

Abstract

This study is an ethnographic survey of bi/multilingual indigenous language use in two Ugandan cities – Mbale, in Eastern Uganda and Gulu, in Northern Uganda. The primary aim of the study was to investigate the language-based decisions about Luganda that native speakers of other indigenous languages of Uganda make as they participate in their day-to-day social interactions. The study was guided by Rymes & Leone's (2014) Citizen Sociolinguistics Model and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. I used a multi-method approach, involving questionnaires, participant and nonparticipant observation, Focus Group Discussions, and in-depth interviews to collect data, which were analysed using a theme-based triangulation approach. The data used in the study were gathered from four domains of public space, including markets, entertainment places, transport centres (bus/taxi parks), and places of worship (churches and mosques). The study identified the different ways through which Luganda spreads in the two cities, and how L2 users of Luganda learn and use it in their daily activities. The study revealed that Luganda is spread and used differently in the two Ugandan cities, owing mostly to its historical spread. In Mbale, Luganda was introduced by its native speakers, led by Semei Kakungulu during the period when the British were setting up a protectorate in current-day Uganda, and its spread has been sustained by the descendants of those native speakers who settled in Mbale with Kakungulu. In Gulu, on the other hand, Luganda was introduced during the colonial times, but it did not take root and its use was mostly looked down upon by, mostly, the Nilotic people found in the area. The current increase of L2 speakers of Luganda in Gulu City is due to reasons like urbanization, trade, and migration. Language-based decisions of L2 users of Luganda in Mbale and Gulu cities exhibit varied patterns that are shaped by factors such as ethnicity of the speaker, age of the speaker, and the domain in which the language is used. Also, L2 users of Luganda in both cities have varied perceptions and attitudes about Luganda, including being a language of national unity and identity, a language for the rich, prostitutes, and con-men, among others.