



Syllable structures in the English speech produced by multilingual speakers with histories of mobilities

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During the last three years, we have seen several thousand refugees, originally from Congo, being resettled from refugee camps in Uganda to Norway by the UN. These refugees have had highly varied linguistic repertoires since childhood (Kiswahili, Kinyabwasha, French, Luganda etc.). In Uganda, they have learnt English informally through daily use over a period of ten-thirty years. Consequently, their repertoires, including their use of English, are now present in Norway's linguistic ecology. Here we see an example of how "language [is] something intrinsically and perpetually mobile, through space as well as time, and made for mobility" (Blommaert, 2010, p. xiv).

This paper reports findings of a study on the syllable structure in the English speech of seven of these refugees that arrived in Norway during 2019. The data consists of recorded word list readings. To complement the word list findings from the whole group, one participant was chosen as a special case to analyse linguistic behaviour across speaking styles: reading a narrative and answering the informal questions.

The analyses reveal that, compared to other varieties of English around the world, the participants regularly simplify consonant cluster and change word-final closed syllables into open syllables, using consonant deletion and/or epenthesis. Their linguistic practices show clear influences from the dominant languages present in the ecologies in which they have been a part, similar to previous findings of suprasegmental patterns in language contact situations (e.g. Steien & Yakpo, 2020).