# Linguistic landscape at the grassroots level in Uganda: The case of informal businesses in Gulu City and its environs

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## Abstract

This paper analyses linguistic information regarding signage developed by Ugandan English speakers at the grassroots level, as a category of non-elite users of English. It specifically examines linguistic signs displayed at small-scale informal businesses, focusing on the source of the signs and the language(s) used in terms of features and the justifications for the choice of the language(s). The results show three types of signs: those written in English (which are predominant), those that blend English and Acholi, and those written in Acholi. Where English is involved, the findings reveal that the choice was mainly based on attracting a wider readership and thus clientele, as well as the fact that English is the functional official language in Uganda. It was also observed that both standard and nonstandard English were used. The source of the signs was reported to be grassroots users of English but sometimes artists and/or acrolectal users of English were involved in writing/drawing the signs.

## 1. Introduction

Linguistic landscape involves words and images displayed in public spaces (i.e. streets, parks and public institutions) for functional reasons or symbolic purposes (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Shohamy and Gorter 2009; Taylor–Leech 2012). Our study examines linguistic information in the signage of speakers of English in Uganda at the grassroots level, involving owners of small-scale informal businesses in Gulu City and its environs. We provide a brief description of English in Uganda in Section 2, delineate acrolectal English in Uganda in Section 3, and describe English at the grassroots in Uganda and beyond in Section 4. Section 5 explains the methodology, while, in section 6, we examine the source of the signs: whether created by grassroots speakers of English or by hired professional artists/acrolectal speakers of English vis-à-vis the language used, i.e. English, Acholi (the native language of the area), or a combination of Acholi and English. In Section 7, we delve into the linguistic features involved in the use of English, taking into account the particularities of grassroots English while considering the influence of acrolectal Ugandan English and the manifestation of standard L1 English. The paper finishes with a conclusion in Section 8.

## 2. English in Uganda

English in Uganda falls within Kachru's (1985) outer circle classification, while, with reference to Schneider's (2007) model, it has been stated that Ugandan English is in the nativisation phase, although it is said to be increasingly approaching the endonormative stabilisation phase (Meierkord and Isingoma 2022). The English spoken in outer circle environments, as stated by Kachru (1985), follows a three-level lectal continuum, which reveals speakers' level of variation from standard use, i.e. acrolectal, mesolectal and basilectal. Hence, the lowest level in the continuum is the basilectal speakers, whose speech is often characterised by non-standard forms since these speakers have minimal or no access to formal education. In Uganda, English is mainly acquired at school, but, as Isingoma (2021a) reveals, there are also informal loci of English acquisition, such as (Pentecostal) churches.

Due to the need to maintain the status of English, Uganda has promoted the policy of the use of English as a medium of instruction at different levels of learning (Milligan et al. 2024). Additionally, whereas English in Uganda can be seen as a de facto lingua franca, it has been studied as regards acrolectal speakers, with little attention paid to the grassroots speakers, yet they also use the language with both acrolectal and fellow

non-acrolectal speakers, especially where the local languages are mutually unintelligible (cf. Meierkord and Schneider 2021). While Isingoma (2021a) compares grassroots English in northern and western Uganda by studying *boda-bodas* (people who operate bicycles and motorcycles used to transport people or goods) and market vendors, there is still a need to document English as used by other grassroots speakers.

## 3. Acrolectal English in Uganda

By far, most of the research on Ugandan English has focused on acrolectal English, the most standardised variety of English associated with formal and professional settings (cf. Platt and Weber 1980). It is what is usually regarded as Ugandan English by World Englishes researchers. Acrolectal Ugandan English manifests itself in phonological, lexical and grammatical features. For instance, Adokorach and Isingoma (2022, 3) note that the RP (Received Pronunciation) diphthong /eɪ/ is realized in Ugandan English as /eɪ/ in *veil*, also as /e/ in *later*, and /e:/ in *buffet*. This means that the diphthong /eɪ/ in Ugandan English is expressed in three ways, that is, first, as a diphthong in words like *may* /meɪ/, secondly as a long vowel, /e:/, as in *café* /kafe:/ and thirdly as a short vowel, /e/, in words like *table* /tebol/(Adokorach and Isingoma 2022, 3, 12). Concerning lexical features, Isingoma (2014, 53) points out semantic extension, where the meaning of an existing expression is broadened, for example, *stage* 'taxi rank' and *step-brother/sister* 'half-brother/sister'. Besides, borrowings and calques characterise acrolectal Ugandan English as evidenced in items such as *matooke* 'mashed cooked bananas', *to be lost* 'long time no see', etc. (Isingoma 2016a, 155–165). In addition, this form of English is characterised by particle omission, e.g., *to pick up* is reduced to *to pick* (Isingoma 2014, 54). As already mentioned, acrolectal English has been the focus of linguistic study in Uganda, and as Isingoma (2021a) notes, it provides its norms to grassroots English in Uganda. In this study, we also discuss the contribution of acrolectal speakers in shaping the linguistic landscape of Ugandan grassroots communities, thereby building upon Isingoma's (2021a) findings.

## 4. English at the grassroots in Uganda and beyond

Grassroots English in Uganda has become a research domain with hitherto only two studies conducted, focusing on the sociolinguistic profile of the use of English at the grassroots (Isingoma 2021a) and a comparison in the production of grassroots speakers of English from South Africa and Uganda (Meierkord 2021).

Our study adopts Meierkord and Schneider's (2021) conceptualisation of grassroots English as a non-elite form of English acquired naturally outside the context of formal education through interaction with other speakers and/or limited access to formal education. The sociolinguistic situation of grassroots English in Uganda shows that while grassroots English users display idiosyncratic features, e.g. the general lack of concord as in *we makes money, few ladies who has come ...* (Isingoma 2021a, 53), they also heavily rely on acrolectal speakers (Isingoma 2021a). By implication, grassroots

English spoken in Uganda has broader features that relate to the general characteristics of Ugandan English (see Section 3 above). Although grassroots English may be viewed as a non-standard form of English characterised by what may be termed as linguistic impropriety, it is often triggered by a communicative situation (Buschfeld 2021) and is functionally useful in the community where it is spoken (Isingoma 2021a). This also confirms Bamidele–Akhidenor's (2021) findings in which she observes that Bahraini traders use English to transact with their customers, particularly those who do not speak Arabic.

## 5. Methodology

Using a cross-sectional descriptive design, we conducted a qualitative linguistic analysis of 36 purposively selected small-scale informal business signs used by grassroots speakers of English in Gulu City and its environs.[1] This approach was employed to gain in-depth insights into language practices regarding grassroots users of English. Gulu City, as an administrative unit, became operational in 2020 and is home mainly to the Acholi. As a metropolitan area, there are also many other ethnic groups (with diverse linguistic backgrounds).[2] Given these characteristics, business owners tend to manipulate language to attract a wider readership and clientele.

We selected 35 participants and 36 signs that characterised grassroots English. All the participants were non-educated or less educated in the sense of Greenbaum and Nelson (1996). Specifically, their education levels ranged from Grade 1 (first year of primary education) to Form 3 (third year of secondary education), meaning that the participants had one to ten years of English education. All the participants were native speakers of Acholi. After obtaining consent from the participants, we took photographs of the signs in markets, shops and restaurants, to capture a visual representation of the linguistic behaviour of the participants, where Acholi, English or a combination of the two languages were used. Prior to selecting the 36 signs, we conducted structured interviews in English with the participants to establish the originator(s) of the signs, i.e. whether they wrote the signs themselves or hired other people with expert knowledge, including acrolectal attributes (see the interview guide in Appendix I). Data was analysed using content analysis methods. We examined the textual and visual elements displayed on the signs, thereby identifying the relevant linguistic patterns involved.

## 6. Languages used in the signage by grassroots speakers of English

The findings show that most of the grassroots speakers of English who were contacted prefer to use English in their signage. Out of the 36 signs, 25 were written exclusively in English, nine in English and Acholi, while two were written exclusively in Acholi.[3] Accordingly, English dominates, whether used singly or together with Acholi. The findings further show that 15 of the signs were written by the grassroots speakers of English themselves and the remaining were drawn by other people who were hired by the grassroots

**Figure 1.** A sign at a cobbler's written by a grassroots speaker of English.[4]



**Figure 2.** A sign on a stall written by a grassroots speaker of English.



**Figure 3.** A sign on a business structure combining both English and Acholi.[5]
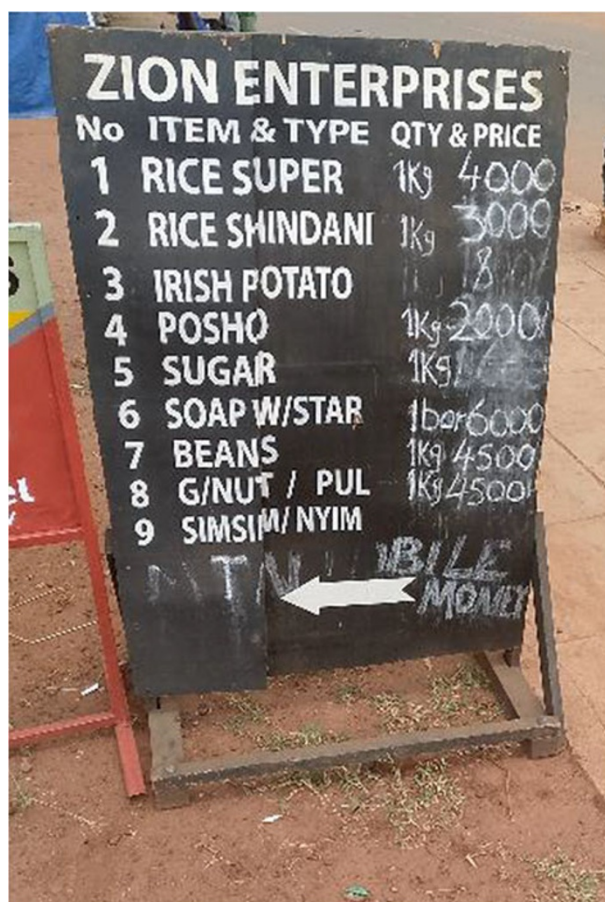


**Figure 4.** A sign at a shop combining both English and Acholi.[6]

speakers of English to provide the inscription that would appear on the signs.

Out of the 15 signs, nine (60%) were written in English only, while six (40%) were in both English and Acholi. This indicates that informal business owners in Gulu City and its environs contribute to the shaping of the linguistic landscape in the area and place a premium on the use of English in this respect, given that all the signs they wrote themselves have English either as the sole language or one of the languages used. Examples of the signs written in English only by grassroots speakers of English are provided in Figures 1 and 2:

Observably, Figure 1 is written in what we characterise as Ugandan grassroots English, while Figure 2 is written in acrolectal Ugandan English (see Section 7 for details on the features of the two sub-types of Ugandan English).

As indicated above, our findings show that six of the signs written by the grassroots speakers of English had a blend of both English and Acholi. Examples of these signs are provided in Figures 3 and 4 and Figures 16 and 17 in Appendix II.

In the blends in Figures 3 and 4, we still see the preponderance of the English language: the fact that it comes first could be said to indicate that it occupies the topmost slot in the importance accorded to the languages used in the area, a revelation that aligns with Nakayiza's (2016) observation as regards a similar situation in Kampala. We also observe that there are features of acrolectal Ugandan English in Figure 4

(see Section 7 for details of Ugandan English particularities on the signs).

We have already shown that the grassroots speakers of English wrote 15 signs, out of the 36 signs considered in the study, either exclusively in English or blending English and Acholi. Crucially, none of these signs reflects exclusive standard L1 English usage. Out of the remaining 21 signs (written by professional artists or acrolectal speakers of Ugandan English on behalf of the grassroots speakers of English), eight were written in standard L1 English, while 11 were written in acrolectal Ugandan English and two were

**Figure 5.** A sign on a butchery written in L1 standard English.



**Figure 7.** A sign written in Acholi on a structure housing a machine for grinding sesame and peanuts.[7]



**Figure 6.** A sign at a shop written in acrolectal Ugandan English.



**Figure 8.** A sign written in Acholi on a butchery selling chevon (goat meat).[8]

written in Acholi only. Note that, as is the case with the signs written by the grassroots speakers of English, for the signs where English is involved here, 16 were written exclusively in English, while three were a blend of English and Acholi. For this category of signs, an example of a sign written in standard L1 English is provided in Figure 5, while an example of a sign written in acrolectal Ugandan English is shown in Figure 6.

As can be seen in Figure 5, there are no Ugandan grassroots English features, nor are there features of acrolectal Ugandan English. Note that, in our assessment of Figure 5, we abstract away from the typographic representation and only consider the lexical items and structural representation (see Figures 12 and 13 in Appendix II for more examples). On the other hand, Figure 6 is written in acrolectal Ugandan English (see details on the features of Ugandan English in Section 7). What we note here is that signs written by professional artists/acrolectal speakers of Ugandan English have a higher proportion than those written in standard L1 English by the same category of speakers of English. Notably, while there are seven signs written in standard L1 English, acrolectal Ugandan English has a share of 12 signs (other examples are shown in Figures 14 and 15 in Appendix II).

Even though the exclusive use of Acholi was only observed on two signs, we need to note that Acholi is evidently one of the languages that shape the linguistic landscape in Gulu City and its environs, whether used singly or used together with English. The two instances where Acholi is used singly are shown in Figures 7 and 8.

The minimal use of Acholi alone on signs compared to the use of English (or English and Acholi) could be said to reflect the perception of how English is more valued (see justifications in the subsequent paragraph) in Uganda in general, as already revealed above in line with Nakayiza's (2016) observation regarding the use of English vis-à-vis Luganda on signs in Central Uganda.

When asked why they used English, some participants said 'English is the official and a national language of the country'. They further mentioned that it was the most widely used and mostly understood language in the city, which is a business hub for people of different linguistic backgrounds (see also Vokes et al. 2019). It is therefore not surprising that the business owners needed to have many people understand what their businesses offered. A reflection on the vast number of signs written in English could point to the issue of language attitude in Uganda, where English is seen as a prestigious language used by economically and socially powerful people (Nakayiza 2016). Likewise, Loth (2016) observes that the use of a specific language in the linguistic landscape of a country/area affirms the value and status of that language (see also Cenoz and Gorter 2006). According to Spolsky (2004), language policy in a given community is reflected through language practice. This means that an official language in a

given country will inevitably appear in the linguistic landscape in any part of that country. Thus, the participants' response as regards their overwhelming choice of English could be premised on these observations about the official status and value of English. It could also be conjectured that by associating themselves with English (the language of the elite in Uganda), these small-scale business owners could be said to front themselves as equally economically and socially powerful people (see also Isingoma 2021a), since, as Nakayiza (2016, 83) puts it, English 'facilitates socio-economic ascent and upward movement'.

Note that the participants' understanding of the concept of a national language is different, given that Isingoma (2016b) states that Uganda does not have a national language, even though Nakayiza (2016) looks at English as the de facto national language. For a language to be considered a national language, it should be a symbol of identity and it should be spoken by the majority of the population (Fasold 1984). However, research indicates that English in Uganda is spoken by less than 20% of the population (Crystal 2003; Meierkord 2020; Isingoma 2021a), although this excludes grassroots speakers. Given that the 20% of the speakers mentioned above do not include grassroots speakers of English (Isingoma 2021a), it is clear that the number of speakers of English is higher than the above figure. We thus note that it is important to include non-acrolectal speakers of English when providing statistics of speakers of English.

As regards the nine signs that blend English and Acholi, the participants stated that they had to add Acholi to English because some customers do not speak English in the area. Given the nature of the businesses involved, some participants said that these were 'community businesses', hence the need to use a local language where the businesses are located. By referring to their businesses as 'community businesses', it seems that it was thus imperative for them to use the community language of the area. This becomes even more prominent when we consider the two signs where only Acholi was used. Despite the multilingual nature of Gulu City, with English as a lingua franca that cuts across all linguistic communities living in the city, some signs are exclusively written in Acholi (or at least have Acholi as an additional language). This could also be viewed as a way the local people construct their social and cultural identity and Acholi is a representation of this identity expression. It has been argued that when members of a community display their language in the linguistic landscape of their area, they are trying to assert the status of their language in the face of the dominion of powerful languages such as English (Cenoz and Gorter 2006).

The data obtained indicates that the signs either were written by the grassroots speakers of English themselves (i.e. 15 signs) or other speakers perceived to be more skilled were sought to write the signs (i.e. 21 signs) with the linguistic information on them provided by the grassroots speakers of English themselves. The skilled labour was mainly sought regarding the artistic and aesthetic representation of the signs, but, in some cases, due to the perceived linguistic expertise of an acrolectal speaker of English.[9] We should note that some of the grassroots speakers of English did not provide written linguistic information to be inscribed on the signs. Hence, the hired acrolectal speakers may have



**Figure 9.** A sign on the desk of an electronic technician.

influenced the linguistic features of the signs. The fact that all the grassroots speakers of English either wrote the signs themselves or provided the linguistic expressions appearing on the signs, most of which were in English, could also be said to show self-confidence in their ability to use English, as well as their desire to associate themselves with English. This confirms Isingoma's (2021a, 63) findings on the role played by courage and self-confidence in using English by a section of grassroots speakers of English in Uganda. While comparing the English spoken by grassroots users in Northern and Western Uganda, he noted that grassroots users of English in Northern Uganda 'speak English without diffidence'.

## 7. Linguistic features in signage written in English

As already indicated in Section 6 above, the signs written in English are characterised by grassroots English particularities, acrolectal Ugandan English particularities and patterns of standard L1 English. Schneider (2016) indicates that grassroots English is characterised by simplification and restructuring, properties that Isingoma (2021a) found to be present in Ugandan grassroots English, too. Our findings show that the above properties are ubiquitous in the signs that we analysed. Thus, we supplement Isingoma's (2021a) findings by providing information on spelling deviations, which we observed in nine signs. For example, the deviations in Figure 9 were observed.

The spelling deviations here involve *whoofers* and *pacolators* instead of *woofers* and *percolators*. On other signs, we observed the following: *costomer* and *coustomer* for *customer*, *coubbler* for *cobbler, shoes* vs. *shose* (see Figure 1 in Section 6), *delicous* for *delicious*, and *your welcome* for *you're welcome* (see Figures 18 and 19 in Appendix II).

Furthermore, we observed deviations involving idiosyncratic phonographic spellings (spelling influenced by how a word is pronounced and, in this case, involving deviations in pronunciation) based on local ethnolinguistic particularities. For example, the word *talent* was spelt as *tallen*. According to Adokorach and Isingoma (2022), whereas Acholi has closed syllables, it does not have coda clusters, implying that L1 Acholi speakers of English may find difficulties pronouncing words with consonant clusters. In fact, words such as *bend, box,* and *fact* are often pronounced as /ben/, /bok/, and

/fak/, respectively, thereby leading to corresponding deviations in spelling. Although we have associated this kind of pronunciation to grassroots users of English in Gulu (extrapolable to other areas where Acholi is spoken natively) with the resultant spelling deviations that may arise, Opiyo (2024) states that this pronunciation is also characteristic of L1 Acholi acrolectal speakers of English. Anecdotally, we have observed such phonographic spelling deviations among L1 Acholi acrolectal speakers of English.

While Ugandan grassroots English has its own particularities, it is more associated with acrolectal Ugandan English than standard L1 English. In fact, Isingoma (2021a) argues that acrolectal Ugandan English provides the norms for Ugandan grassroots English. In this study, this is evidenced in many signs, i.e. 15 (44%) out of 34 signs where English is involved (note that there are signs which had exclusively grassroots English particularities and these are not included in the 44%). For example, in Figure 2 (see Section 6 above), the particularities involve the use of the words *kikomando* 'a mix of chapatti and beans' (cf. Kezaale 2021) and *rolex* 'a mix of omelette and vegetables wrapped in a chapatti' (Oxford English Dictionary, online edition).[10] In Figure 4 (see Section 6), we see the use of Ugandan English lexical items: *posho* 'maize meal', *simsim* 'sesame' (cf. Isingoma 2016a) and the semi-initialism *g/nut* 'groundnuts/peanuts'. For the latter, while the word *groundnuts* occurs in, e.g. British English, it is rarely used, as evidenced by only 15 hits in the British National Corpus (BNC), while its synonym *peanuts* occurs 200 times. Moreover, in Ugandan English, *groundnuts* is also realised as *g-nuts* or *g/nuts* or *g.nuts* – something that does not appear in the BNC, but appears in the Ugandan component of the International Corpus of English, albeit sporadically. We also note the use of *Irish potatoes* in Figure 4, an expression that occurs in American English (Merriam–Webster Dictionary – Online), meaning 'potatoes' in British English. Although Merriam–Webster Dictionary – Online lists *Irish potatoes* as an American English expression, the Corpus of Contemporary American English has only 18 entries for this expression, as opposed to *potatoes*, which has 15347 entries. However, in Ugandan English, *Irish potatoes*, or more informally *Irish* (see Figure 10), is the only option available to mean 'potatoes', while the word *potatoes* is exclusively used to mean 'sweet potatoes', although the expression *sweet potatoes* is also used.

In Figure 10, apart from Ugandan English *Irish*, there is also the Ugandan English expression *g-nuts*. As already observed, the Ugandan English semi-initialism from *groundnuts* has three spellings. Here, it is the hyphenated version that is used. All in all, while grassroots English in Uganda has its own particularities, the fact that speakers of this sub-variety of English not only interact with acrolectal speakers of Ugandan English on a daily basis, but also 'look up to the acrolectal users of English in Uganda as their role models' (Isingoma 2021a, 64), explains why features of acrolectal Ugandan English are prevalent among grassroots speakers of English in Uganda.

Given that grassroots English is above all English points to the fact that it cannot be completely divorced from standard L1 English. Accordingly, as stated earlier (see Section 6) and abstracting away from typographic representation, Figure 5



**Figure 10.** A sign at a shop written in Ugandan English.[11]



**Figure 11.** A sign on an eating joint written in standard L1 English.

presents a case where there is the use of standard L1 English. Likewise, Figure 11 has features of standard L1 English, even if a comma would ideally be required after the word *deliveries*.

The use of standard L1 English on the above signs is not surprising even though these signs are linked to grassroots speakers of English. As already shown in Section 6, some of the signs were written by professional artists/acrolectal speakers of English (even if the wording would sometimes come from grassroots speakers of English). But, above all, grassroots English is a (sub-)variety of English. This means it shares a number of commonalities with any other variety of English, including standard L1 English, with acrolectal Ugandan English providing a number of shared lexical items, but also standard L1 English. In fact, Amarorwot and Isingoma (2021, 58) observe that indigenous Ugandan languages are a source of substrate features for world Englishes (e.g. loanwords, concepts for calques, distinctive structural features), while superstrate features come 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).' It is thus inevitable that shared lexicons and grammatical properties will feature in any variety or sub-variety of English. In other words, there is a critical mass of a common core any variety of English shares with standard L1 English. Clearly, both acrolectal Ugandan English and Ugandan grassroots English

converge with standard L1 English, but, evidently, diverge from it, while, despite sharing many commonalities, they also diverge from each other to some extent.

## 8. Conclusion

In this paper, we have highlighted the pervasive influence of English on signage used by grassroots speakers of English in Gulu City and the surrounding areas, as evidenced by the predominance of English-only signage and the minimal presence of Acholi-only signage, underscoring the role of language status in language choice in the linguistic landscape of multilingual settings. While the predominance of English in the signage depicts its overall role in the country as, first of all, the functional official language, the use of Acholi, albeit sporadic, could be seen as a manifestation of identity expression but also as a vehicle of intraethnic communication. As far as writing the signs is concerned, the study shows that two strategies are employed by the grassroots users of English: (i) they employ professional artists or acrolectal speakers of English; (ii) they write the signs themselves. With respect to the first strategy, most of the grassroots speakers of English usually provided the linguistic expressions appearing on the signs (including the two instances where Acholi only was used), although in some cases the wording would come from the hired professionals/acrolectal speakers of Ugandan English. This strategy usually led to the production of some signs with not only some manifestation of standard L1 English usage but also particularities of acrolectal Ugandan English. The second strategy, where the grassroots speakers of English wrote the signs themselves, interestingly, had a prevalence of the use of English. Acholi only appeared on the signs where there was a blend of the two languages. Moreover, such signs were fewer than where there was the exclusive use of English. The signs produced by this category did not have typical features of standard L1 English. They had particularities of grassroots speakers of Ugandan English, but also particularities of acrolectal Ugandan English, specifically in terms of lexical features, as well as regional phonographic spelling (due to substrate influence from Acholi). The blend of standard (L1 English) and non-standard English (grassroots and acrolectal Ugandan English) features in the signage depicts how grassroots communities are situated within the realities of English usage in L2 environments. The prevalence of English in the signage used by grassroots speakers of English also proves the position of English in Uganda as a lingua franca (and also as an official language, as already stated above), as well as stressing the supremacy of English in public spaces in Uganda.

## Notes

1  We used the cross-sectional descriptive design to collect data at a single point in time to describe the prevalence of the linguistic behaviour of the participants.

2  Prior to this date, Gulu was administratively treated as a municipality (a lower administrative unit).

3  Note that the names of the businesses are not considered in determining the language used on the signs.

4  The business name is written partly in Acholi (i.e. *Bedo Dano Tek Workshop* meaning 'being human is difficult').

5  In Figure 3, the Acholi equivalent of the English phrase *maize huller* is realised as *cuma kob*, literally meaning 'machine for hulling and grinding maize'.

6  Note that there are words used in Figure 4 that indicate the type of items, namely *rice* has two types: *rice super* and *rice shindani*, with the latter containing a slightly modified Kiswahili word *shindano*, meaning 'needle', which depicts the shape of the rice grains. At the same time, *soap* is categorised as *W/Star*, which stands for *White Star*, a type of laundry soap in Uganda. Note also that there are two words that are rendered into Acholi, i.e. *groundnuts* and *simsim* (sesame in standard L1 English), realised as *pul* and *nyim*, respectively. It is not very clear why some words are written in both English and Acholi, while others are written in English only (including Ugandan English). However, this still shows the predominance of the English language.

7  *Cuma odii ki binyebwa* translates as 'a machine for making sesame and/or peanut paste, and peanut powder'.

8  *Ringo dyel tye kany* means 'goat meat is here'.

9  Skilled labour involved professional artists who may be acrolectal or non-acrolectal speakers of English.

10  *Chapatti* is an Anglo-Indian word, used in Ugandan English to refer to a type of bread.

11  The misspelling of *super* (realised here as *supper*) is not a characteristic of acrolectal Ugandan English but can be viewed as a characteristic of Ugandan grassroots English and it is more common in learner English in Uganda.

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## Appendix I: Structured interview guide

### 1.1 Demographics

1. Can you tell us a little about yourself? (your name, age, occupation, education)
2. How long have you lived in this community?
3. What is your mother tongue?

### 1.2 Linguistic landscape

1. Did you make this sign?
2. If not, who did it? Why? Was the person hired?
3. Why did you choose to use this (these) language(s)?

## Appendix II: Additional signage by Ugandan grassroots English speakers



**Figure 12.** A sign on a restaurant written in standard L1 English.



**Figure 13.** A sign on a structure for a plastic dealer written in standard L1 English.

**Figure 14.** A sign at an eating joint written in Ugandan English.



**Figure 17.** A sign at a shop written in Ugandan grassroots English and Acholi.



**Figure 15.** A sign at a restaurant written in Ugandan English.



**Figure 18.** A sign on a barbershop written in Ugandan grassroots English.



**Figure 16.** A sign at an eating joint written in Ugandan English and Acholi.



**Figure 19.** A sign at a restaurant written in Ugandan grassroots English.

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