be viewed without its attachment to English. Today in Uganda, upward mobility is thought to be impossible without a fair command of English. This conclusion is drawn from the response given by parents who participated in a quantitative study they carried out in twelve districts in Uganda. The question asked was “what languages would parents want their children to learn”. The findings indicted that 96.8% of the 591 respondents wanted their children to learn both their mother tongue and English. (Cuyckens 357). Tembe and Norton (2011) also state that many parents believe that English provides their children greater prospects for the future. One parent is quoted saying; “Children should learn a language which helps them in the future. Not put them in brackets of second community” (p.12).
10.4 English is sophisticated and superior

According to Schmied (2004), one of the stereotyped notions on English among East Africans is that English is sophisticated and superior. He however notes that this notion has little effect on attitudes towards practical language use and usage. He goes on to say that language is mainly viewed in extremely practical terms and that “English is the international language of science and technology and world-wide communication” (East African English Phonology 156).

Looking at Tembe and Norton’s study, we are told that participants in the study also argued that there is no need of persisting on using indigenous languages since using them provided no place in globalization especially when it comes to technology. Parents went on to say that, English which is a global language should be their children’s first language if they are to move at the pace the world is moving at. They further claimed that, it was their duty as parents to teach their children their mother tongues and that it should be done in the confines of their homes. Furthermore, these participants viewed English as a lingua franca within Uganda due to the language diversity in the country. (Tembe and Norton 12).

10.5 English is a language of repression

Despite the large positive view on English, there exists a slight colonial stigma of English among some Ugandans as Nassenstein (2016) states it is:

a non-African language of the elites that is associated with a repressive colonial system and excludes the masses from national discourse, [which] has led to recurring debates about a nationwide used language of trans-ethnic and trans-social integration (p.398).

This older generation in Uganda feels that they cannot identity with the English language. They project their inefficiency to communicate in English to repression brought to the country by the White_Man.
11. Why is English a lingua franca in Uganda

11.1 English is a Global Language

Different scholars argue that English is the single most used language in global communication. The English language has been perceived to be the pivot of global unity, especially in education, sports, religion, to mention but a few. And because of this view, Ugandans realize that having a native language as a lingua franca is not in the best interest of the country, hence the use of English.

In his article “Across cultures, English is the word”, Mydans (2007) tells us that English has become the second language of many people, to the extent that many parts of the world consider knowing English as being educated. He observes that, in the interconnected world the role English plays cannot be underestimated ranging from trade, education, religion and in every aspect of life. Its importance is pivotal in the globalization of different economies. He further states that, “English started with the dominance of two successive English-speaking empires, British and American, and continues today with the new virtual empire of the internet”. Additionally, Crystal (2003) predicts that by 2050 the proportion of the world’s population who speak English as an L1 will decline to less than 5 percent, a ratio much less than the 1950 estimate of an 8 percent decline. (p.69), and he goes on to say that, politically, English is an official or working language of most international political gatherings throughout the world (Crystal, 2003).

In his article “Global business speaks English” (2012), Nesley gives an economic reflection of English referring to it as “the global language of business”. The review also observes that “as corporations expand the scope of operations to various countries, geographically dispersed employees have to work together to meet common goals”.

The influence of English in developing countries is said to be so important for any country to compete in a global market place. Negash (2011) states that:
as developing countries seek to compete in the global marketplace, English is the language in which most negotiation and marketing schemes must take place (p.8).

English is also the primary language of academia, as many academic publications are written in English. Crystal (1999) asserts that:

English is the medium of a great deal of the world’s knowledge, especially in such areas as science and technology. And access to knowledge is the business of education. When we investigate why so many nations have in recent years made English an official language or chose it as their chief foreign language in schools, one of the important reasons is always educational (World English: Past, Present, Future. p.6).

The above scholarly presentation also agrees with Coleman (2010) in his writing for The British Council, where he links the use of English to the development of economies. He argues that the economies that survive on services will need efficiency in English skills (p.7). It is also noted that Uganda’s postcolonial elites share the colonial view of national political and economic unity and integration, and they continue to support English as the country’s official and national language despite its elitism and undemocratic nature as many Ugandans have low proficiency in English (Otiso 2006. p. 5)

11.2 English is Rising in Africa

Negash (2011) indicates that about twenty African nations in Sub-Saharan Africa use English exclusively as their official language, while Kenya and South Africa use English as official language alongside other official languages, Swahili for Kenya and Dutch, Afrikaan, Zulu and others for South Africa (p.4). He also states that some Lusophone and Francophone countries, English holds a high status (p.4). Negash concludes his research by asserting that:
With good language planning, English is going to be the major international language for some time to come, which will help Africa and Africans to get connected within and beyond their national and regional boundaries (p.19).

**11.3 English is a Language of Commerce**

Negash (2011) claims that:

countries seeking economic development often turn to English as a means to engage foreign markets. In order to attract foreign investments, develop international trade opportunities and create tourism campaigns, countries in Africa often see English as an essential tool (p.7).

He further states that for most African economies that are looking forward to boosting their commodity for export, the leader’s ability to negotiate, have good marketing skills, plus a good command of English grantees the security of millions of farmers in Africa (p.7).

Many nations anticipate that the projected growth in international tourism in the next ten years will come with its associated advantages all mirrored towards proficiency of English in such nations since they will potentially experience worthwhile development opportunities.

The Director of Policy Planning at the Rwandan Ministry of Education was quoted saying:

... to make Rwanda to be equal... English is now a world language, especially in trade and commerce. Rwanda is trying to attract foreign investors — most of these people are speaking English (McGreal, 2009).

Hasselriis (2010) claims that Rwandans are working hard to show that they are competitive in an emerging African market which has left a visible impact. He states that:
impressive growth has occurred in both the service sector, and in the amount of foreign investments, which the government says is reflected in the high levels of activity in the construction sector.

Even though this growth however cannot be credited directly to the governments’ interest in English language programs, it is clear that government values such as; policies, have a key component in their economic development strategies. Kirkpatrick (2016) states that:

English is the lingua franca of the world, beneficial for global trade and commerce, business and education opportunities, [and he further asserts that] many researchers see an active link between English and the economic developments for nations and individuals (p.4).

Kirkpatrick goes on to cite an action research study by Norton and Ahimbisibwe (2013) where a group of young women from one of the villages in Uganda attribute their access to better health care and awareness to the embodiment of the English language in information technology (Kirkpatrick 4).

According to McGreal (2009),

While the English language is valued by African countries as serving global economic interests, it also may serve economic and peace relations within the continent. English may be viewed as a tool that crosses regional, cultural and linguistic barriers. Countries that seek to develop trade relations amongst their neighbours may see English as a useful negotiation mechanism that cuts through regional language barriers.

He claims that Rwanda’s move towards English is purposeful for the strengthening trade ties to the neighbouring East African nations which include Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

In Burundi, the neighbouring country to Rwanda, Nizonkiza (2006) states that:
The search for business partners beyond the boundaries of Burundi […] compelled Burundian businessmen to learn English. In addition to individual businessmen, the government, too, had to seek ways to cope with the new challenges posed by trends in trade. The same situation was observed in Rwanda in 1995. As the Rwandan minister of education, Murigande, noted in an interview with *Lingua Internazionale* (2004), the government was compelled by tendencies on the international market to move substantially towards English, as far back as 1995 […]

### 11.4 English a language of unity.

In different scholarly arguments, English is regarded as a language of unity when looked at in cultural perspective. Considering Uganda’s multilingual status, English has served to curb the interethnic reveries within the country. And in Rwanda, Izabela (2012) states that:

The decision to distance Rwanda from the French language also has implications for the country’s post-genocide identity project. It allows for a break from colonial past and ties to Belgium and France, factors which the Rwandan government specifies as key in the development of genocidal ideology […] [and hopes] to eliminate afflictions based on ethnicity and create a single national identity (p.5).

English also gave South Sudan a chance to unite as one nation after it gained independence from Sudan as the news director of South Sudan Radio was quoted saying “With English, we can become one nation. We can iron out our tribal differences and communicate with the rest of the world” (Goldsmith, 2011).

Despite the fact that English still has some lingering attachment to the colonial times, Ugandans agree that its use by governing bodies is in the best interest of the country as it avoids conflicts and hierarchy tendencies based on ethnic backgrounds.
11.5 English is suitable for educational purposes

Currently English is an official language in 19 African nations. For these nations to use English as a language of instruction in educational settings, they would have to prepare learning materials in about 800 languages. This gives English an upper hand in terms of being used as a language for government, commerce, and education in Africa. Furthermore, the budgets covering the production of learning materials in native tongues at all educational levels is said to be “cost-prohibitive, even when theoretically possible” (Plonski 2010 p.3)

Not only do we have to consider the financial implications of using local languages for educational purposes, there is also evidence in favour of English use among African people. The World Bank (2002) reports that Africans favour Western-language instruction. Teaching or using native languages for educational purposes is considered to be second class but success in government and business is linked to the use of European languages especially for higher institutions of learning. For example, in 1994 in Mali, “there was considerable resistance to [instituting] mother tongue instruction among rural people, who saw it as a second-rate education keeping them from better-paying jobs and higher education” (The World Bank, 2002, p. 32).

Plonski (2013) quotes Crystal (2004) as arguing that “languages have always been utilitarian by their very nature and that instead of thinking in terms of official languages, it would be better to embrace a concept of languages that are “official for a particular purpose” (p. 16). With this view, the circumstance in African where there exists a language used at home, another one used in schools and possible another for communication within the government should not be shocking.

Crystal does however express a concerning issue of “language death” that is arising around the world and the loss of culture. He notes that throughout history, language has changed, evolved, and borrowed from one another and that human languages cannot be controlled. He further claims that, “the more a language becomes a national, then an international, then a global language, the more it ceases to be in the ownership of its originators”. He goes on to predicate that “the growth of an English family of languages mixed with other local languages will probably be the main linguistic trend of the 21st century” (Plonski p.16-17)
Focusing on Africa, Hurskainen (2002) states that due to Africa’s flexibility in availing education in both English and the native languages, the language situation is positive. This can be seen as a contributing factor to the ever-increasing numbers of foreign students that attend universities in Uganda. A report in 2012 referred to Uganda as “A pioneer in African higher education” and indicated that in 2006 the number of foreign students in the higher education sector was 12,930 (9.4%), and by 2010 this had increased to more than 16,000 students. Most foreign students were from Kenya; others came from Rwanda, Tanzania, Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Uganda: Moving beyond Price to Recruit International Students 2012).

Plonski quotes Negash (2011) as arguing that “the power of English is not as much imperialistic, as it is empowering, an opportunity to join the global marketplace and to communicate ideas and cultures across boundaries” (p.17). It is reasonable to assume that because English has been adopted by many nations to create a lingual community across borders, it is no longer owned by its native speakers. English can now be seen as empowering and allows sharing of information between cultures.

11.6 Conclusion

As noted earlier, over 26 African nations have embraced the use of English as the official language. Most African leaders have continued to embrace the English language in their wake to achieve globalization of trade and education and they view English as a positive development for their growing economies. However, a few leaders view English as a tragic loss of cultural wealth, but this can be attributed to an “imperfect educational outcome”.

The use and demand for English in Uganda and Africa has gained steady momentum over the centuries. Nations in Africa will maintain the encouragement for the attainment of English through their education curriculum since it will provide an overall strategy for socio-economic development, and the participation in the millennium development goals will always find English a necessity for strategic development. Because of the advantages attached to the use of English, it will continue to be of great impact and its prevalence in Africa seen as an uprising event.
12. Conclusion

It could be argued that people belonging to same cultural unit tend to share the same phonological expression, which might account for how the different tribes that make up the Ugandan cultural unit are all responsible for the exitance of the verity of English spoken in Uganda.

Most of the research that has been done on the indigenous languages of Uganda and their influence on English has been done on the Luganda language. Earlier in this paper (p. 13 and 14), I discus how Luganda has had an influence on the verity of English spoken in Uganda. Likewise, Schmied (2004) also argues that:

mother tongue and other East African languages have contributed to the verities of English in East Africa as the features and strategies from first language acquisition are transferred usually causing interference on the Standard English learning process (East African English Phonology 157).

In comparison to other creoles and pidgins such as Nigerian pidgin, Uglish has not had a worldwide recognition as a verity of English. however, a few scholars such as Nico Nassenstien in his book A Preliminary Description of Ugandan English, Isingoma Bebwa in Lexical and Grammatical Features of Ugandan English, and Josef Schmied’s East African English Phonology make mention of Ugandan English. Bernard Sabiiti is not to be forgotten as he tries to introduce Uglish to the world in his dictionary Uglish: A Dictionary of Ugandan English. The attention this verity of English has gotten from different scholars over the centuries confirms that Uglish is another verity of English that deserves recognition.

At the beginning of my research into the verity of English spoken in Uganda, I had the notion that Ugandan English was bad English or simply “broken English”, a kind of English only spoken by the illiterate, and that Standard English was a privilege for the upper class. However, I now understand that Uglish like other languages is complex, has an innovative system and it would be wrong to say or assume that one language is better than another based on its vocabulary, inflectional system, or other inherent features.
Uglish has had a great impact on the people of Uganda to the extent that high level politicians and many successful people in Uganda are unable to communicate in Standard English but have their entire vocabulary is in Uglish. Sabiiti (2014) claims that nearly everybody in Uganda uses Uglish. This is seen to be true especially during election periods when the government needs to address the general public. In discussing Luganda as a possible lingua franca (see p.10), I listed a few of the slogans that are used in National politics in Uganda. It is important to note that these slogans are used in the local languages, and this is one of the times we experience code switching. Uglish has also been accredited for its influence on social life. This is mostly due to the multilingual status of Uganda, where a given group of individuals are unable to have a conversation in their indigenous languages but instead resort to the use of English as a uniting agent, however, Standard English cannot serve purposes social life. Here Uglish becomes a language of fun and one that creates oneness among its users.

However, one might ask, should Uglish be celebrated? To answer this question, I will refer to what has already been discussed in this paper. It has been noted that English is the official language used in Uganda. This implies that for educational purposes, it is in the student’s best interest to speak and write Standard English. Examinations are carried out in English and inability to express oneself in Standard English automatically leads to failure.

The system of Universal Education has been claimed to be partially responsible of the increase or formation of Uglish, as the numbers of student intake has raisin, but in turn the quality of education has dropped since the focus is on getting students from one class to the next regardless of their class performance. It has also been noted that the number of teachers also increased with the increased number of students, but it is noted that some of them are under qualified, and this may be due to the fact that they are products of the same system.

The education system should focus on mainstreaming Standard English. Uglish has also been known to be used in formal settings. If the speaker is able to express himself in both Uglish and Standard English, then we can argue that they have competence in both languages. But the implications of not being competent in Standard English might affect one’s development personally or otherwise. The use of Uglish in formal settings might suggest one’s inability to think or have original thoughts.
As people in Uganda continue to use Uglish in different settings, I am of the view that Ugandans should be encouraged to equip themselves with language for all purposes. Every Ugandan should be able to enjoy Uglish because it is part of their identity, and they should also be able to express themselves in Standard English if they are to have a chance to participate in the global movement. English is a world lingua franca and as such Ugandans should have a good command of the English language alongside their indigenous languages.
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