

PHONOLOGICAL VARIATION IN KĪKAMBA LIVESTOCK BARGAINING REGISTER

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at showing tendencies of phonological variation in Kĩkamba livestock bargaining register. The study applied variationist theory by Labov (1972). Accordingly, a mixed research design was adopted. The findings of the study showed that phonological variation exists within the Kĩkamba dialects and that such variations are geographically distributed. The results revealed variations that are regionally distributed. Thus, phonological variation in livestock bargaining register is a geographic dimension. The study revealed that phonological variation occurs in some words and that the words varied in sounds in three Kikamba dialects which are the Kĩmasakũ, Kĩkĩtui and Kĩkĩlungũ dialects.

Keywords: Phonological variation, livestock register, Kĩkamba.

1. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic variation are differences in the ways that a particular language is used. Linguistic variation may be regional, social or contextual. Variation between languages, dialects, and speakers is known as interspeaker variation (Labov, 1972). Linguistic variation may occur in all aspects of language (including phonemes, morphemes, syntactic structures, and meanings). Chambers (1995) observes that, variation in language use among speakers or groups of speakers is a notable criterion or change that may occur in phonological, lexical, morphological or even at the syntactical levels of language use. Many scholars agree that language variation is typically the vehicle of language change (cf. Labov, 1972; Chambers, 1995; Duranti 1997; Meyerhoff, 2006). Wardhaugh (2006) observes that language variation in social interactions has been recognized as a key concept and object of study in variationist sociolinguistics. Wardhaugh argues 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's views further provide evidence for variationist studies in linguistics. Linguistic variation is brought about by the way speakers choose their words, the way they pronounce them and in the way they change the form of the words as they speak.

Thus, language variation can be analyzed at all levels of linguistic analysis. This study focuses on phonological variation in Kĩkamba livestock bargaining register. Ūkambanĩ is occupied by the amba people who speak the Kĩkamba language. The Kĩkamba language is placed in class 50 of E zone and is a Bantu language (Guthrie (1948). Phonological variation are differences between accents – comes in a variety of forms. Phonological variation in Kĩkamba phonology can be traced back to two main dimensions: A geographic dimension, accounting for a large proportion of the

total variability, and a social dimension that regulates variety-internal variation. The geographic distribution includes the composition of the phonemic inventory, the phonotactic patterning of phonemes, their lexical distribution. A broad social dimension on the other hand is constrained according to social factors, such as age and gender. The overall picture can be understood as a combination of vertical and horizontal sociolinguistic forces.

In terms of dialects Kĩkamba has five dialects; the Kĩtui North dialect, the central Kĩtui dialect, Eastern-Southern dialect, and Makuenĩ and Machakos dialects. Maundu said that the Kĩkamba dialects include Kĩmumoni, Kĩngũlya, Kĩkĩlũngũ, North Kĩtui and Kĩmasakũ (Maundu, 1980). 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 Kĩtui central dialect. The Kĩmasaku dialect is spoken with some variations in Machakos and Makuenĩ districts (Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ). The analysis in this study is in close reference to three dialects which are: Kĩmasakũ, Kĩkĩtui and Kĩkĩlũngũ dialects.

Several scholars have analyzed on the concept of phonological variation and they are correlated with social variables such as class, gender and context (cf. Labov 1966; 1972; Trudgill, 1974; Romaine, 1982; Milroy, 1987; Fasold, 1990 and Labov (2010). The general finding is that there are variations in languages both internally and externally according to certain characteristics of the users of those languages. Most of these studies have focused on English language. This paper focused on phonological variation in language Kĩkamba within the livestock register. The study aimed at bridging the gap by analyzing livestock register as a social activity hence representing how linguistic variation and linguistic variables influence language use in Livestock Markets.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by Variationist Theory (VT) which guides the collection, analysis, interpretation and explanation of what is observed in the language data. (Taglamonte, 2012). The Variationist Theory (VT) or Quantitative Paradigm was first formulated by Labov (1972) and has been modified over time by sociolinguists such as (Trudgill, 1974; 1986; Romaine, 1978; Milroy, 1987; Taglamonte, 2012). VT examines how variation is highly structured (Labov, 1972). Thus, language is seen as a built system of language in the brain. Variation is said to be regular, rule-governed and describable by VT which is the theory to guide this study. The theory emphasizes on two tenets the principle of accountability and vernacular. That is, a linguistic variant must be correctly analyzed and that all variants must be accounted regardless of whether they are realized or unrealized. On the other hand, vernacular as advanced by Milroy (1987) is the real language use. That vernacular forms the foundation onto which styles are developed must be put into consideration.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed research designs. The qualitative design was used in description of phonological variations. The study considered quantitative research since Labovian theory calls for quantitative analysis of data. Thus, linguistic variables are measured and expressed numerically (Hudson, 1996). The target population of this study was the bargaining exchanges between the buyers/brokers and sellers of Livestock in Livestock market places in Ukambani. The data was collected through audio recording. Purposive sampling was used to twenty-four interactions.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The data collected on livestock register reveal phonological variation spoken in three dialects Kīmasakū, Kīkītui and Kīkīlūngū dialects. The researcher observed that phonological variation in the three dialects was reflected in articulation of certain consonant and vowel sounds. The analysis therefore is an attempt to identify the phonological variation using the concept of variability as propounded by Labov (1972) and Taglamonte (2012). Most of the variables were reflected in Nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and pronouns as analyzed in the subsequent sections below:

4.1 The Variable [n ǝ]

The Variable [n ǝ] in the verb collected reveal different realization as the Kīmasakū, Kīkītui and Kīkīlūngū dialects are concerned. The lexical item presented in table 1 below reveals the example in the variation in variable [n ǝ] in these dialects that are considered to be Kūkamba but the speakers are considered to be located in different geographical/regional areas.

Table 1: The Variable /n ǝ/

Kīmasaku	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss
/n ǝ/	[nz]	/n ǝ/	
<u>Ntho</u>oowe(verb)	<u>Nzo</u>oowe	<u>Ntho</u>oowe(verb)	Buy for me
Nthei	Nzei	Nthei	Empty

Table 1 above illustrates observational variation in the realization of the variant /n ǝ / for Kīmasakū, Kīkītui and Kīkīlūngū dialects. Both dialects make use of the nasal compounds/consonant clusters at the beginning of the word. However, while the word ‘Nthoowe’ in Kīmasakū and Kīkīlūngū is realized with /n ǝ/ in Kīkītui it is realized with [nz]. Therefore, the data reveals that the livestock register shows that the variant of the nasal compound /n ǝ / is the nasal compound /nz/.

4.2 The Variable /j/

Phonological Variation in words (Nouns and verb) was also reflected in the glide /j/. Table 2 below shows variation in realization in the glide /j/ in the pronunciation in various words. The bolded area is where the different realization occurs:

Table 2: The Variable /j/

Kīmasakū /j/	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss

	[kw]	/j/	
Uyĩthĩa	Ukwĩthĩa	Uyĩthĩa	You find that

The analysis established that the glide /j/ in the word Uyĩthĩa in Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ dialects is realized as a /j/ but in Kĩkĩtũi the orthography of the same word is written as Ukwĩthĩa. Therefore sound /j/ is replaced by voiceless velar stop /k/ and together with the voiced labio-velar approximant /w/ in Kĩkĩtũi dialect which still gives the realization of the word the features of a glide. The meaning of the word remains constant and the dialects are mutually intelligible.

Table 3 below also shows variation in the noun Iy’oki (yoke) where in Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ the word is realized with a glide /j/ but in the same word in Kĩkĩtũi is realized with a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ as shown below:

Kĩmasakũ /j/	Kĩkĩtũi /s/	Kĩkĩlũngũ /j/	Gloss
Iy’oki	Isoki	Iy’oki	Yoke

From the analysis in table 2 and 3 the data reveal that in the register of livestock variation the variables of the glide /j/ are replaced by voiceless velar stop [k] together with the voiced labio-velar approximant [w] and the voiceless alveolar fricative [s].

4.3 The Variable /sy/

The analyzed data reveals that the voiceless alveolar fricative/s/ together with the glide/j/ orthographically written as /sy/are used in Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩtũi dialects while in Kĩkĩlũngũ dialect is the Voiceless palato-alveolar affricate [tʃ] orthographically written as /ky/. The data collected revealed most words in Kamba language either use the /ky/ sound or the /j/ as shown in table 4 below:

Table 4: The Variable /sy/

Kĩmasakũ	Kĩkĩtũi	Kĩkĩlũngũ	Gloss
/sy/	/sy/	/ tʃ /	
Masyaa	Masyaa	Makyyaa	several deliveries
Isyaa	Isyaa	Ikyaa	One delivery
Mathooanĩsya	Mathooanĩsya	Mathooanĩkya	Bought together with

Syīndū	<u>Syī</u> ndū	<u>Kyī</u> ndū	Things
Nīsyaaambatie	Nīsyaaambatie	Nī <u>kyaa</u> ambatie	They have become expensive
Masyītwa	Masy <u>īt</u> wa	Mak <u>yīt</u> wa	Names
Usyokete(verb)	Us <u>y</u> okete	U <u>ky</u> okete	As you come back
Mwaasya ata	Mwaas <u>ya</u> ata?	Mwaak <u>ya</u> ata?	What have you said?
Kūsyaa	Kū <u>syaa</u>	Kū <u>kyaa</u>	To give birth
Ya sya	Ya <u>sya</u>	Ya <u>kyaa</u>	After giving birth
Mūsyī	Mū <u>syī</u>	Mū <u>kyī</u>	Home
Kūnthooesya	Kūnthooes <u>ya</u>	Kūnthooe <u>ky</u> a	Sell to
Kwasisyaa	Kwas <u>isyaa</u>	Kwai <u>kyaa</u> .	Look at that
Syaku	<u>Sy</u> aku	<u>Ky</u> aku	Yours

The words in table 4 above reveal livestock register in the market and shows the discourse of buyers and sellers as revealed in words such as *Masyaa* (several deliveries), *Kūnthooesya* (sell to me) among others. The data reveals phonological variation in Kūnkamba dialects in the variable /sy/. For instance, the nouns collected reveal that the variable /sy/ has the voiceless alveolar fricative/s/ together with the glide/j/ in words such as *Masyaa* (several deliveries), *Isyaa* (one delivery), *Masyītwa* (Names), *Syīndū* (things) and *Mūsyi* (home) in Kūmasakū and Kīkītui dialect. In comparison to Kīkīlūngū dialect the realization of the same words is done with the voiceless palato-alveolar affricate /ʃ/ as in *Makyyaa*, *Ikyaa*, *Makyītwa*, *Kyīndū*, *Mūkyī* respectively.

The same pattern was revealed in the verbs where in Kūmasakū and Kīkītui dialect the action words have /s/ as in *Mathooanīsyaa* (Bought together with), *Kwasisyaa* (look at that), *Kūnthooesya* (Sell to) and *Kūsyaa* (to give birth) while in Kīkīlūngū dialect the realization of the same words is done with the voiceless palato-alveolar affricate as in *mathooanīkyaa* *kūnthooekyaa* and *Kūkyaa* respectively.

Table 4 also demonstrates the variable /sy/ occurs in other word classes such as pronouns. For instance, while in Kīmasakū and Kīkītui dialect the possessive pronoun is realized as *Syaku* (yours) in Kīkīlūngū it is realized as *Kyaku*.

4.4 The Variable /n/

The variable /n/ reflected the variant [t] and the vowel [i] as shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: The variable /n/

Kīmasakū	Kīkīlūngū	Kīkītui	Gloss
/n /	/t/	/ i/	
Tūnini	Tūtiti	Tūini	Small ones

The data above shows the realization of the variable /n/ in Kīmasakū in the word *tūnini* as an alveolar nasal /n/. In the Kīkīlūngū dialect the variable /n/ is the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ since the word is realized as *tūtiti*. In the Kīkītui dialect the same word is realized without the alveolar nasal /n/ nor the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ but with a high front vowel /i/.

4.5 The Variable /m/

The variable /m/ has the variant [m] in Kīmasakū and Kīkītui dialects while it has [k] in Kīkīlūngū as shown in table 11 below:

Table 6: The Variable /m/

Kīmasakū	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss
/m /	[m]	[k]	
Mūkautī(noun)	Mūkautī	Kīkautī	The navel

The illustrations in table 6 above shows that in Kīmasakū and Kīkītui in the word *mūkautī* is realized with the voiced bilabial nasal /m/ while in Kīkīlūngū the same word is realized with a voiceless velar stop /k/ as in *Kīkautī*

4.6 The Variable /u: /

The data collected also shows variation in realization of the variable /u/ as shown in 7 below:

Table 7: The Variable /u: /

Kīmasakū	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss
/u:/	[ɔ]	[u:]	
Uū	U <u>no</u>	<u>U</u> ū	This one

Table 7 above demonstrates that the variable /u:/ has two forms: [u:] in Kīmasaku and Kīkīlūngū while in Kīkītui it is realized with the alveolar nasal [n] together with an open-mid back rounded vowel [ɔ]

4.7 The Variable /iu/

The variable /iu/ reveals two variants which are [iu] and the short [u] as demonstrated in table 8 below:

Table 8: The variable /iu/

Kīmasakū	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss
/iu/	[u]	[iu]	
Yū (demonstrative pronoun)	Isu	Yū	That one

The analysis above reveals that the variable /iu/ which is a diphthong is realized with /iu/ in Kīmasakū and Kīkīlūngū while in Kīkītui the same word is realized together with a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ with a short vowel /u/.

4.8 The Variable /i:/

The variable /i:/ has the variant /i:/ in Kīmasakū and Kīkīlūngū and the variant /ɔ/ in Kīkītui as shown in table 9 below:

Table 9: The Variable /i:/

Kīmasakū	Kīkītui	Kīkīlūngū	Gloss
/i:/	/ɔ/	/i:/	
Yū	Yū <u>no</u>	Yū	This one

The data in table 9 above further shows that in Kikĩtui the long /i:/ is replaced with alveolar nasal /n/ with a short vowel /ɔ /.

4.9 The Variable /i /

The variable /i/ has the variant [i] in Kĩmasakũ and Kikĩtui and the variant [ɔ:] in Kikĩlũngũ as shown in table 10 below:

Table 10: The Variable /i/

Kĩmasakũ	Kikĩtui	Kikĩlũngũ	Gloss
Ti yĩla	<u>Ti</u> yĩla	<u>Tyo</u> yĩla	Not when

The glide /j/ in Kikĩlũngũ leads to vowel lightening in the word *tyo yĩla*. The researcher observed that phonological variation in Kĩkamba language occurs due to the difference in lexicon, manner of articulation, prosodical variation and variation in stress and duration. For instance, the differences in the dialects were mainly caused by the vowel length and tone.

4.10. Distribution of phonemes in the livestock market

The table below gives the quantitative summary on phonemes distributions

Variant	Example	Kĩmasakũ	Kikĩlũngũ	Kikĩtui
/z/	<u>Nzei</u>	-	-	2
/tʃ /	M <u>akya</u> a	-	15	-
/Kw/	U <u>kwi</u> thia	-	-	1
/j/	U <u>y</u> ithia	1	1	-
/sy/	M <u>asy</u> aa	15	15	-
/ð /	<u>Nthei</u>	2	2	-

From the table above, it is evident that some words are pronounced differently in different parts of Ukambani bringing about phonological variation. Some sounds are realized differently in the different dialects found in different parts of Ukambani. For example, the sound /z/ is exclusively found in Kikĩtui while /sy/ and /ð/ are majorly used in Kĩmasakũ and Kikĩlũngũ. /tʃ / is majorly

used in Kikilungũ. This difference in pronunciation of certain sounds brings about dialectical variation.

5. CONCLUSION

This study focused on phonological variation in livestock bargaining register. The study established that phonological differences in three dialects occur in nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns and adverbs. The data reveals that one main feature of the phonological differences in the three dialects is the feature of /tʃ/ that occurs as a result of palatalization among /k/ before /j/ in Kikilungũ dialect. Another feature that differentiates the three dialects is that Kĩmasakũ speakers use a high tone while the 'Kikĩtui' speakers in most cases tend to use a non-high tone. The study also observed that the phonological substitution of the cluster sounds [nth] for [nz] by the Kikĩtui speakers lead to dialectical variation.

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