English as an International Language at United World College East Africa. Attitudes to native and outgroup accents

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Abstract

This paper reports on a small-scale project on English as an International Language (EIL) conducted at United World College East Africa (UWCEA), Tanzania, Moshi campus – a highly diversified multicultural community, which offers a microcosm of EIL in action.

The study examines the respondents' preference for either nativeness or intelligibility principle (cf. Levis 2005, 2020), and their attitudes to native and outgroup accents with respect to comprehension, familiarity, and recognition (cf. Tajfel/Turner 1979).[1] It also sketches an accent profile of a United World College (UWC) student to formulate general characteristics of an EIL user. The study is based on the responses of 40 students to 32 Likert scale items.

The findings prove that firstly intelligibility is valued over nativeness and speaking English with a foreign accent does not imply unintelligibility and incomprehensibility. Secondly, immersion in a multi-accent community is alleged to positively affect the respondents', recognition, and familiarity with English accents. Contrary to Smith/Nelson's (2006) finding, native English accents are reported to be easier to understand than outgroup ones. It is also confirmed that familiarity with accents enhances their comprehension, as well as that immersion among East African English users improves the ability to recognise this accent.

The examined users of EIL share some accent attitudes. They believe their English has features of many Englishes (82.5%), aim at being understood (65%), do not deliberately use their L1 accents in English (62.5%) and some overtly admit to neutralizing their L1 accents in English (42.5%). In addition, half of the informants strive for a native English accent (50%) and nearly the same number of them prefer one variety of English over others (47.5%).

[1] In this paper the term *outgroup*, a concept introduced in Tajfel/Turner's (1979) social identity theory, is used as a substitute for *non-native* in contrast with *native*. However, in the questionnaire, to avoid misunderstanding among the respondents, the term *non-native* was applied.

1 Introduction

Phonetic research and pedagogy have long been influenced by two contradictory ideologies, namely the nativeness versus intelligibility[2] principle as observed by Levis (2005, 2020). The former holds that it is both possible and desirable to achieve native-like pronunciation**,** although due to biological constraints, stated in the Critical Period Hypothesis, it is an unrealistic burden for most learners. On the other hand, within the intelligibility framework, becoming more understandable is an aim in itself. This approach recognizes that communication can be successful regardless of accents. Moreover, it recommends that in phonetic instruction the focus should be on suprasegmentals, as it leads to better and quicker intelligibility (cf. Derwing/Rossiter 2003).

Another proposal for intelligibility-based pronunciation instruction of outgroup communications in English as an International Language was formulated by Jenkins (2000), which she later defined as: "English […] as a lingua franca (ELF), the common language of choice, among speakers who come from different linguacultural backgrounds." (Jenkins 2009: 200). Unlike in Levis' intelligibility approach, in Jenkins' (2007) ELF core, which is a list of pronunciation features regarded as crucial for being intelligible, a renewed emphasis on segmentals and de-emphasis of suprasegmentals is recommended. In short, the focus of instruction should be shifted to such aspects as: consonants (except /θ/, /ð/ and dark /l/), the NURSE[3] vowel, consonant clusters, vowel length, word groups, and placement of nuclear stress.

Marlina (2014: 4) explains the term English as an International Language in the following way: "EIL, as a paradigm, recognises the international functions of English and its use in a variety of cultural and economic arenas by speakers of English from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds who do not speak each other's mother tongues." She observes that the sociolinguistic reality of English has been constantly changing and that English has gained the status of an international language for a variety of reasons: 1) as a dominant language in a variety of economic and cultural spheres, 2) as an official language of some countries or as a required second (ESL) or foreign language of study (EFL), 3) as one of the languages of bi-/multilingual users of English who apply it in a plurilingual context.

However, Rose/Galloway (2019) implement the umbrella term global Englishes for such related fields of research as English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and World Englishes (WE), all of which share the same ideology and call for change to pedagogy from the norms of native speakers to a diversity and plurality of EFL interactions. They explore the impact of the global spread of this language on English users and put forward a proposal for a Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework. They suggest that the main purpose of the curriculum should be teaching English as a pluricentric language for use with outgroup rather than native users of English to prepare learners to speak and write English in various places worldwide.

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[2] The term *intelligibility* refers to how understandable L2 or FL speech is and how much the listener understands (cf. Munro/Derwing, 1995).

[3] Here and in the following, the lexemes in capital letters are prototypical examples and were taken from Wells' (1982: XIX) standard lexical set; here: for the central, mid, long and neutral vowel /ɜ:/.

The growth of English as an international lingua franca is visible in a growing number of ESL and EFL users, who outnumber the native speakers of English. One of the places where English as an International Language is in use, where the research cohort was recruited, is UWCEA, Tanzania. United World Colleges is a global movement, which promotes peace education and mutual understanding among nations and cultures. It was founded by an educational pioneer, Kurt Hahn, who recognized the power of education as a force for peace and sustainability as well as a need for promoting diversity and compassion and service for the benefit of the whole world but also local communities. This organization is made up of eighteen schools and colleges on four continents as follows:

1. Europe (n = 7): UWC Atlantic in Wales (1962),[4] UWC Adriatic in Italy (1982), UWC Red Cross Nordic in Norway (1995), UWC Mostar Bosnia and Herzegovina (2006), UWC Maastricht in the Netherlands (2009), UWC Dilijan in Armenia (2014) and UWC Robert Bosch College in Germany (2014);
2. Asia-Pacific (n = 6): UWC South-East Asia in Singapore (1975), Li Po Chun UWC of Hong Kong in China (1992), UWC Mahindra College in India (1997), UWC Thailand (2016), UWC Changshu China (2015) and UWC ISAK Japan (2017);
3. Americas (n = 3):[5] Pearson College UWC in Canada (1974), UWC-USA in New Mexico (1982) and UWC Costa Rica (2006);
4. Africa (n = 2): Waterford Kamhlaba UWC of Southern Africa in Eswatini (1981) and UWC East Africa in Tanzania (2019).

UWC is represented in more than 150 countries through their national committees. Over 60 000 students from over 180 countries have studied at UWC institutions. They receive full or partial financial assistance. They "study the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP), which provides [them] with the knowledge and skills to reach universities across the world. […] This international organization "also encourages them to consider how they can actively support their community, and build initiatives that teach leadership, teamwork, creativity and self-confidence." (*What is UWC?*) It boasts that it is building a community of role models to make the world a better place.

The colleges are deliberately diverse to allow students to gain understanding of different ways of thinking. Among the presidents of the UWC movement there are: Lord Mountbatten (1967), HM King Charles III (1978), Nelson Mandela (1995), who in 1999 became the Honorary President of UWC, and the current President HM Queen Noor of Jordan who shared the presidency with Mandela from 1995. Shelby Davis, a retired American investor, is a UWC patron, whose international scholarship program, the largest in the world, provides need-based financial aid to UWC graduates to pursue higher education in the USA.

Because the present study was conducted in a multi-accent school in Tanzania, where apart from English as an International Language, East African English (EAE) can be heard, two of the research statements concern this accent. It appears to be appropriate to familiarize the reader with the basic phonetic features of this lesser-known outer circle variety of English in the

[4] The date in brackets points to the year the school was founded and admitted its first students.
[5] Simon Bolivar UWC of Agriculture (1988) closed in 2012.

Kachru's (1985) model of the three concentric circles of World Englishes[6]. Wolf (2010/2021) describes EAE as a relatively homogenous variety, spoken in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in higher domains of every-day life such as education, the media, and commerce, as Swahili, usually functions as the lingua franca in that region. At a segmental level EAE phonology can be characterized by: a) in vowels: 1) "a substitution of /ɜː/ with [a], occasionally [ɛ], especially in Tanzanian English, as in [wak] (*work*), [ban] (*burn*)," 2) "a substitution of /ʌ/ with [a]," 3) "post-tonic <our, or, ure, us, ous> [pronounced] as [a(s)], as in [nɛba] (*neighbour*), [dɔkta] (*doctor*), [fjutʃa] (*future*), [dʒizas] (*Jesus*) and [sirias] (*serious*)"; b) in consonants: 1) "vocalization of /l/ in final Cl-clusters, insertion of [o/ɔ], as in [pipol] (*people*), [baibɔl] (*Bible*); 2) "simplification of consonant clusters through vowel insertion, as in [milik] (*milk*), *and [ə]go*." (Wolf 2010/2021: 220)

Schmied (2006: 193f.) gives a more detailed description of the EAE five-vowel phonological system, with a strict consonant-vowel syllable structure. At a vocalic level, the following tendencies are distinguished: 1) levelling length differences, short vowels are usually longer and more peripheral than in Received Pronunciation (RP) e. g. KIT[7], FOOT, LOT, STRUT/TRAP tend towards FLEECE, GOOSE, THOUGHT and BATH, respectively, 2) the central vowels: STRUT (*but*), NURSE (*bird*) and COMMA (*a*) tend toward half-open and open positions, e. g. /a/ and /e/, 3) some closing diphthongs are monophthongized, e. g. in FACE and MOUTH the second element is hardly heard; centring diphthongs finish with an open /a/, e. g. NEAR /nɪə/ as /nɪa/. For consonants, the substitutions are restricted to some ethnic groups only and they include: 1) the merger of /r/ and /l/, 2) intrusive or deleted consonants, e. g. nasals especially in plosive clusters, and 3) difficulty with some fricatives. At a suprasegmental level, consonant clusters are modified by: 1) deletion, e. g. dropping a final consonant, e. g. /d/ in *hand* or /t/ in *next*; or 2) by vowel insertion, e. g. /ɪ/ between /sp/ and at the and of the word in *hospital* pronounced as [ˈhosɪpɪtalɪ], /ɪ/ at the and of the word in *spring* as [ˈspɪrɪŋɪ] and /ʊ/ at the and of the word in *book* as [bʊkʊ].

All in all, owing to the fact that education at UWC schools takes place in a diverse college community, embracing a pluricentric view of English as ENL (English as a native language), ESL (English as a second language), EFL (English as a foreign language), EAE (East African English) – and promotes intercultural understanding, and engaging with global issues in the pursuit of peace, it embodies EIL pedagogy, which is defined by Marlina (2014: 7) as:

> Informed by the EIL paradigm, teaching EIL or EIL pedagogy means the act of professionally guiding students from all Kachruvian circles to (1) gain knowledge and awareness of the pluricentricity of English and the plurilingual nature of today's communication; (2) inspire students to give equal and legitimate recognition to all varieties of English; and (3) develop the ability to negotiate and communicate respectfully across cultures and Englishes in today's communicative settings that are international, intercultural, and multilingual in nature.
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> (Marlina 2014: 7)

[6]In this Kachruvian model, the inner concentric circle is synonymous with English as a native language (ENL), the outer circle denotes ESL, and the expanding circle includes both ELF and EFL.

[7] The words written in capital letters are Wells' (1982: XVIII-XIX) standard lexical set for English vowels.

2 Method

2.1 Aims

The aims of the study are to examine: firstly, respondents' preference for either the nativeness or intelligibility principle (cf. Levis 2005, 2020); secondly, their approach to language norms and its effect on their own English; thirdly, their attitudes to native and outgroup accents with respect to comprehension, familiarity, and recognition; and fourthly, an accent profile of a UWC student in order to formulate the main characteristics of an EIL user.

The intention is to address the following questions:

1. Do the respondents support the intelligibility or nativeness principle in international communication in English?
2. Does a foreign accent imply unintelligibility and incomprehensibility[8]?
3. Should an intelligible and comprehensible outgroup accent be used as a model of English and a language of instruction in English speaking-countries?
4. Should ESL and EFL learners comply with standard English norms and approximate to a native accent in international exams and in English-speaking countries where they study?
5. Does immersion in a multi-accent community improve the respondents' comprehension of accents?
6. Can they recognize native (N) and outgroup (O) accents of English?
7. Is it easier to understand N or O accents of English?
8. Does familiarity with N and O accents have a positive effect on the ability to comprehend them?
9. Are they familiar with EAE as a result of their immersion in Tanzania?
10. In communication do the respondents:
    a. hide or deliberately use their L1 accents?
    b. strive for a native English accent?
    c. aim at a specific accent or at being understood?
    d. adjust their speaking for the benefit of their communicative partner, if needed?[9]

2.2 Procedure

The applied quantitative method is based on a form consisting of 32 statements on a 5 point-Likert scale from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1), presented in a fixed order, collected by means of the Microsoft Teams platform between the months of May and July 2023. Descriptive statistics are used to show measures of central tendencies (mean) and variability (standard deviation).

2.3 Participants

The participants, forty students of UWCEA, Tanzania Moshi campus completed an online survey. They form a unique multicultural and multilingual cohort with respect to their biographical data, which includes such aspects as: represented nationalities, countries of living, the number

[8] According to Munro/Derwing (1995) intelligibility means how understandable L2/F2 speech is, i. e. how much the listener understands, while comprehensibility implies how easy L2/F2 speech is and refers to the listener's effort.

[9] In Jenkins (2022) such behaviour is referred to as the communicative efficiency motivation in accommodation theory.

of native and foreign languages in use, the variety of types of English learnt or acquired – each of which is discussed in detail below.

The informants were from two diploma classes, nineteen from Diploma 1 (henceforth D1) (47.5%), the first grade of the two-year IB programme, and twenty-one from Diploma 2 (henceforth D2) (52.5%), the final IB course. They represented twenty-two (73%) single and eight (27%) dual nationalities listed in Appendix 1,[10] of which 12.5% Tanzanians were the most numerous. There were two informants each of American, Lebanese, Pakistani, Polish and Portuguese origin. Eight participants pointed to a dual citizenship i. e.: American and Indian, English and French, Latvian and Canadian, Lithuanian and Beninese, Mauritian and Australian, Tanzanian and Kenyan, Tanzanian and Indian (Punjabi), as well as Welsh and British.

Appendix 2 shows that 29 informants (72.5%) were raised in one country (henceforth CoL – the country of living), inhabitants of Tanzania form the most numerous (n = 7, 12.5%) group since the study was conducted in Tanzania, while 11 respondents (27.5%) exhibit a multicultural background as they report to have lived in between two and five countries.

Most of the cohort (84%) report speaking more than one language, as 22 (55%) are multilingual and 11 (27.5%) bilinguals. Seven monolinguals constitute 17.5%.

Appendix 3 reveals that thirty-two respondents (80%) were speakers of one native language (NL), e. g., English (n = 8, 20%), Kiswahili (n = 3, 7.5%) Arabic, Polish, Portuguese (n = 2 - for each of these Ls). Seven (17.5%) could speak two L1s and only one (2.5%) was a user of three NLs.

As regards the number of languages spoken by each individual, the greatest part of the informants could speak two languages (n= 11, 27.5%), seven informants (17.5%) communicated in one and the remaining group were multilingual and used between three to six languages, i. e. three (n= 10), five (n= 6), four (n= 5) and six (n= 1).

Appendix 4 provides detailed information on the variety of languages spoken by the cohort and the respondents' self-assigned proficiency level in these languages pursuant to CEFR.

All the respondents spoke English, as it was the language of communication at school. Their self-assigned proficiency level in this language was high, i. e., C2 (n= 21), C1 (n= 17) and B2 (n= 2). The next most frequently used languages were French and Spanish (n= 15). Then the ranking of languages is as follows: Swahili (n= 11), Hindi and German (n= 4); Arabic, Gujarati, Punjabi, Russian and Portuguese (n= 3); Italian, Mauritian Creole and Polish (n= 2). Eighteen other languages listed in Appendix 4 were reported by one informant each: Danish, Catalan, Bangla, Marathi, Urdu, Ukrainian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Irish, Welsh, Armenian, Pashto, Luganda, Pare, Tetum, Indonesian, Hungarian and Turkish.

In the cohort the most numerous language family (Indo-European, n = 23) was represented by the following eight branches:

[10] For greater clarity, all the tables regarding the participants are included in the Appendix.

1. Germanic, e. g., English (n= 5), German (n= 4) and Danish (n= 1),
2. Romance, e. g., French (n= 15), Spanish (n= 15), Portuguese (n= 3), Italian (n= 2) and Catalan (n= 1),
3. Indo-Aryan, e. g., Hindi (n= 4), Gujarati (n= 3), Punjabi (n= 3), Bangla, Marathi, and Urdu (n= 1 each),
4. Slavic, e. g., Russian (n= 3), Polish (n= 2), Ukrainian (n= 1),
5. Baltic, e. g., Latvian and Lithuanian,
6. Celtic, e. g., Irish and Welsh,
7. Armenian and
8. Iranian, in this case Pashto.

There were thirteen representatives of the Niger-Congo language family who spoke Swahili (n = 11), Luganda and Pare (n = 1 each). Afro-Asiatic, Semitic was represented by Arabic (n = 3), two Creole languages by Mauritian Creole (n = 2) and Tetum (n = 1), Austronesian by Indonesian (n = 1). There was also one speaker of the Uralic (Hungarian) and Turkic (Turkish) families.

Appendix 5 summarizes types of a variety of English learnt or acquired by the respondents. As expected, native inner circle varieties of English, especially British (80%) and American English (73%), but also Canadian and Irish (3% each), were reported to be most often learnt or acquired. Outer circle Englishes such as East African (20%), Indian (8%), South African (5%) and Pakistani (3%) were represented by a minority of the cohort.

3 Results and discussion

For ease of understanding, the results are grouped under four major headings, which correspond to the main aims of the study, and they regard arguments for the informants' fondness for speaking with either a native English accent or intelligible English, their attitude to language norms and to native and outgroup English accents, as well as the accent profile of a UWC student of EIL.

Descriptive statistics consisting of mean (central tendency) and standard deviation (variability) are used to discuss the results which are displayed according to the mean, from the highest to the lowest value. The percentage of the provided answers from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1) is also included in the tables.

3.1 Nativeness vs. intelligibility principle

The responses to five statements presented in Table 1 provide an answer to the question of whether the respondents support the nativeness or intelligibility principle in international communication in English.

No.	Statement	S no.	Mean	σ	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	In communication, being understood is what matters, rather than sounding native.	S.3	4.63	0.63	70%	22.5%	7.5%	0%	0%
2.	Speaking any variety of Eng. is acceptable in international encounters if people can understand each other.	S.2	4.58	0.59	62.5%	32.5%	5%	0%	0%
3.	When I understand what the speaker is saying their accent does not matter.	S.19	4.45	0.88	62.5%	25%	10%	0%	2.5%
4.	Even if I can hear that a speaker has a foreign accent it does not mean that I will have problems understanding them.	S.21	4.33	0.89	55%	27.5%	12.5%	5%	0%
5.	In international communication native-like pronunciation and grammar is less important than being understood.	S.4	4.15	0.74	35%	45%	20%	0%	0%

Table 1: Nativeness vs. intelligibility principle – descriptive statistics
(S no. = statement number, SA = strongly agree, A =agree, U = undecided, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree)

The results show that in general the respondents are in favour of sounding intelligible rather than nativelike. The mean values range from 4.15 to 4.63, with the lowest variability (standard deviation) in the top two statements: S.3 (0.63) and S.2 (0.59), and the highest in the statements: 19 (0.88) and 21 (0.89) respectively. The statement with the highest mean and one of the lowest standard deviations (S.3: 4.63 ± 0.63): "In communication, being understood is what matters, rather than sounding native." is supported by 92.5% of the informants, who chose mostly "strongly agree" (70%) and "agree" (22.5%) responses. A similar percentage of positive answers (95%) is given to the statement which prioritizes intelligibility regardless of a variety of English used (S.2: 4.58 ± 0.59). 87.5% agree that being able to understand the interlocutor is more vital in communication than the accent which is produced (S.19: 4.45 ± 0.88). The standard deviation is higher (0.88) than in the two above-mentioned cases, which means that the responses are less consistent. A very similar tendency of high variability (S.21: 4.33 ± 0.89) is revealed in the statement expressing the idea that accented speech does not imply unintelligibility – which is selected by 82.5% of the cohort. Eventually, 80% of the participants acknowledge that in international conversations native-like pronunciation and grammar is less important than being understood (S.4: 4.15 ± 0.74).

3.2 Norms

The six statements in this part, displayed in Table 2, concern the respondents' attitude to language norms and they reveal: 1) whether outgroup accents should be used as a model of English and a language of instruction in English-speaking countries, and 2) whether EFL and ESL learners should approximate to a native accent in international exams and in English-speaking countries where they study. Here there is greater variability in the results than in the previous section

on intelligibility versus nativeness as the values of standard deviation (from 0.74 to 1.46) are higher. The means range from 2.88 to 4.15.

No.	Statement	S no.	Mean	σ	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	As long as ESL, e. g., Indian or Western African Eng., does not impair understanding, there is no reason to object to that variety being used in native Eng.-speaking countries, e. g. as a language of instruction (if a teacher used this accent in the classroom.)	S.9	4.15	0.74	32.5%	52.5%	12.5%	2.5%	0%
2.	The source of materials for studying Eng. should be all Eng.-speaking communities and contexts, not just native Eng.-speaking cultures.	S.8	4.00	0.96	32.5%	45%	15%	5%	2.5%
3.	A proficient user of Eng., whether native or non-native, is a role model in the process of learning the Eng. language.	S.7	3.93	0.89	32.5%	30%	35%	2.5%	0%
4.	Non-native speakers of Eng. are required to comply with standard Eng. norms in international communications especially in international exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, or CAE.	S.5	3.73	0.88	17.5%	47.5%	25%	10%	0%
5.	I feel pressure to aim at a native Eng. accent and to approximate to native speaker norms because I am planning to study in an Eng.-speaking country, and I feel that it will be expected of me.	S.17	3.33	1.46	27.5%	27.5%	10%	20%	15%
6.	If you study in an Eng.-speaking country (the USA, the UK, Canada, etc.) you should adjust your Eng. to the standard variety of Eng. which is used there.	S.6	2.88	1.07	10%	17.5%	25%	45%	2.5%

Table 2: Norms – descriptive statistics (for the abbriviations see Table 1)

Statement no. 9, with the highest mean (4.15 ± 0.74), answers the question of whether intelligible outgroup accents should be used as a language of instruction in English-speaking countries. 85% concur with this idea. It was modelled on Trudgill/Hannah's (1982/2002: 124) rhetorical question, who point to a controversial linguistic issue regarding second language varieties of English, in particular, the use of West African English in a European country:

> A particular problem arises in the case of speakers of non-native varieties of English who attempt to get English language degrees at continental European universities. For example, a West African student's English may be more fluent than that of a Dutch student, but is the WAfEng variety valid or appropriate in the Dutch situation, and more importantly, should such a student be allowed to teach English in a Dutch school?
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> (Trudgill/Hannah 1982/2002: 124)

77% of those surveyed are of the opinion that all English-speaking communities and contexts, not just native English-speaking cultures, should be sources of materials for studying English (S.8: 4.00 ± 0.96). 62.5% express their agreement with the idea that "a proficient user of English, whether native or non-native, is a role model in the process of learning the English language (S.7)," – (3.93 ± 0.89); although 35% are undecided, unable to separate the notion of good proficient English from the notion of a native speaker "ideal". 65% of the informants find it true that outgroup speakers of English are required to comply with standard English norms in international communications, especially in international exams such as IELTS, TOEFL, CAE (S.5: 3.73 ± 0.88). 55% admit that they feel pressure to aim at a native English accent and to approximate to native speaker norms because they are planning to study in an English-speaking country, and they feel that it will be expected of them (S.17: 3.33 ± 1.46). This statement obtains a mean of 3.33 and the highest standard deviation value in this set, at 1.46, which indicates greater dispersion. Finally, nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) disagree with, one quarter is undecided, and 27.5% are for, the statement which reads: "If you study in an English-speaking country (the USA, the UK, Canada, etc.) you should adjust your English to the standard variety of English which is used there. (S.6)" - (2.88 ± 1.07).

3.3 Accents

This section, on the basis of thirteen statements included in Table 3, presents the respondents' attitudes to native and outgroup accents with respect to comprehension, familiarity, and recognition. The colours in the table are used to highlight the topic of native and outgroup accents (dark grey), as well as East African English accents (light grey).

No.	Statement	S no.	Mean	σ	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
I.	COMPREHENSION								
1.	Studying in an international school requires making an effort to improve comprehension of other accents.	S.1	4.50	0.55	52.5%	45%	2.5%	0%	0%
2.	My understanding of Eng. has benefited from listening to native and non-native Eng. accents.	S.23	4.33	0.76	47.5%	40%	10%	2.5%	0%
3.	At school I can hear what different accents sound like, which makes it easier to understand them.	S.20	4.30	0.88	52.5%	30%	12.5%	5%	0%
4.	I find understanding native Eng. accents (e. g., American, British) easier than non-native ones.	S.26	3.15	1.12	12.5%	30%	20%	35%	2.5%
5.	I find understanding non-native Eng. accents easier than native ones.	S.27	2.63	0.95	2.5%	17.5%	27.5%	45%	7.5%

No.	Statement	S no.	Mean	σ	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
II.	FAMILIARITY								
6.	Thanks to my UWCEA experience I am familiar with a wide array of Eng. accents.	S.30	4.35	0.70	45%	47.5%	5%	2.5%	0%
7.	The study at UWCEA has positively affected my familiarity with a great range of Eng. accents.	S.28	4.33	0.73	45%	45%	7.5%	2.5%	0%
8.	Before UWCEA I was familiar with a narrow range of Eng. accents.	S.29	3.58	1.20	25%	35%	17.5%	17.5%	5%
9.	At the beginning of UWCEA I found East African Eng. accent(s) unfamiliar.	S.31	3.13	1.22	10%	37.5%	20%	20%	12.5%
III.	RECOGNITION								
10.	I can recognize the difference between Eng. native and non-native pronunciation.	S.24	3.78	1.08	22.5%	47.5%	17.5%	10%	2.5%
11.	When I hear somebody speaking Eng. I wonder where the person comes from.	S.22	3.75	1.08	25%	45%	12.5%	15%	2.5%
12.	I can recognize a speaker's accent/nationality if it belongs to Englishes which I hear on the campus.	S.25	3.68	0.97	15%	52.5%	22.5%	5%	5%
13.	Thanks to my studies at UWCEA I am able to recognize East African Eng. accent(s).	S.32	3.65	1.00	17.5%	47.5%	20%	12.5%	2.5%

Table 3: Native and outgroup accents – descriptive statistics (for the abbriviations see Table 1)

When it comes to the comprehension of English accents, it can be concluded that it improves in a multi-accent community, because 97.5% of the respondents agree that they are required to make an effort to understand them (S.1: 4.50 ± 0.55) – which is also reflected by the high mean of 4.50 with a low value of standard deviation (0.55). In addition, 87.5% of the respondents confirm that their overall understanding of English gets better as a result of immersion in a multi-accent community (S.23: 4.33 ± 0.76). This exposure to native and outgroup accents at school facilitates understanding of different Englishes (S.20: 4.30 ± 0.88) – 82.5% of the students identify with it. The informants find understanding native English accents easier (S.26: 3.15 ± 1.12) than outgroup ones (S.27: 2.63 ± 0.95), although it needs to be emphasised that there is a wide dispersion of results represented by standard deviation values of around 1 point, from 0.95 (S.27) to 1.12 (S.26).

The results also give some insight into the positive effect of studying in the international multicultural environment on the respondents' familiarity with a great range of English accents (90%) (S.28: 4.33 ± 0.73). 92.5% are aware that this experience has led to their familiarity with a wide array of English accents (S.30: 4.35 ± 0.70). 60% admit to having been familiar with a

narrow range of Eng. accents before their study at UWCEA (S.29: 3.58 ± 1.20). The high value of standard deviation (1.20) for this statement points to large variability, which might have been caused by the fact that the cohort comprises outgroup and native respondents, some of whom were raised in multi-accent communities before studying in UWCEA. Moreover, 47.5% of the respondents admit to having been unfamiliar with Eastern African English at the beginning of their UWC study (S.31: 3.13 ± 1.22). The high value of standard deviation (1.22) indicates a variety of answers in the group as, presumably, the informants who were residents of Tanzania or any other country in Africa might have had greater familiarity with EAE accents.

The data also provide information on the respondents' self-reported ability to recognize English accents. 65% report being able to recognize EAE accent(s) owing to their study at UWCEA (S.32: 3.65 ± 1.00). The majority of the informants believe they can recognize the difference between English native and outgroup pronunciation (S.24: 3.78 ± 1.08), and a speaker's accent/nationality if it belongs to Englishes which they could hear on the campus (S.25: 3.68 ± 0.97). 70% of the respondents confirm that they sometimes reflect on an interlocutors' nationality on the basis of their accent (S.22: 3.75 ± 1.08). However, the variability in the last three statement is large (with standard deviation from 0.97 (S.25) to 1.08 in S.22 and 24).

3.4 Accent profile of UWC student of EIL

The data in Table 4 provide generalizations about the accents of UWC students, which could serve as an outline of typical characteristics of an EIL user.

No.	Statement	S no.	Mean	σ	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	If a communication problem appears I adjust my speaking for the benefit of my communicative partner(s).	S.18	4.30	0.61	37.5%	55%	7.5%	0%	0%
2.	I believe my Eng. has features of many Englishes and places I have been.	S.16	4.05	0.93	32.5%	50%	10%	5%	2.5%
3.	It does not matter to me which variety of Eng. I speak if people understand me.	S.15	3.88	1.16	35%	37.5%	12.5%	10%	5%
4.	When I speak Eng., I don't think about my accent, I aim at being understood.	S.14	3.68	1.25	30%	35%	15%	12.5%	7.5%
5.	I prefer one native variety of Eng. over others (for example, I aim at Am. Eng.).	S.10	3.38	1.21	25%	22.5%	17.5%	35%	0%
6.	When I speak Eng., I strive for a native Eng. accent.	S.11	3.23	1.31	17.5%	32.5%	17.5%	20%	12.5%
7.	When I speak Eng., I make an attempt to hide my mother tongue accent.	S.13	2.98	1.29	12.5%	30%	12.5%	32.5%	12.5%
8.	When I speak Eng., I deliberately use my mother-tongue accented Eng.	S.12	2.33	1.05	2.5%	12.5%	22.5%	40%	22.5%

Table 4: Accent profile of UWC student of EIL – descriptive statistics (for the abbriviations see Table 1)

Since at UWC school there is a plethora of English accents, one of the techniques that 92.5% of the students report applying is adjusting their speaking for the benefit of their communicative partner(s) when faced with a communication problem (S.18: 4.30 ± 0.61). In other words, EIL users as interlocutors appear to be aware that success in communication is reciprocal and depends on their own willingness to overcome a breakdown. This is the statement with the highest mean (4.30) and the lowest standard deviation (0.61), which indicates a small amount of variance in the responses. In the remaining statements, however, the variance is large, as standard deviation ranges from 0.93 to 1.31. The difference in the attitude of native and outgroup speakers with reference to these accent-related issues, which is intended to be the focal point of a future analysis, might be one of the reasons for such dispersion of the data.

Furthermore, as slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (27.5%) report having been raised in between two and five countries, unsurprisingly, 82.5% of all of them believe that their English has features of many Englishes and places they have been to (S.16: 4.05 ± 0.93). The next two statements (S.14 andS.15) provide arguments for intelligibility, as the main communicative goal the majority of the respondents care about is being understood rather than their own variety of English (S.15: 3.88 ± 1.16) and/or their accent (S.14: 3.68 ± 1.25. It has been observed that an attachment to "standard" inner circle native speaker models remains firmly in place among many respondents, as half of them claim to strive for a native English accent (S.11: 3.23 ± 1.31) and nearly half (47.5%) express a preference of one variety of English over others (S.10: 3.38 ± 1.21). The use of the L1 accent in the respondents' own English has also been under scrutiny. The results are inconclusive as 45% report not making an attempt to hide their own L1 accent in English while 42.5% admit to neutralizing it (S.13: 2.98 ± 1.29). In addition, 62.5% state that they do not deliberately use their mother tongue-accented English (S.12: 2.33 ± 1.05).

4 Conclusions

The findings prove that firstly, among EIL users, intelligibility is valued over nativeness (S.3: 4.63 ± 0.63) and speaking English with a foreign accent does not imply unintelligibility and incomprehensibility (S.21: 4.33 ± 0.89). Secondly, as hypothesised, immersion in a multi-accent community is alleged to positively affect the respondents' comprehension (S.1: 4.50 ± 0.55), recognition (S.25: 3.68 ± 0.97), and familiarity with English accents (S.28: 4.33 ± 0.73). Contrary to Smith/Nelson's (2006) finding, native English accents are reported to be easier to understand than outgroup ones (S.26: 3.15 ± 1.12). It is also confirmed that familiarity with accents enhances their comprehension (S.23: 4.33 ± 0.76), as well as that immersion among East African English users improves the ability to recognise this accent (S.32: 3.65 ± 1.0).

The examined users of EIL share some attitudes to accent. They believe their English has features of many Englishes (82.5%), aim at being understood (65%), do not deliberately use their L1 accents in English (62.5%) and some overtly admit to neutralizing their L1 accents in English (42.5%). In addition, half of the informants strive for a native English accent (50%) and nearly the same number of them prefer one variety of English over others (47.5%).

To summarize, the respondents' beliefs support the intelligibility principle. At the same time, nearly half of them exhibit a preference for a native accent in their own English. They also feel pressurized to aim at a native accent and approximate to standard English norms in international exams and undertaking studies in English-speaking countries. These issues could serve as starting points for future research.

This research, however, is subject to some limitations. First, the study included a random, but small, sample of UWCAE students. We are fully aware that a larger cohort could have affected the results. Second, and more important, no correlation between attitudes and linguistic/cultural background was examined, although we formulated some assumptions. For example, statement 16 shows that 82.5% of the respondents expressed the opinion that their English has features of many Englishes and places they have been to, although only 27.5% of all the cohort have been raised in between two and five countries, which leads us to the conjecture that this might have been because of their exposure to the variety of accents at UWCEA. This could be further examined. Similarly, in statement S31, which asked the respondents about their familiarity with EAE accents, we assumed that the high value of standard deviation might be attributed to the fact that the residents of Tanzania, unlike other respondents, might have been familiar with this variety of English. We realise that the attitudes of the respondents regarding accents of English do not necessarily correspond to their actual ability to recognize these accents, as this was not verified prior to the study, mostly for logistical reasons. Finally, it is believed that these limitations do not undermine the quality of our research on EIL in the unique multilingual and multicultural setting of UWCEA, which has not been much examined so far.

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Appendix

No.	**Nationality**	n= 40	*%*	n*(%)*
1.	Tanzanian	5	12.5%	22 (73%)
2.	American	2	5%	
3.	Lebanese	2	5%	
4.	Pakistani	2	5%	
5.	Polish	2	5%	
6.	Portuguese	2	5%	
7.	Ugandan	2	5%	
8.	Armenian	1	2.5%	
9.	Bangladeshi	1	2.5%	
10.	British	1	2.5%	
11.	Canadian	1	2.5%	
12.	German	1	2.5%	
13.	Hungarian	1	2.5%	
14.	Indian	1	2.5%	
15.	Irish	1	2.5%	
16.	Italian	1	2.5%	
17.	Mauritian	1	2.5%	
18.	Mexican	1	2.5%	
19.	Palestinian	1	2.5%	
20.	Spanish	1	2.5%	
21.	Timorese	1	2.5%	
22.	Ukrainian	1	2.5%	
23.	American, Indian	1	2.5%	8 (27%)
24.	English, French	1	2.5%	
25.	Latvian, Canadian	1	2.5%	
26.	Lithuanian, Beninese	1	2.5%	
27.	Mauritian, Australian	1	2.5%	
28.	Tanzanian, Kenyan	1	2.5%	
29.	Tanzanian, Indian (Punjabi)	1	2.5%	
30.	Welsh, British	1	2.5%	

Appendix 1: Nationality of the respondents

No.	**The number of CsoL**	**The country of living (CoL)**	n= 40	%	n(%)
1.	one	Tanzania	7	17.5%	29 (72.5%)
2.		Mauritius	2	5%	
3.		Poland	2	5%	
4.		Portugal	2	5%	
5.		USA	2	5%	
6.		Armenia	1	2.5%	
7.		Bangladesh	1	2.5%	
8.		Hungary	1	2.5%	
9.		India	1	2.5%	
10.		Ireland	1	2.5%	
11.		Italy	1	2.5%	
12.		Lebanon	1	2.5%	
13.		Lithuania	1	2.5%	
14.		Mexico	1	2.5%	
15.		Pakistan	1	2.5%	
16.		Palestine	1	2.5%	
17.		Spain	1	2.5%	
18.		Uganda	1	2.5%	
19.		Ukraine	1	2.5%	
20.	two	Canada, Latvia	1	2.5%	6 (15%)
21.		England, France	1	2.5%	
22.		Pakistan, Afghanistan	1	2.5%	
23.		Saudi Arabia, Lebanon	1	2.5%	
24.		Timor-Leste, Indonesia	1	2.5%	
25.		Wales, England	1	2.5%	
26.	three	Germany, Tanzania, Malawi	1	2.5%	2 (5%)
27.		Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda	1	2.5%	
28.	four	Italy, Canada, Thailand, Tanzania	1	2.5%	2 (5%)
29.		South Africa, Uganda, Ethiopia, Namibia	1	2.5%	
30.	five	USA, Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Denmark	1	2.5%	1 (2.5%)

Appendix 2: The respondents' country of living

(CcoL = countries of living)

No.	**The number of NLs**	**Native language(s)**	n= *40*	*%*	n(%)
1.	one	English	8	20%	32
2.		Kiswahili[11]	3	7.5%	(80%)
3.		Arabic	2	5%	
4.		Polish	2	5%	
5.		Portuguese	2	5%	
6.		Armenian	1	2.5%	
7.		Bangla[12]	1	2.5%	
8.		French	1	2.5%	
9.		German	1	2.5%	
10.		Gujarati	1	2.5%	
11.		Hungarian	1	2.5%	
12.		Italian	1	2.5%	
13.		Latvian	1	2.5%	
14.		Lithuanian	1	2.5%	
15.		Mauritian Creole	1	2.5%	
16.		Pare	1	2.5%	
17.		Pashto	1	2.5%	
18.		Punjabi	1	2.5%	
19.		Spanish	1	2.5%	
20.		Tetum	1	2.5%	
21.	two	Arabic, English	1	2.5%	7
22.		English, Welsh	1	2.5%	(17.5%)
23.		Kiswahili, English	1	2.5%	
24.		Luganda, English	1	2.5%	
25.		Spanish, Catalan	1	2.5%	
26.		Ukrainian, Russian	1	2.5%	
27.		Urdu, Punjabi	1	2.5%	
28.	three	English, Punjabi, Kiswahili	1	2.5%	1 (2.5%)

Appendix 3: Native language(s) of the respondents

[11] Kiswahili is an endonym of Swahili.
[12] It is an endonym of Bengali language.

No.	L family[13]	L branch	Language	*n*	A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2[14]
1.	EIL	Germanic	English	**40**	0	0	0	2	17	21
2.			German	**4**	1	2	0	0	0	1
3.			Danish	**1**	0	1	0	0	0	0
4.		Romance	French	**15**	1	1	6	5	0	2
5.			Spanish	**15**	3	5	1	3	1	2
6.			Portuguese	**3**	0	0	0	1	0	2
7.			Italian	**2**	1	0	0	0	0	1
8.			Catalan	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
9.		Indo-Aryan	Hindi	**4**	1	2	0	0	0	1
10.			Gujarati	**3**	1	1	0	0	1	0
11.			Punjabi	**3**	0	1	0	1	0	1
12.			Bangla[15]	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
13.			Marathi	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
14.			Urdu	**1**	1	0	0	0	0	0
15.		Slavic	Russian	**3**	0	1	0	0	0	2
16.			Polish	**2**	0	0	0	0	0	2
17.			Ukrainian	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
18.		Baltic	Latvian	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
19.			Lithuanian	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
20.		Celtic	Irish	**1**	0	0	0	1	0	0
21.			Welsh	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
22.		Armenian	Armenian	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
23.		Iranian	Pashto	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
24.	Niger-Congo	Bantu	(Ki-)Swahili	**11**	3	0	0	5	2	1
25.			Luganda[16]	**1**	0	0	0	0	1	0
26.			Pare[17]	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
27.	Afro-Asiatic	Semitic	Arabic	**3**	1	0	0	0	1	1
28.	Creole	French Creole	Mauritian Creole[18]	**2**	0	0	0	0	0	2
29.			Tetum[19]	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	1
30.	Austronesian	Malayo-Poly-nesian	Indonesian	**1**	0	0	0	0	1	0
31.	Uralic		Hungarian	**1**	0	0	0	0	1	0
32.	Turkic	Southern	Turkish	**1**	0	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix 4: Languages spoken and proficiency level (CEFR)

[13] Taxonomy of languages according to Eberhard/Simons/Fennig's (2024) *Ethnologue.*
[14] C2 also includes the informants' L1.
[15] The *Ethnologue* term is Bengali.
[16] The *Ethnologue* term is Ganda.
[17] The *Ethnologue* term is Asu.
[18] The *Ethnologue* term is Morisyen.
[19] The *Ethnologue* term is Tetun Dili.

No.	Kachru's (1985) Concentric Circles	Variety of English	Number/40	%
1.	Inner Circle	British	32	80%
2.		American	29	73%
3.		Canadian	1	3%
4.		Irish	1	3%
5.	Outer Circle	East African	8	20%
6.		Indian	3	8%
7.		South African	2	5%
8.		Pakistani	1	3%

Appendix 5: Variety of English learnt or acquired: inner and outer concentric circles