

LEXICAL VARIATION IN LIVESTOCK BARGAINING REGISTER IN UKAMBANĪ

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated lexical variation in livestock bargaining register in UkambanĪ. Livestock register plays a central role in creating and sustaining the market society that encompasses social norms of Kamba people. Moreover, in Kenya, livestock production contributes about 3.3% of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Despite such significant contribution to the national economy, little attention has been paid on livestock register by linguists yet it constitutes of specific social and cultural activities. This study aimed at showing different lexical variation in livestock bargaining register. The study applied variationist theory by Labov (1972). Consequently, a mixed research design was adopted. The findings of the study revealed that nouns record higher variability than the verbs and adjectives in livestock register. The findings further showed that livestock bargaining register in Ukambani is caused by the individual speaker's age and gender.

Keywords: Lexical variation, Livestock register, Ukambani.

1. INTRODUCTION

Lexical variation refers to the choice of different words, phrases and collocations in speech by people in different contexts. The focus in lexical variation is on how different terminological terms are used to capture the different kinds of variations that exist in the use of the lexicon to name the referents (cf. Geeraets, 1993). Lexical variation can be in words and phrases – by comparing the way a language is spoken in different places and among different social groups. Thus, it may be systematically distinguished in two ways: first, there is the fact that words may mean several things and second, the same kind of referent may be named by various distinct lexical categories.

Different studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of register in explaining systematic patterns of language use (Reid 1956; Ferguson 1983; [Biber 2012](#)). For instance, Ferguson (1983) study in variation shows the structural characteristics of sports announcer talk, which includes omission of subjects, simplification, sentence inversion, and present progressive verbs. Asnaghi (2013) study on the analysis of regional lexical variation in California English, using site-restricted web searches revealed regional, lexical and linguistic variation exists in written standard California English. **Miyazaki and, Takemura in (2019) study on dialectical variation revealed lexical and morphosyntactic variation among the Swahili varieties in Zanzibar, Tanzania.**

Lexical variation occurs when different dialects or even same language users employ varying words for the same thing due to various reasons. This paper study focuses on livestock register. Livestock market site provides a linguistic climate where the buyer (who is the bargainer) is in diametrical opposition to the vendor, whose main aim is to make the most profit in the sale of the animal. Biber & Concard (2009) observe that registers are language varieties associated with a particular combination of situational characteristics and communicative purposes, which in turn typically exhibit linguistic similarities. Due to the opposing participants in livestock market, the interactants engage in livestock register that leads to an acceptable price to both parties. Participants use negotiating, compromising, and maneuvering skills which sometimes fall into conflict (Ayoola, 2009). Kapchan (1996) observes that interactants in a bargaining exchange try to outwit one another by convincing each other of the reasonableness of the price or lack thereof. Therefore, bargaining is an important aspect of the social activity of buying and selling in which vendors and their prospective customers engage in.

Ūkambanĩ is occupied by Kamba people who speak the Kĩikamba language. Kĩikamba is a major language of Kenya with four million speakers and growing. The Kĩikamba language is placed in class 50 of E zone, a group which includes Languages like Kikuyu (E51), Kiambu (E52), Kimeru (E53), Kitharaka (E54), Kĩikamba (E55) and Daiso of Tanzania (E56) Guthrie (1948). According to Maundu (1980), Kĩikamba has five dialects; the Kitui North dialect, the central Kitui dialect, Eastern-Southern dialect, and Makuenĩ and Machakos dialects. Maundu said that the Kĩikamba dialects include Kĩmumonĩ, Kĩngũlya, Kĩkĩlũngũ, North Kitui and Kĩmasakũ. Mutiga (2002) recognizes four major regional dialects which have developed from two regional dialects (Kĩkĩtui and Kĩmasakũ). The Kĩkĩtui dialect is broken into two sub-dialects; Mwingi dialect and Kitui central dialect. The Kĩmasakũ dialect is spoken with some variations in Machakos and Makuenĩ districts (Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ).

This paper focuses on lexical variation in livestock bargaining register in Ukambanĩ. The livestock markets in Ukambanĩ have enhanced market discourse of bargaining which occurs in everyday life of the Kamba people and strongly impacts on their linguistic environment. The study therefore investigated the aspect of lexical variation within the bargaining exchanges between vendors and buyers in Ukambanĩ. Thomason and Kauffman (1988) observes that the lexical variation is the most erratic aspect of language and therefore the most likely to undergo change due to language contact situation. The study therefore aimed to describe the different types of lexical variation within the livestock bargaining register in Ukambanĩ.

It is hoped that the study adds to the topic of languages, linguistic exchanges and bargaining discourses in Kĩikamba language. The study applied the Variationist Theory hence it is hoped that it will inform on sociolinguistic research by advancing knowledge on livestock register as a social activity.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted Variationist Theory (Labov, 1972; Wardhaugh 2006) that focuses on language variation. The overriding concepts behind variationist theory (VT) is the view that no one speaks the same way all the time and people constantly exploit the nuances of the language they speak for a wide variety of purposes (Wardhaugh, 2006). VT is based on several tenets. One of these tenets

is that speakers vary language at every level of language (Wardhaugh, 2006). The first is the principle of accountability. That is, a linguistic variant must be correctly analyzed. This happens when the researcher takes into account all the variants regardless of whether they are realized or unrealized as long as they comprise of the variable of the variable context. Taglamonte (2012) observes that a correctly accountable research will exhaustively investigate all possible factors of context. The second tenet is vernacular. Milroy (1987) defines vernacular as the real language use. The vernacular forms the foundation onto which styles are developed.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed research design. The qualitative design was considered because some variations needed to be described in words. The study considered quantitative research since Labovian theory calls for a quantitative treatment of data using appropriate statistical techniques (Hudson, 1996). Variationists collect data, quantify it and apply statistical measures in order to study language variability with greater precision. Linguistic variables are measured and expressed numerically; hence, a quantitative research design. The target population of this study was the bargaining exchanges between the buyers/brokers and sellers of Livestock in Livestock market places in Ukambanĩ. The study targeted to do a recording of 30 interactions. This initiated by the fact that in market discourses the interactions are brief and concise. The data was collected in a natural speech situation while the buying and selling of livestock was going on. Through purposive sampling the study sampled a corpus of bargaining exchanges of twenty-four interactions. The recordings were collected with the help of research assistants (livestock brokers). Audio recording of interactions between the sellers and their prospective buyers was used as the major tool of data collection in this study.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The variationist sociolinguistic of orderly heterogeneity claims that speakers have a continuum of choices to make in their language use. This results to linguistic variability which can often be regarded to us socially but linguistically equivalent ways of the same thing and occurs at all levels of linguistic analysis. The study presents data as recorded from 24 sampled interactions. This study analyses lexical variation in close reference to different word classes which include lexical variation involving nouns, lexical Variation involving verbal forms and lexical variations in adjectives. Lexical variation refers to a situation where words may mean several things and a thing may be referred to using more than one lexical item.

4.1 Lexical Variation Involving Nouns

The analyzed data reveals the lexical variation involving nouns. The audio recorded data reveals six main nouns which were cow, goat, sheep, chicken, money and skin. The Kĩkamba words used by both the sellers and buyers to name the referents were as shown in analysis of nouns. The researcher collected nouns in the conversations as they were used within the livestock registers. The data reflected the names of the livestock at the market, money as used by the buyer and also parts of body of animals such as the skin. In choosing the nouns, the researcher considered all these aspects in order to collect data that fairly represents the market environment of livestock. The subsequent analysis below illustrates the nouns that were reflected in livestock register. The participants in the conversations used different words to name the referents that were targeted which attests to the existence of lexical variation in the livestock register.

Table 1 below gives the noun variants and their frequencies:

Linguistic Variable	Variants	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer- seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions
Ng’ombe (A Cows, male or female)	Moi	A heifer	23
	Nzaũ	A bull	12
	Ndewa	A castrated bull.	8
	Kalasinga	A big bull.	22
	Kasaũ	A calf	12
	Isoma	A bonny cow	11
	Ivuseki	An old emaciated cow.	18
	Mũtambo	A big strong bull (hyperbole: railway)	10
	Muoma	A cow that has calved severally	6

The analysis in table 1 above demonstrates that there are various referents for the variable *Ng’ombe* such as, *Moi*, *Nzaũ*, *Ndewa*, *Kalasinga*, *Kasaũ*, *Isoma*, *Mboo*, *Ivuseki*, *Mũtambo* and *Mũoma*. This implies that the cow variable shows onomasiological variation. Onomasiological variation is a situation where a referent or a type of referent may be named by means of various conceptually distinct lexical items. For instance, *Ng’ombe* to generally mean a cow (male or female), while *moi* to heifer and *nzaũ* a bull.

Onomasiological variation was also reflected in the variable goat as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: The goat variable (Mbūi)

Linguistic variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Mbūi (A goat, male or female)	Nthenge	A Billy goat	18
	Mbaika	A goat that has not kidded	12
	Ngulata	An old billy goat	10
	mũoma	A goat that has kidded severally.	17
	Katena	A kid	12
	Ndīla	A castrated billy goat	10
	Mūtĩng'a	A mature goat	17
	Mūsomalĩ	A goat from Somali land.	14
	Mũūkamba	A goat from Kamba land.	11
	Mūtambo	A big goat	3
	Woma	A Borana goat	2
			5
			4
			3

The goat variable as shown in table 2 reveals that the referent goat may be named by distinct lexical items such as *nthenge*, *mbaika*, *ngulata*, *mũoma*, *katena*, *ndīla*, *mūtĩng'a*, *mūsomali*, *mũūkamba*, *mūtambo* and *woma*. All these concepts have different pathways that relate to source concept which is the goat. In Kĩkamba language, the lexical item *goat* is therefore referred to by different concepts.

The data also revealed the sheep variable as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: The Sheep Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Ilondu (A sheep, male or female)	ĩlũnga	A sheep (male or female)	12
	ĩsũnĩ	A sheep (male or female)	14
	ĩmaa	A sheep (male or female) (Kĩkĩtui)	11
	mwati	A young female sheep that has not lambed.	8
	ndũũme	A mature male sheep	6
	kĩlingĩlĩ	A sheep with a raised tail	4
	Mũoma	A mature sheep that has lambed severally.	5
	Katena	A lamb	6

Table 3 above reveals the different concepts that refer to the sheep variable. The analysis shows that respondents use more than one word to refer to sheep. For instance, the lexical items *Ilondu*, *Ilũnga*, *Isũni* and *Imaa* refer to simply sheep regardless its gender. This implies that Kĩkĩkamba language reflects formal variation. Formal variation is where particular referent or type of referent may be named by means of various lexical items regardless of whether these represents conceptually different categories or not. However, it is worth noting that *Imaa* is commonly used in Kĩkĩtui dialect hence revealing geographical variation. The lexical items *mwati*, *katena* and *ndũũme* relate to the level of maturity of the sheep but lexical item refers back to the variable *sheep* while the lexical items *Kĩlingĩlĩ* and *mũoma* are descriptive as they reveal the features of the sheep.

Table 4 below presents data on the fourth noun that was investigated in the livestock register that is the chicken variable.

Table 4: The Chicken Variable (Ngũkũ)

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Ngũkũ (A chicken, male or female)	Nzamba	A cock	18
	Nzokolo	A cock	16
	Mwela	A young female hen	11
	Kaswii	A chick	12
	ĩvutavutĩlya	A hen which does not hatch chicks.	6

	Kĩenyeji	A local breed hen	
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Table 4 above reveals the various lexical items that relate back to the chicken variable. The lexical items *Nzamba* and *Nzokolo* are used to refer to chicken as much as they specify a cock. The lexical items *kaswii* and *mwela* collocates to age and gender of the chicken as illustrated in table 4 above. Table 5 below presents data on the fourth noun that was investigated in the livestock register that is the *money* variable.

Table 5: The Money Variable (Mbesa)

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Mbesa	Mbesa	Money	24
	Isilingi		24
	Ithooi		22
	Ilovoo		18
	Manoti		12
	Ilovia		12
	Mang’otole		25

The data collected reveals lexical variation in the variable money as shown in table 5 above. Amongst the lexical variants that refer to money in Kĩkamba are *isilingi*, *Ithooi*, *Ilovoo*, *manoti*, *ilovia* and *mang’otole*. The money variable therefore reveals formal variation. The money variable also reveals the aspects of lexical borrowing as reflected in the lexical variant *isilingi* and *manoti*. The last noun that was invested in the livestock register was the skin variable as shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: The Skin Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Skin	Kikole	Skin	18
	Kikonde	“	16
	Kithuma	“	12
	Ndawa	“	12

The skin variable has four main variants *Kikole*, *Kikonde*, *Kithuma* and *ndawa* as illustrated in Table 6 above. The analysis on nouns is in line with the Variationist theory as it has shown that respondents use more than one word meaning that has one source hence leading to variation. The analysis also indicates that lexical variation exists in Kĩkamba language. All the nouns targeted in this study were named by use of more than one word. The data reflects both onomasiological and

formal variation. Formal variation refers to a situation in the use of a given language where the speakers use more than one word to name an object or a person as shown in all the six nouns. The analysis above shows the use of quantified data using numbers in order to precisely describe the linguistic phenomenon under investigation as propagated by the Variationist theory. Basing on this tenet, the nouns were assigned numerals for clear analysis.

4.2 Lexical Variation involving verbal forms

The analysis involves lexical items that indicate actions. The researcher targeted lexical variation in three main verbal actions in livestock registers; to arrive, terms used when buying and terms used when selling as reflected in the data. The researcher chose these verbs because they are common activities among the buyers and vendors of livestock, they give a broad reflection of the socio-economic activities of the Kamba community. The data collected revealed names of the actions that were varied as shown in the analysis below:

The first analysis focuses on *to arrive* variable as shown in table 7 below:

Table 7: To Arrive Variable (kūvika)

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
To arrive(kūvika)	Kūkena Kūkinya Kūka Kūthandīka	Arrive	16 12 12 14

The verbal form ‘to arrive’ has five variants which are *kūvika*, *Kūkena*, *Kūkinya* *Kūka* and *Kūthandīka*. The terms are a type of formal variation. All the five words are variants because they all name the action of ‘to arrive’. The next data reveals lexical variants of terms used when buying the livestock.

Table 8: The Buying Variable (kũũwa)

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Buying(kũũwa]	Kũthooa	Buy	22
	Kũnenga		16
	Kwĩkĩa		12
	Kũlika		8
	Kũvikya va		6
	Wĩkenda kyaũ?		6

Table 8 above shows there is variation as far as the buying variable is concerned. The Kũkamba language being agglutinating the morphological features of the lexical variants as in: *Kũthooa*, *Kũnenga*, *Kwikia* *Kũlika*, *Kũvikya va* and *wĩkenda kyaũ?* the words have the particle ‘*Kũ*’ which is attached on the root word as in ku+nenga. Noteworthy, the meaning of this words when used in the context of bargaining discourse they mean the action of buying but when used in other context they may have a different meaning. The same applies to the selling variable below:

Table 9: The Selling Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
Selling	Kũta	The action of selling	23
	kũkwatĩanĩsya		22
	kũkwendya		16
	Kũthoosya		16
	Kũtamũka		14
	Kũweta		14
	Kũlekelya		12
	kũsũvĩa		14
	Kwĩkũwa		14
	Kwenda		12
	Mbathe mbesa		12
	Kũnewa		11
	Nenga mang’otole		10

Table 9 above reveals the various lexical variants that relates to the verbal action of selling as shown by particle ‘*kũ*’ as in *Kũkwatĩanĩsya*, *kũkwendya*, *Kũthoosya*, *Kũtamũka*, *Kũweta* and *kũlekelya*. Contextually all these variants refer to the action of selling in the bargaining discourse

but they have a different meaning in other contexts. Thus, buying and selling variables reflect contextual variation where a speaker varies their language depending on contextual factors such as the formality of the speech situation.

4.3 Lexical Variations in Adjectives

The analyzed data reveals the lexical variation involving adjectives. The audio recorded data reveals adjectives that describe the animal as healthy or unhealthy, adjectives that relates to weight and adjectives that relate to the quality of the animal on sell as shown in the subsequent analysis.

Table 10: A Healthy Animal Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer and seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
A healthy animal variable	Kanake Katendeu Kanyooku kitambaa katambũũku. Keu Kanoete kakavĩtũka kakilu kako sawa kakwatu kathukĩanĩu Kĩstrong Mboo(gentle) Kaseo Kanene Kasanzamũku Ndambũũku Kena weight Kaito Ka-smart Ka class	A healthy animal	16 12 8 6 10 4 3 11 6 4 4 5 3 6 8 5 3 4 4 5 3

Table 10 above reveals the various adjectives that have a source from the variable healthy animal. Among the Kũkamba lexical items that show that the animal is healthy are *Kanake*, *Katendeu*, *Kanyooku*, *kĩtambaa*, *katambũũku*, *Keu*, *Kanoete kakavĩtũka*, *kakilu*, *kakwatu* and *kathukĩanĩu*. The description of the animal relates to the bargaining discourse especially where the sellers justify the price of the animal or as a way of persuading the buyer to purchase the animal. The variable of a healthy animal also has aspects of lexical borrowing as shown in lexical items such as *Kistrong*,

Ka-smart, Ka class, Kena weight from English language and *iko sawa* from Kiswahili language. These variables reveal that several languages come into contact with one another, including English, Kikamba, and Kiswahili in livestock market transactions in Ukambani.

On the other hand, table 11 below reveals an unhealthy animal as shown:

Table 11: An Unhealthy Animal Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
An unhealthy animal variable	Kakũnũku	An unhealthy animal	15
	Kamosu		12
	Kasoma		14
	Konze		8
	Kakũũ		6
	Komũ		8
	Kate kĩw'ũ		4
	Kavũthũ		4
Sula nthũku	4		

The data in table 11 above demonstrates an unhealthy animal variable with lexical variants such as *kakũnũku, kamosu, kasoma, konze, Kakũũ, komũ, kate kiw'ũ, Kavũthũ, Kakuvĩ* and *Sula nthũku*. The lexical variants have one source which is an unhealthy animal.

Other adjectives reveal the quality of the animal on sell as described in the variable below:

Table 12: The Local Breed Variable

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
The local breed	Kienyeji	The local breed	14
	Kĩsenzi		12

The local breed variable in Table 12 above shows that the variable has two variants namely *Kienyeji* and *Kisenzi*. It is believed in the livestock domain that the local breed livestock are more delicious as compared to other breeds. Some breeds were described through the strategy of specialization that is by means of reference to a place with which they are from as shown in table 13 below:

Table 13: The Breed Basing on Origin

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
The breed basing on origin	Mūsomalī	A goat from Somali	12
	Woma	A borana goat	8
	Mūkamba	A goat from Kamba land	18
	Dorper	A breed of sheep kept by the Maasai.	6

The variable of the breed basing on origin identifies various spatial locations in its variants such as Somali for the variant *mūsomalī*, Borana for the variant *woma*, Kamba land for the variant *mūkamba* and Maasai for the variant *dorper*. Other variants include breeds which are not local as shown in Table 14:

Table 14: The Animal which is not Local

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
The breed which is not local	Breed	Not a local breed	16
	Improved	A mixture of a ‘breed’ and ‘Kienyeji’	12

The variable *the animal which is not local* is mainly described using English borrowed words *breed* and *improved*. The findings reveal that in a multilingual market setting in Ukambani, English and indigenous languages including Kūkamba and Kiswahili feature prominently in market transactions.

Other adjectives were based on the physical features of the animals as shown in table 15 below:

Table 15: The Variable Based on Physical Features and Quality

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Gloss	Frequency of usage among buyer seller interactions in the 24 sampled interactions.
The variable based on physical features and quality.	Mũthũkũ/mũkunĩ	Without horns	6
	Kĩlingĩlĩ	A sheep with a raised tail	5
	Kĩtũndũ	A goat that has low fertility.	3
	Mbũi yoko	A goat that gives birth to twins	4

The analysis above reveals the physical features of the animal may be used to reveal various types of animals. For instance, an animal may be described as *Mũthũkũ/mũkunĩ* to mean without horns or *Kĩlingĩlĩ* to imply a sheep with a raised tail.

The analysis in this section reveals that nouns, verbal forms and adjectives had variants, which is an indication of lexical variation in Kũkamba language. This is in line with the variationist theory’s tenet, which states that all languages vary either internally or externally. The study observed what Labov calls inter-person lexical variation. Speakers with different social characteristics use different words to name the same referent. Thus, this study agrees with this tenet of the Variationist theory.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sought to describe variations in livestock bargaining register in Ukambani. From the findings of this study, we can conclude that there is lexical variation in livestock register in Ukambani. The study observes that nouns record higher variability than the verbs and adjectives. The findings further shows that lexical variation in livestock bargaining register in Ukambani is caused by the individual speaker’s age and gender. The study further observes lexical variation may cause incomprehensibility in a discourse.

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