Structural Nativization of English in Uganda: Evidence from Number Agreement and Interrogatives among Acholi Speakers of English

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Abstract

The current study unveils two features of structural nativization of English in Uganda involving L1 speakers of Acholi, elicited by number agreement and interrogatives. Sixty acrolectal Acholi speakers of English took part in recorded semi-structured interviews and a written elicitation test comprising fifteen multiple-choice questions. Fourteen-thousand words were obtained from the interviews and these were supplemented with 15,000 words obtained from the ICE-Uganda, thereby making a 29,000-word corpus. Text files for the corpus and scores from the elicitation test were generated and analyzed. Our findings indicate, among others, that there is evidence of the use of the suffix "-s" (and its allomorphs) on verbs with plural subjects and no suffix with singular subjects among Acholi speakers of English, while there is also a tendency of leaving the Wh-phrase in situ in all types of interrogatives. In both cases, the role of Acholi as a substrate language can be seen, while analogical leveling also favors such peculiarities, given that superstrate English has, for example, echo questions, where no movement occurs. This study thus provides more evidence of the structural nativization of English in

Uganda, thereby augmenting discourse on the development of Ugandan English as a second language variety of English.

Keywords*:* Ugandan English, second language variety, substrate influence, analogical leveling

In keeping with Kachru's (1985) taxonomy, the second language (L2) English variety spoken in Uganda belongs to outer circle varieties. English in Uganda has had contact with three main language subphyla (involving over 40 indigenous languages), namely, Bantu (with 64. 8% speakers of the entire population), for example, Luganda; Nilotic (28.2%), for example, Acholi, and Central Sudanic (6.8%), for example, Lugbarati (Isingoma & Meierkord, 2019). According to Eberhard et al. (2021), there are around 1,500,000 native speakers of Acholi in Uganda, which number is significant considering the numbers of different ethnic groups in the country. In addition to these indigenous languages, there is one endogenous language (namely Kiswahili) and one exogenous language (namely English), which is spoken as a nativized variety and serves as a lingua franca, since Uganda does not have a national language that serves that purpose (Isingoma, 2016). According to Isingoma (2016), the functionality arising from this linguistic ecology presents a triglossic situation, with English being an exoglossic (and functionally the mainly used) official language, while Kiswahili is an endoglossic official language and the more than 40 indigenous languages are mainly used for intraethnic communication. These languages affect each other at varying degrees, with more effects seen reciprocally between English and indigenous languages, given the status of English in the country.

Meierkord (2016) and Adokorach and Isingoma (2020), for example, have demonstrated the fact that the various ethnic groups in Uganda, each with a distinct language, sometimes display differences

in how English is used as an L2, even though there are also significant aspects of homogeneity. For that matter, Meierkord (2016) has argued that it is possible to talk about "Luganda English", "Ateso English", "Acholi English", etc. All these intranational varieties of English contribute to the nativization of English in Uganda (Isingoma & Meierkord, 2019) in line with Schneider's (2007) model on the development of postcolonial Englishes.

Number agreement and interrogatives provide some evidence of the structural nativization of English in Uganda, owing to substrate influence and analogical leveling (and possibly other L2 acquisition processes). In standard first language English (henceforth L1 English), Wh-phrases obligatorily move to the specifier of the complementizer phrase (Spec-CP, that is, the Wh-movement landing site) in overt syntax; this differs from other languages, like Chinese, which do not move their Wh-phrases (question words) to Spec-CP (Li & Liu, 2016). With reference to agreement, Ryding (2005) states that the term refers to feature compatibility between words in a phrase or a clause. As English is a second language in Uganda, where indigenous languages have different patterns of agreement and interrogatives, it is important to find out what emerges from such contact phenomena and how this contributes to the development of distinct varietal features of English in Uganda. This study therefore sets out to explore how the Acholi language substratally contributes to the structural nativization of English in Uganda (as an L2) besides the role of analogical leveling in this respect, using evidence from two grammatical aspects: (a) number agreement (specifically subject-verb agreement and an aspect of pronoun-antecedent agreement), and (b) order of interrogatives.

Number Agreement and Interrogatives in L1 English

In L1 English, agreement is relatively limited; it occurs between the subject and a present tense verb, so that, for instance, with a third

person singular subject, the verb must have the "-s" suffix ending. Thus, "John plays a lot" is grammatical, but "*John play a lot" is ungrammatical, because the verb does not agree with the subject in number.

L1 English also has a special form of subject-verb agreement known as notional concord. This occurs with abstract nouns, where there is freedom to use either a singular or a plural verb, depending on whether the speaker wants to emphasize a single notion or two (for example: "Your fairness and impartiality *has* been much appreciated" vs. "Your fairness and impartiality *have* been much appreciated"). Both cases are considered grammatical in terms of their agreement depending on the meaning perceived by the speaker. If the speaker feels that "fairness and impartiality" is one concept, then the first sentence is correct but if he/she feels that "fairness and impartiality" are two different entities, then the second sentence is correct (Hasselgård et al., 2012; Quirk et al., 1985).

The English language also has a tendency of relying on the noun that is closer to the verb to determine whether the verb is singular or plural. This is referred to as the principle of proximity or attraction (Hasselgård et al., 2012). This involves correlative conjunctions such as "neither...nor", "either...or" (for example, "neither the students nor the teacher *understands* the subject" vs. "neither the teacher nor the students *understand* the subject."). It is impossible for the verb to agree with both parts of the subject; therefore, it has been said that the verb should agree with the element nearer to it (Hasselgård et al., 2012). That is why both examples above are correct.

Concord between personal pronouns and their antecedents requires the former to agree in number, person, and gender (where applicable) with their antecedents (Quirk et al., 1985). For example, in a sentence such as "Monica is here", the pronoun "she" will be

used to refer to "Monica", since the pronoun is singular, feminine and it is appropriate for a human referent, congruently with the word "Monica". The pronoun "it", by contrast, will be illicit here since it cannot be used with a human referent, despite the fact that it is singular.

As far as interrogatives are concerned, Li & Liu (2016) observe that L1 English obligatorily moves the Wh-phrase to Spec-CP in overt syntax. The English language also has a type of interrogatives called 'echo questions'. As can be seen in (1), the question words remain in situ. Such questions may express mild surprise or disbelief, and ask for confirmation rather than information (Quirk et al., 1985).

(1) a**.** I saw an elephant**.**

b**.** You saw what?

L1 English also has another form of interrogatives called declarative questions, which behave like polar questions (Quirk et al., 1985; Hasselgård et al., 2012). They have a rising intonation but have the form of a declarative sentence and are informal in nature. There are no Wh-words used and different from Wh-questions, there is no inversion of the verb, which means there is no movement. Examples include "You can dance?", "He wants something to eat?"

Number Agreement and Interrogatives in L2 English

In L2 English, Basnet (2017) found out that Nepali speakers of English exhibit difficulties in subject-verb agreement. Her results show that "the mean score of the judgement for ungrammatical agreement is significantly lower than grammatical agreement" (p. 58). The results also indicate that, in her acceptability test, the participants accepted several deviant sentences, as in the following (2), which in L1 English are judged ungrammatical:

(2) a**. ***The brown dog play with the yellow football**.**

b**. ***The sisters walks in the forest**. (**Basnet, 2017, p**.** 60**)**

Studies of this kind have been conducted among Norwegians (Jensen et al., 2020) and Spaniards (Morales, 2014) with results generally indicating participants (both beginners and advanced) showing difficulties in tackling subject-verb agreement in L2 English, albeit with variability between such speaker groups.

From a World Englishes perspective, Isingoma (2021) hints at the phenomenon of agreement while investigating grassroots English (namely basilectal or learner English used by less educated people) in Uganda, although he also makes mention of acrolectal speakers of English. He notes that sentences with incongruent agreement patterns from an exonormative perspective (similar to those in (2)) were observed in the discourse of L1 Acholi speakers. He provides examples in (3). While (3a) was from grassroots speakers, (3b) was from acrolectal speakers, which means the level of proficiency was tangential for this occurrence:

(3) a**.** Many guys has left**.**

b**.** The verbs agrees with the subjects**.**

What is clear about Isingoma's (2021) observation is that while he mentions acrolectal speakers, his data in this respect was solely based on written discourse, gleaned from his students' tests and did not include aspects such as notional concord or the principle of proximity. Crucially, this was not the focus of his study. There is thus a need to strengthen his observations by including spoken discourse, widening the scope, and augmenting the discussion in order to paint a more comprehensive picture of this linguistic behavior.

With reference to interrogatives, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008) note that in Indian English, Wh-words are moved to the left periphery just as is the case in L1 English. In addition, this involves both standard and colloquial Indian English as well as both direct and indirect embedded clauses. On the other hand, in Cameroon English, it has been reported that Wh- movement does not occur. Questions are generated at the base, that is, in situ (Mbangwana, 2004). For example, Mbangwana (2004, p. 903) provides the following interrogative in Cameroon English (4):

(4) You are going where?
'Where are you going?'

As far as Ugandan English is concerned, Ssempuuma (2013) states in the Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English survey that feature F228, which has this peculiar property, exists, but is extremely rare. There is thus a need to prove this stance based on solid empirical evidence, as pursued in this study.

The Role of Transfer and Analogical Leveling in L2 Englishes

Indigenous languages furnish World Englishes with substrate features (e.g. loanwords, concepts for lexical calques, distinctive structural features). Concomitantly, World Englishes are furnished with superstrate features from L1 English (e.g. lexical items for semantic extension, lexification of calques, shared core lexicon and grammatical structures), thereby leading to a feature pool in the sense of Mufwene (2001). With reference to transfer from substrate languages, Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, p. 164) observe that this also involves, to some extent, the superstrate language, which will usually have an already existing grammatical structure which allows for "overgeneralization" (see also Andersen, 1983, p. 182; Bolton, 2018).

While the transferred form may start as a feature of learner English, it may become entrenched and eventually become an institutionalized norm (see also Percillier, 2016).

Schmied (2004) shows that the distinctive features of English in East Africa, where Uganda is found, emerge because of analogical leveling. According to P. J. Blevins and Blevins (2009), analogy refers to regularization. While it is common in morphology (for example, accounting for the emergence of regular "cleaved" by analogy to "cleaned" as opposed to irregular "clove"), it also extends to syntax as well as semantics (P. J. Blevins & Blevins, 2009; Isingoma, 2018). Schmied (2004) shows that the use of the collocation "to request for" and "to demand for" in East African English is indeed a result of analogy due to the use of the preposition "for" after the nouns "request" and "demand". Similarly, Mukherjee and Hoffman (2006) argue that the extension of new verbs (for example, "advise", "confer") to ditransitive constructions in Indian English is premised on analogy. Of course, analogy, as already shown above in relation to the emergence of "cleaved", is also ubiquitous in L1 English grammar (see Isingoma, 2018; Mukherjee & Hoffman, 2006).

Perspectives such as transfer and analogical leveling are domains that essentially characterize the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), but they also underlie World Englishes, such as Ugandan English, as most of these varieties are L2 Englishes (cf. Mesthrie, 2017). However, as has been observed by Percillier (2016) and Mesthrie (2017), SLA usually has a psycholinguistic emphasis. Specifically, how individuals progress in the acquisition of L2 with the main aim of attaining native-like competence. The World Englishes paradigm, on the other hand, is sociolinguistically oriented with a focus on describing trajectories, uses, and distinctive properties of postcolonial Englishes, which are seen as socially and

functionally meaningful in territories where they are spoken. Delineations in the current study lend themselves to this paradigm.

An Overview of Number Agreement and Interrogatives in Acholi

What will interest us here is third person agreement, since this is where there is an interesting dichotomy to examine. Third person subject-verb agreement in Acholi manifests itself by means of prefixation on the verb (see Kitching, 1932), with only the third person plural having a marker, as shown in (5):

(5) a. Lacoo tedo dek
Man 3SG.cook.PRES food
'The man cooks food.'

b. Coo gi-tedo dek
Men 3PL-cook.PRES food
'The men cook food.'

Observably, while the third person plural (5b) has the agreement marker "gi-", prefixed on the verb (tedo "cook"), the third person singular has no marker. However, it is also possible to omit the prefix in (5b), without rendering the sentence ungrammatical. Note that an obligatory third person singular marker (o-) appears when the verb is in the past tense. Crucially, this marker appears in order to encode the past tense. This can be confirmed by the fact that, in the plural form, the plural prefix "gi-" changes to "gu-" as a result of the combination of "gi-" with "o-" (the past tense marker). Namely, the vowel segment in "gi-" is assimilated in terms of position of the tongue elevation so that it becomes like the segment /o/ in this respect, which is a back sound, while maintaining its tongue elevation feature of a high vowel. As a result, /i/ turns into /u/, which

we see in "gu-". Note that while "gi-" in (5b) can be left out, "gu-" cannot, due to the tense element embedded in it.

Third person pronoun-antecedent agreement more or less follows the patterns of third person subject-verb agreement, in that there is a null element when the antecedent is a singular non-human referent, while if the antecedent is plural, the pronoun "gi" (here a free morpheme) is optionally used, as in the B part of (6):

(6) a. Muranga egini ber?
Beans these good
'Are these beans good?'

b. Eyo **(**gi**)** ber**.**
Yes (they) good
'Yes, they are good.'

Thus, in essence, third person subject-verb agreement and third person pronoun-antecedent agreement (involving non-human referents for the latter) can only be overtly marked for the plural form, although usually optionally, save when the subject verb-agreement involves a construction in the past tense.

With reference to interrogatives, we notice that both polar and the equivalents of Wh-questions in Acholi are realized without any syntactic properties that distinguish them from declarative sentences (see Bavin, 1982). However, the intonation in Acholi interrogatives differs from that of declaratives, in that interrogatives have a rising intonation at the end of the sentence. This means, generally, there is no movement of the equivalent of the Wh-phrases to Spec-CP, as is the case in Chinese (see Li & Liu, 2016). An example of the equivalent of a Wh-interrogative in Acholi is given in (7):

(7)	Coo	gi-tedo	ngo?
	Men	3PL-cook	what
	'What do the men cook?'		

As shown in the interlinear gloss, the equivalent of the wh-word remains in situ. However, it is possible to move "ngo" (what) to Spec-CP if the speaker would like to express, for example, surprise. This is pragmatically conditioned and the question word changes from "ngo" to "ngoma" to express the added emphasis. Hence, in Acholi, the usual order of interrogatives is that the question word remains in situ.

As we have seen already, the two grammatical aspects in Acholi do not behave in the same way as what we have seen in relation to L1 English. While Acholi requires, for example, an agreement marker for third person plural (though optionally), English requires an obligatory agreement marker on the third person singular. Likewise, while usually English requires Wh-phrases to move to Spec-CP, Acholi, on the other hand, usually requires its question words to remain in situ. In situations of language contact between the two linguistic systems, we expect substrate influence and other L2 acquisition processes such as analogical leveling to shape the way L2 speakers of English behave in relation to the two grammatical aspects.

Methods

Participants

All the participants in the study were acrolectal speakers of English (that is, highly proficient), having completed at least 13 years of English education in line with the ICE requirements (Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996), which also means they were all adults. For purposes of uniformity with the ICE-Uganda data (see https://www.ruhr-unit-

bochum.de/engling/researchUG2.html), we modelled the categories of participants in terms of occupation on the same criteria used for the collection of ICE-Uganda, namely students, professionals, and the business community. However, our aim was to document features that cut across these speaker groups. Sixty respondents participated in semi-structured interviews and an elicitation test.

Data Collection and Preparation

We used semi-structured interviews, an elicitation test, and data from the ICE-Uganda. The semi-structured interviews enabled us to record 14,000 words. Since we have been participating in the collection of data for the compilation of ICE-Uganda, we also used part of the raw data of the spoken component at our disposal, where we could easily identify L1 speakers of Acholi. This gave us 15,000 words. Hence, from the two datasets, we had 29,000 words (that is, 14,000 from the semi-structured interviews plus the 15,000 from the raw data of the spoken component of ICE-Uganda). Thus, our corpus had 29,000 words.

The corpus data from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed and saved as text files as was the raw data of the ICE-Uganda. Then, our entire corpus was searched using the concordancing software "AntConc" (Anthony, 2014). It is used for analyzing electronic texts (corpus linguistics) in order to find patterns in language.

Due to the sparseness of data in the corpus, we supplemented our corpus data with an elicitation test in order to capture instances of aspects of agreement especially notional concord and concord by proximity, which were absent in the corpus. The test had 15 multiple-choice questions, which were validated by three local linguistics experts, who rated them positively in keeping with British English exonormative standards. We used a three-option multiple choice format following, for example, Terrant and Ware (2010) and Dehnad

et al. (2014), who have shown, among others, that the three-option format allows for the inclusion of more functioning distractors and has higher discriminating effects. The test was administered in a face-to-face environment, with respondents writing their answers on paper. It was supervised in the sense that no consultations were permitted. We maintained the same order for both the sequence of test items and answers for all the participants. In terms of time, it was open-ended.

Analysis

The text files of the corpus were sorted and analyzed manually. The items searched were in relation to number agreement and interrogatives. As for the elicitation test, the participants were assigned one score for each correct answer. We then interpreted the field-based meanings of the collected data, and made them verbal. We edited the data into frequency counts, frequency tables, line graphs, and bar graphs. We used the following standard formula employed in corpus linguistics (Esimaje et al., 2019) to compute normalized frequencies of the corpus data: $N = n\,(10^6)/\mathrm{C}$, where N is the normalized frequency; n is the observed frequency and C is the corpus size (see *The Grammar Lab*).

In addition, in order to highlight structural representations in relation to the grammatical phenomena under consideration in the study, we used aspects of Chomsky's (1986) theory of Universal Grammar (see also, for example, White, 2003). The theory aims at stating and defining properties of grammars of all human languages, as well as explaining why grammars have the properties they have. Two tenets underlie the theory: principles and parameters. Principles are common to all languages while parameters are language-specific. In the next section, tree structures showing parametric variation between Acholi and L1 English are drawn in order to visualize how

differences between the two languages may influence the way Acholi speakers of English try to align English grammatical structures with those of Acholi in their L2 English discourse.

Results and Discussion

Number Agreement

From the naturally occurring data in the study, that is the corpus data, the following are examples of deviations regarding number agreement (8):

(8) a**. […]** and he or she feel like you are not welcoming, they go away**.**

b**.** They does not feel comfortable in his present**.**

c**. […]** and these clothes was to prove that he is now richer than our father**.**

d**.** The people of Uganda has a right to speak out their minds**.**

e**.** The writers uses style**.**

f**. […]**; I don't trust other people's answers, it may be wrong**.**

g**.** They could even buy those ones and keep it**.**

In total, there were 11 deviations for 29,000 words. When we subject the occurrences to a normalized frequency, we get the following results:

Table 1

Attestation of Number Agreement Peculiarities in the Entire Corpus Data

Grammatical aspect	Attestation/Normalized Frequency (1 million words)
Agreement peculiarities	11 (379.31)

The above means the normalized frequency of deviations is 379.31 per one million words. The peculiarities in question involve subject-verb agreement for third person singular (for example, [8a]) or plural (for example, [8b]) and agreement of pronouns with their antecedents (for example, [8f]). Specifically, the subject in (8a) is singular and therefore the verb should have the suffix "-s", while in (8b), the unmarked form should be used. As for concord between a pronoun and its antecedent, as in (8f), we observe that the pronoun is in singular while the antecedent is in the plural form.

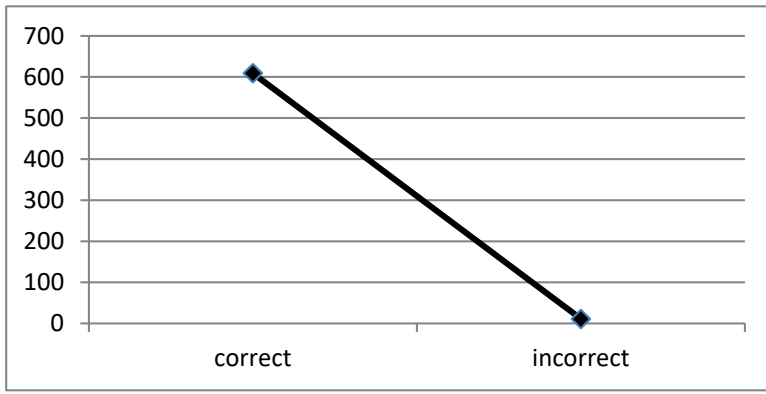
Let us discuss one of the sentences above, namely (8d). Although the word "people" can be used as a plural noun (meaning "persons") or both as a singular (that is, "a people", meaning "nation") and plural ("peoples", meaning "nations"), its use here falls under the meaning "persons", as shown by the possessive determiner "their", which is plural. Moreover, Quirk et al. (1985, p. 303) indicate that when "people" is used to mean "nation", "the singular form is normally constructed with plural concord," for example, "The Portuguese people have chosen a new President." The British National Corpus (BNC) has many such sentences where the phrase *a people* is indeed used with plural concord (for example, "They are a people who ask for little but who are enormously ..."; "The kingdom came as a threat to a people who were unprepared …"). Thus, even though the speaker in (8d) had intended to use "people" in the sense

of "a nation", the plural verb form would be required in L1 English.

Despite the above observations regarding peculiar manifestations of concord, the overall results indicate that there were 620 occurrences of agreement and only 11 were peculiar, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1

Occurrences of Standard Use of Number Agreement vs. Deviations

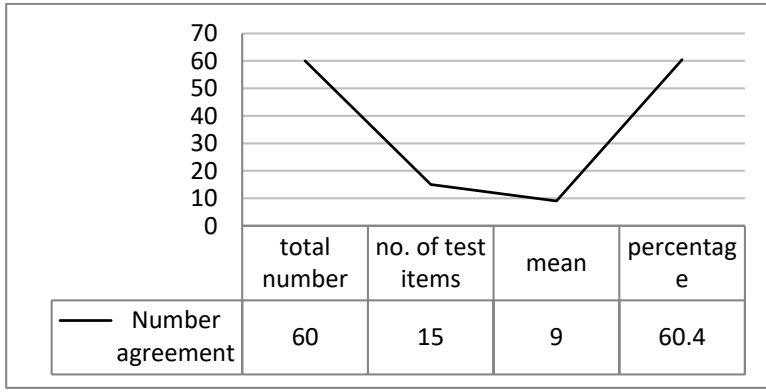


The graph reveals that incidences of standard use were far more than deviations, with a difference of 609 out of 620, which amounts to eleven (11) deviations. Although the deviations are few, they remain an interesting feature that punctuated how the respondents dealt with agreement in English. As notions that are taught right from the earliest stages of schooling, it is interesting to find such occurrences among acrolectal/advanced speakers of English, which may point to important stages of entrenchment in the nativization process of English in Uganda.

Moreover, when the respondents were subjected to the elicitation test, the results were even more interesting, as reflected in the following figure:

Figure 2

Total Score of all the Respondents in relation to Number Agreement



The results in Figure 2 show that the sixty respondents got an average score of 9 (60.4%) out of the 15 test items on number agreement. This is quite revealing as close to 40% of the responses had deviations. The questions whose answers presented more deviations were questions in relation to notional concord and the principle of proximity, which are unique forms of English number agreement. Thus, the fact that the elicitation test comprised a wider range of concord phenomena (for example, notional concord) than what was obtained in the corpus data explains why there were more deviations in the former.

We could attribute the peculiarities exemplified in **(**8**)** to mainly two phenomena**:** substrate influence and analogy**.** Substrate influence involves looking at the possibility of transfer from Acholi, where the third person plural has a subject agreement marker, while the third person singular has no agreement marker, as shown earlier. This could make L1 Acholi speakers use a marker for English plural forms and avoid it for singular forms on a par with what takes place in their L1. Since leaving out a marker for plural forms is also allowed in Acholi, this resonates well with what takes place in L1 English. If

we think of substrate influence from Acholi regarding the use of "it" to refer to plural antecedents, we could attribute this to the fact that Acholi uses either "gi" (them/they) or a null element when an antecedent is plural. The Acholi null element, whose equivalent in English is "it", is also used for singular antecedents. Therefore, due to these facts, L1 Acholi speakers could be said to extend the use of the L1 English equivalent of the Acholi null element, that is, "it", to plural antecedents in their L2 English as well. These findings confirm and augment Isingoma's (2021) observations regarding the issue of agreement in English among L1 speakers of Acholi. Although Isingoma (2021) accounts for the such peculiarities by stating that they may be a result of the fact that verb forms in Acholi are not formally distinguished in terms of singularity and plurality, that observation is not tenable, since we have seen that, in Acholi, a formal distinction is (optionally) made between third person singular and third person plural.

As mentioned above, the nativization process of English in Uganda involving L1 Acholi speakers might also be facilitated by analogical leveling, which results in generalizing the rule of inflection of English nouns to English verbs in the third person singular in the present simple (see also Isingoma, 2021). L1 speakers of Acholi are aware of the fact that the regular plural marker for English nouns is "-s". They seem to extend this to verbs as well. Thus, when a singular subject is used, the speakers use uninflected forms (since singular nouns are uninflected in English) and when a plural subject is used the speakers inflect the verbs using "-s" (since regular plural nouns are inflected with "-s"). The fact that this aligns well with the behavior of verbs in Acholi strengthens the possibility of applying such a strategy due to substrate influence.

Order of Interrogatives

As regards interrogatives (whose use is to ask questions), the results indicate that there were a number of instances where interrogative phrases were placed at the end of the question, as has been reported in relation to Cameroon English (Mbangwana, 2004). We are aware that L1 English does not leave its Wh- phrases in situ, save for echo questions. However, the thread of conversation in our corpus does not indicate a situation of echo questions. Some examples of the peculiarities are given in the following sentences (9):

(9) a**.** Then she went where next?

b**.** You managed how?

c**.** You've remembered what?

d**.** You teach which subjects?

e**.** You are here up to when?

The table below shows frequency of occurrences based on normalized word counts.

Table 2

Attestation of Order of Interrogatives

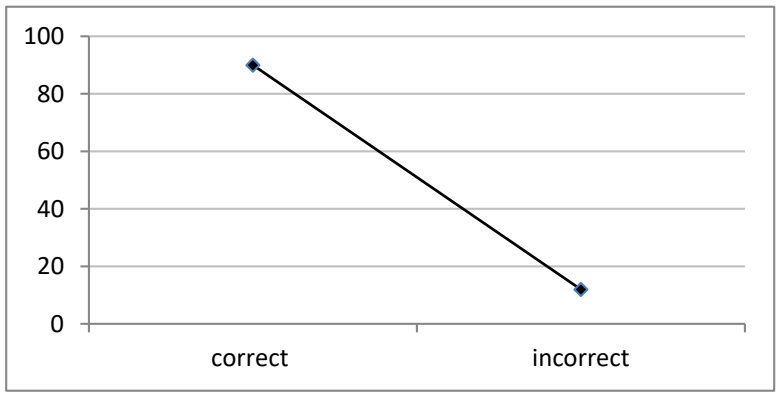
Grammatical aspect	Attestation/Normalized Frequency (1 million words)
Interrogative deviations	12 (413.79)

The data shows that, out of 29,000 words, there were 12 occurrences of English interrogatives that deviated from L1 English, which means that, for one million words, there would be 413.79

occurrences of such nativized peculiarities. When the corpus results for the peculiarities were compared with the occurrence of all interrogatives in the data, the following became known.

Figure 3

Comparison of Deviations and Standard Use of Interrogatives



The above graph shows that the peculiarities are less than the standard use, which has 90 occurrences, while the peculiarities have 12 occurrences. As can be seen, the majority of the interrogatives are structured in the same way as they are in L1 English. However, the fact that there are several cases that deviate from the norms indicates that Acholi speakers of English can afford to say what is not usable in L1 English. Moreover, the potential of having very many cases in a larger corpus is visible, as evidenced in the normalized frequencies, i.e. 413.79 incidences of such nativized patterns per one million words. This revelation seems to contrast with Ssempuuma's (2013) assertion that such constructions are extremely rare in Ugandan English. Nevertheless, two observations can be made in relation to Ssempuuma's (2013) assertion: (a) it might be the case that these deviant patterns are localized among L1 Acholi speakers only in such a way

that the patterns do not cover the entire country. Since L1 Acholi speakers cover approximately only 3.4 % of the entire population in Uganda (see Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2019), Ssempuuma's (2013) observation may stand if these patterns happen to be restricted to what we can call "Acholi English ". (b) More importantly, observations of this nature require solid empirical data (like what this study has tried to use), as opposed to data that is mainly impressionistically generated.

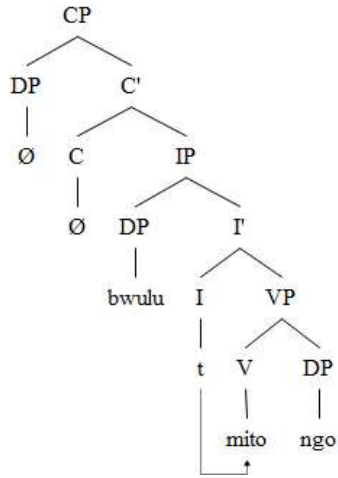
As was the case with agreement above, we can also look at substrate influence and analogical leveling as two main forces behind peculiar interrogatives in English among L1 Acholi speakers. Thus, it is also possible to account for the deviations above by means of comparing what takes place in L1 English and what takes place in Acholi (the substrate language under consideration) regarding the position of question words in a sentence. As shown earlier, question words are usually put at the end of the questions in Acholi (Bavin, 1982), as shown in (10):

(10)	Bwulu	gi-mito	ngo?
	Youth	3PL-want	what?
	"What do the youth want?"		

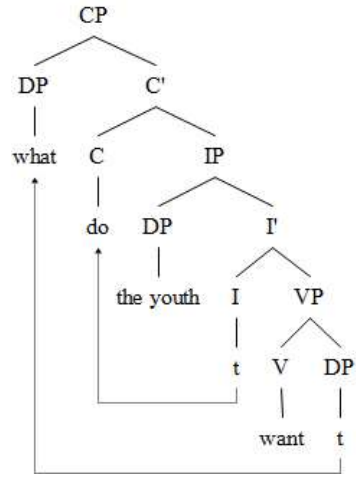
According to the Universal Grammar theory (Chomsky, 1986), while interrogatives are a universal principle that exists in both L1 English and Acholi, there is a parametric variation between the two languages as regards the position of the word used to code the principle of interrogative sentences. This can be illustrated in (11a) as the parsed interrogative involving the sentence in (10) above and its English equivalent (11b): In the diagram, we have used notation and labels as per the Generative Grammar tradition (see, for example, Haegeman & Guéron, 1999; White, 2003). The CP (Complementizer Phrase) is the maximal projection for a complex or Wh-question

sentence; it dominates C' (a projection of C) and the specifier (Spec-CP). Spec-CP, which is occupied by a DP, is the landing site of Wh-movement from the lower DP. We have maintained the use of DP in such positions in lieu of NP in line with the tenets of Generative Grammar. The label C stands for Complementizer, which is occupied by either a subordinating conjunction or a moved auxiliary, and this makes the two be in complementary distribution. The Complementizer selects a clause as its complement, which is represented by IP (Inflection Phrase). The latter is called an Inflection Phrase since it contains inflectional properties such as tense and person.

11. a.



b.



As can be seen in the two structural representations, English requires the wh-word to move to Spec-CP, while, in Acholi, the question word remains in situ. The two structures are also different in that while the English Complementizer Phrase (CP) has overt elements, the Acholi CP is empty and only its Inflectional Phrase (IP) is populated to cater for its interrogatives of this nature. This is because there is no movement of the question word. One could thus argue that the CP is redundant for Acholi. However, as stated earlier, there are circumstances where Acholi allows movement of the question word to Spec-CP (as is the case in English), which requires the Acholi question word "ngo" (what) to be realized as "ngoma" (what). However, this is only possible in certain pragmatic situations, where, for example, the speaker is surprised and by asking such a question, he/she would like to remind the hearer about what had already been agreed on or discussed and the referent has adamantly gone ahead to do the opposite.

The differences observable between the two are a parameter of variation within the UG framework, while the similarity between the two languages is that both have question words whose canonical position is the lower DP of IP (cf. Chomsky, 1986; White, 2003). It can therefore be assumed that non-native speakers of English whose order of interrogatives is different are likely to have peculiar use of the language when constructing interrogative sentences in English, as the case is with L1 Acholi speakers.

In addition to substrate influence delineated above, it is also possible that second language acquisition processes such as analogy could be behind these deviations as well. Superstrate English has a type of questions called "echo questions" as well as declarative questions as discussed earlier, which have no inversion. Given these scenarios (English echo questions and declarative questions), it is possible that native speakers of Acholi may extrapolate these forms of interrogatives in English to other question types, thinking that what is permitted by the two forms of interrogatives above is also permissible for general Wh-questions. This analogy is said to be pervasive in the nativization of English (Schmied, 2004). Crucially, we see how this process interacts with substrate influence if we subscribe to Andersen's (1983) and Mesthrie and Bhatt's (2008) analysis of the role of superstrates in facilitating substrate transfer. Namely, we see the transfer of the Acholi syntactic structure (that is, no movement of question words) succeeds because superstrate English has syntactic structures that facilitate this (that is, no movement in echo questions, for example), a situation that allows for overgeneralization.

Conclusion

This study sought to highlight the role of Acholi as a substrate language as well as the role of analogy in the structural nativization of English in Uganda. With the observed peculiarities involving

number agreement and interrogatives in English among L1 speakers of Acholi, we can posit that this study reinforces observations made by, for example, Meierkord (2016) and Isingoma and Meierkord (2019) that indeed the nativization of English in Uganda is on course. This study therefore augments discourse on the structural nativization of English in Uganda, in line with Schneider's (2007) model, where nativization occurs in the third phase in the development trajectory of postcolonial Englishes, characterized by not only phonological, morphological and lexical differences from L1 English, but also by visible differences in syntax, as this study has attempted to show. Therefore, what we have observed as regards Acholi speakers of English lends itself to the World Englishes paradigm (see Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008; Percillier, 2016; Bolton, 2018) regarding how structural asymmetries between L1 English and an indigenous language (in our case, Acholi) feed into the syntactic features of L2 English. This provides further evidence of the nativization process of English in Uganda.

This study also supports the assertion made by Meierkord (2016) with respect to the fact that each Ugandan indigenous language can be said to influence the way English is spoken in the country insofar as one can talk of "Acholi English", "Luganda English", "Ateso English", etc. This, in turn, supports the idea of interactions across Englishes proposed by Meierkord (2016), by which an outer circle variety such as Ugandan English can be seen as having intranational varieties of English. In concurrence with hints provided by Isingoma (2021), this study has confirmed the occurrence of peculiarities in the grammatical aspect of number agreement in English among L1 Acholi speakers, which can lead one to conclude that this is a feature of "Acholi English", as opposed to, for example, "Luganda (Bantu) English" (see Isingoma, 2021).

The current study has also shown that, in contradistinction to Ssempuuma (2013), leaving Wh-phrases in situ is not "extremely rare" in Ugandan English, especially when you consider L1 Acholi speakers. Of course, no empirical comparative study has been conducted to find out what takes place among speakers of other Ugandan indigenous languages so as to determine the (non-)ubiquity of this grammatical aspect (that is, interrogatives) in the country. The fact that it is not substrate influence alone that brings about these peculiarities (as other L2 acquisition processes such as analogical leveling come into play) makes it even more probable to find some of these peculiarities spread in other parts of the country, even if the languages spoken there may be dissimilar from Acholi. This is an outlook that we intend to pursue in the future.

Crucially, our data collection methods involved categorizing the participants into three groups, namely students, professionals and the business community. However, in this study, we only looked at linguistic behaviors that cut across the three speaker groups. Thus, we did not look at interspeaker variability, although it should be analyzed. We therefore intend to pursue this in the future using the same data. Furthermore, our study employed a three-option multiple-choice format, following observations made, among others, by Terrant and Ware (2010) and Dehnad et al. (2014) regarding the advantages of this format. However, we are aware that there are also four and five multiple-choice questions as alternative formats that can be used. Thus, it would be good to explore this approach in a similar study.

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