

Social variables in Kĩkamba livestock bargaining register

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Abstract: This study examined the effects of social variation in Kĩkamba livestock bargaining register. Livestock register provides a ground where the hearer exercises power and aims at controlling the mind of the speaker. The study was guided by Labov's (1972) variationist paradigm which states that language varies at all levels and that the variation is caused by certain social characteristics of the speakers of a language. The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research design. Audio-recording, observations and interviews were used in data collection. The conversations of traders were recorded as they engaged in the buying and selling of livestock. The audio-recorded data was transcribed, translated, coded, analyzed and presented in tables and pie charts. The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of the study indicated that age and gender are responsible for the linguistic variation in livestock bargaining context and that dialectical variations reflected in Kĩkamba language. The results of the study add to the topic of languages, linguistic exchanges and bargaining discourses in Kĩkamba language. The study also informs on sociolinguistic research by advancing knowledge on livestock register as a social activity. Thus, the study recommends the development of a Kĩkamba dictionary to record the deeper Kĩkamba lexical items found in the livestock bargaining register for future reference. Further, the older members of the Kĩkamba community should be encouraged to use Kĩkamba in home domain as a way of encouraging the young to utilize Kĩkamba language.

Keywords: Variable, Social variables, Age, Gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language variation occurs in different contexts. Coates (1993) observes that an individual will speak differently in different social settings. This means that different social variables such as age, gender, level of education, ethnicity and rural urban dichotomy determine the way an individual uses a given language. Wardhaugh (2006) observes that speakers of a language make constant use of the many possible options in a given language by exploring the nuances of the language they speak for a wide variety of purposes. For instance, an individual speaker may offer as many instances of variation as the purposes for which they use the language, the social context in which they use it and the person they are addressing at that particular time. This is called intra-speaker variation.

Poplack (1993) argues that an important aspect of any study in the variationist framework involves the speech community, where observation of language use in its socio-cultural setting is carried out. This is in order to gain access to the vernacular, the relatively homogeneous, spontaneous speech reserved for intimate or casual situations. The structure of communication in the speech community is seen by variationist as realized through recurrent choices made by speakers of various interactional and grammatical levels. The choice mechanism entails that given linguistic functions may be realized in different forms. In order to account for the variant

that was actually selected in a given situation, the variationist must determine why, where and when it was used and by whom. The current study looks at the way speakers vary their language at a livestock market. Peccei (1999) notes the occurrence of language variability along social factors allows speakers to locate themselves in a multi-dimensional society and as hearers to locate others in that society as well.

Livestock register provides a ground where the hearer exercises power and aims at controlling the mind of the speaker. The 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. Due to the opposing participants in livestock market, the interactants engage in livestock register that will lead 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.

This study aimed at analyzing livestock register as a social activity hence representing how linguistic variation and linguistic variables

influence language use in livestock markets. The study analyzed the aspect of bargaining exchange in terms of language variation. Attention was also laid to linguistic variables that drive interactional exchanges since the bargaining language is socially constructed. It is hoped that the findings of this study contributes to the knowledge gap on lexical variation in spoken Kĩkamba livestock register and add value to the current literature on language variation. Livestock Market provides a ground where the hearer exercises power and aims at controlling the mind of the speaker. Such discourses are key in teaching of communicative practices for contract negotiation.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by variationist theory as proposed by Labov (1963, 1963, and 1972). One of the tenets of variationist theory is the variable. Wardhaugh (2006) defines a variable as a linguistic feature that does not involve a change of referential meaning. Sociolinguistic researchers such as Labov, 1963; Duranti, 1997; Chambers; 2002, Wardhaugh 2010) recognizes that language change and variation occur due to both geographical and social factors such as age and gender. Speakers can therefore vary their language use depending on the purpose for which they intent to use the language. This tenet of the variationist theory helped the researcher in identifying the factors that bring about language variation in Kĩkamba language in the livestock market. The study which looks at linguistic variation was guided by this theory. This area of socio linguistics aims at identifying the internal and external factors that influence frequency of use of a given variant in an attempt to account for the status of the variant in a speech community.

The theory also posits that an individual speaker can vary his or her speech (intraspeaker variation) or variation may occur across speakers (inter-speaker variation) (Chambers, 1992, 2002). The study relied on the Variationist Theory to explain the variations that arise in a speech community and why the variations do exist. Linguistic variation could be as a result of the purpose for which the language is used (Wardhaugh, 2006), environment in which the language is being used and the addressee. The context of language use in the current study is livestock market while the purpose for the linguistic variation could be to make the best out of a bargain. The study therefore sought to find out if the choice of the terms used in the livestock market is influenced by sociolinguistic variables.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research design. The quantitative design was applied in establishing frequencies. The qualitative design was considered because some variations needed to be described in words. Both designs complemented each other, by so doing maximized the strength, and limited the weakness of each other. Hudson (1980) observes that the Labovian theory calls for a quantitative treatment of data using appropriate statistical techniques. The study hence correlated linguistic variables which were measured and expressed numerically.

The target population of this study was the buyers/ brokers and sellers of the livestock market places in Ukambanĩ. Through purposive sampling the study sampled a corpus of bargaining exchanges of twenty-four interactions from 30 respondents. 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. Voice recording was the most appropriate for this study since this is a study on language variation that proceeds mainly by observing language use in natural social setting and categorizing the linguistic variants according to their social distribution (Chambers, 2002). The study aimed at obtaining as closely as possible people's natural speech that has not been greatly altered due to the presence of an observer. Data was analyzed through quantitative methods. Lexical items of Kĩkamba livestock register were correlated with age and gender as social variable and recorded a significant relationship between them.

4. Linguistic Analysis of social variables in Livestock Register

This section analyses social variables that are responsible for linguistic variation in the spoken Kĩkamba in livestock markets in Ukambanĩ. According to Labov's Variationist theory, the social differences of people will reflect in their choice of variants. Labov (1972) defines a sociolinguistic variable as one that correlates with some non-linguistic variable such as the speaker, addressee and setting. A social variable is the particular characteristic of a language user that influences or determines his or her choice of one linguistic item over another. These include the speaker's gender, age, social class, location and level of education. The analysis in this section therefore bases on the unique characteristics of the speakers of Kĩkamba in livestock markets.

4.1 Lexical Variation Correlated with Age

One of the social variables that affects language use is a speaker's age. For instance, older people are more conservative and are more likely to use formal language forms compared to the young who are more innovative and likely to accept any linguistic changes that may occur. Eckert (1997) observes that community studies of variation frequently show that increasing age correlates with conservatism in speech such that older members of the community will stick to the original linguistic variables while the young speakers will shift to new variables. The analyzed data from livestock registers in Ukambanĩ observed a similar trend among Kĩkamba speakers. This study discovered a similar situation among speakers of Kĩkamba. Older speakers of Kĩkamba were observed to be using original deep Kĩkamba words in their speech while the younger ones would use simpler terms or borrowed and nativized words. In relation to names of animals, the analyzed data revealed that the older speakers used original descriptive terms when referring to certain animal as in *kalasinga*, *ivuseki*, *mũtambo*, *mũoma*, *kītũndũ*, *ngulata*, *mbũi yoko*, *kĩlingĩllĩ* and *mũthũkũ*. Such words aided the description of animals as shown below:

Table 1: Descriptive Words Used by Older Speakers

Kĩkamba words	Meaning
mũoma mũthũkũ/mũkunĩkĩlingĩĩ	an animal that has kidded, calved or lambed severally.a goat without horns.
kĩtũndũ mbũi yoko kalasinga	a sheep with a raised tail.infertile goat
ĩvuseki mũtambo	a goat that kids twins.a big uncastrated bull an old emaciated cow.
ngulata	a big animal (either a cow or a goat.) an old billy goat

The older speakers make use of the original Kĩkamba words to describe the animal while the younger speakers on the other hand utilized the strategy of borrowing to describe animals as shown in Table 2 below:

Table 2: English and Kiswahili Borrowed Words

English	Kiswahili
BreedstrongSmartclass size	Bei ya Mwisho? kwa hivyo iko sawa?
Thirty-three(thousand)	
Fourteen(thousand)	

The younger users of Kĩkamba were observed to be more innovative in that they took Swahili and English words and adapted them to the morphology and phonology of Kĩkamba in order to come up with words and phrases such as *mwisho ni* (what is the last price) *ĩ ni nzeo lakini naku wĩ yĩũũ* (this is a good one but it is too expensive), *mbona nowene ni kanini* (but you can see it is small), *kanene na ndambũũku* (big and straight). Variation due to age was also shown in the description of animals. Where the older speakers used deep Kĩkamba words to describe a healthy animal such as *kanyooku* (smooth), *kĩtambaa* (good material), *katambũũku* (straight), *keu* (ripe), *kanoete kakavĩũũka* (excessively fat), *kakĩlu* (quiet), *kakwatu* (concentrated), *kathukĩanĩũ* (compact), younger speakers used terms such as *kena weight* (it's heavy), *ka-smart* (it's smart), *ka class* (it's classic) and *iko sawa* (it's okay) to describe the animals. The results show that the young speakers of Kĩkamba are observed to be shifting gradually to new words and expressions borrowed largely from Swahili and English language. This makes their language different from that which is used by older members, which is characterized majorly by deep Kĩkamba words and expressions.

The same trend was observed in terms used to describe an animal that is unhealthy according to the buyer. Where the older speakers used deep Kĩkamba words to describe an unhealthy animal with words such as: *kakũnũku* (old), *kamosu* (thin), *kasoma* (weak), *konze* (weak), *kakũũ* (old), *komũ* (dry), *kate kĩw'ũ* (dry), *sula nthũku* (ugly) and *kavũthũ* (light) the younger speakers used terms such as *ka weak* (weak), *ka sula mbaya* (bad looking), *ka konde* (thin) among others. The analysis above reveals that market interactions and settings provide an environment where languages come in contact.

The analysis also reveals that Ukambanĩ markets are multilingual contexts. The study observes that the effect of age on the choice of linguistic variables is strongly conditioned by the socio- historical context of the speech community and the language being studied. Ukambanĩ markets comprise people from various ethnic languages with the Kĩkamba being the major. At the backdrop of this social setting, we find that the neutral language of communication among the young is Kiswahili, which is taught and examined in the Kenyan school system. Therefore, moving away from the "standard forms" of Kĩkamba has become prestigious and young speakers now prefer code switching in their lexical items while the older become more conservative sticking to forms that are closer to the standard Kĩkamba.

The current study observes that older members of the Kamba community stick to original Kĩkamba linguistic variables while the young speakers have shifted to new linguistic variables especially those borrowed from Kiswahili and English. The young speakers of Kĩkamba use Kiswahili more than the older members of the community do. Thus, they end up borrowing a lot from Kiswahili and English into their spoken Kĩkamba. Therefore, the speaker's age determines their choice of the terms to use in language. The analysis on nouns, verbs and adjectives demonstrate that older members of the Kamba community stick to original Kĩkamba variables while the young have shifted to new variables especially as borrowed from Swahili and English words.

Moreover, the use of figurative language was observed among older speakers and especially among the brokers and the sellers who could understand the deeper livestock register and who had a vast experience of buying and selling as shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Figurative Language Used Among Older Speakers during Buying and Selling

Figurative language	Gloss
kwĩkya mbeange	Mentioning a very high price.
kelĩtu kaseo	A beautiful girl-A good-looking animal.
kĩtambaa	Material- A healthy looking animal with a smooth skin. The price should be lower than the mentioned one.
ka mukĩlo oo.mũtambo	A railway-A very big animal.
no mbesa	It's still good money but not enough to complete a sale.
Malĩ kītũũnĩ	Wealth in the cowshed-Healthy and good-looking animals that can make you rich.

The use of figurative language was observed among the older speakers of Kĩkamba who have experience in livestock registers. In the bargaining discourse the term ***Kwĩkya mbeange*** (mentioning a very high price) was used where the interlocutors would complain on the price of the animal. The term shows that the market place is a site where the buyer, who is a bargain hunter, is in diametrical opposition to the vendor, who is out to make profit by setting a huge price. In the

text recorded, another metaphor that was common among the older speakers was ***Kelĩtu kaseo*** (A beautiful girl-A good-looking animal) where a healthy animal was compared to a good-looking girl. The use of this metaphor is used as a bargaining strategy where the seller of the animal credits it by praise.

Another metaphor that is used by older sellers as a form of praise is ***Kĩtambaa*** (material- a healthy looking animal with a smooth skin) and ***mũtambo*** (A railway-A very big animal). These metaphors are used by older speakers as persuasive strategies. The money metaphors include the use of ***Kũkomana na mbesa*** to imply to meet with money-to make good money after the sale of the animal and ***no mbesa*** (It's still good money but not enough to complete a sale).

The results of this study show that increasing age correlates with conservatism in speech. Older members of the Kamba community stick to the original Kĩkamba linguistic variables such as ***kalasinga*** (a big uncastrated bull), ***kĩlingĩlĩ*** (a sheep with a raised tail), ***kũkenā*** (to arrive), ***kũkinya*** (to arrive), ***ĩvusekĩ*** (an old emaciated cow), ***mũthũkũ*** (an animal without horns), ***kĩsenzĩ*** (local breed) and ***mbũĩ yoko*** (a goat that kids twins) while the young speakers are seen to have shifted to new linguistic variables especially from Kiswahili and English. This study observes a relationship between the speaker's age and the speaker's choice of lexical items. The speaker's age causes lexical variation in Kĩkamba especially in livestock registers. Evidence is also seen in cases where the older speakers use figurative language in bargaining discourse. The older respondents maintained the most original forms of Kĩkamba language irrespective of where they were and whom they were. The data above therefore demonstrates that the older are more conservative and more creative than the younger in the use of lexical items that were directly linked to livestock registers.

Table 4: Uncommon Terms Used in the Livestock Market in Relation to Age

Linguistic term	<40 yrs.	>40 yrs.	Total number of Respondents.
Kĩtũndũ	-	1	1
Kuma ngala	1	-	1
Kĩlingĩlĩ	-	1	1
Ngulata	-	1	1
Kalasinga	-	3	3
Mũtambo	-	1	1
Mbũĩ yoko	1		1
Kelĩtu kaseo	-	1	1
Kakilu nesa	1	-	1
Kĩtambaa	-	1	1
Total	3	9	12

The distribution of uncommon terms as used by traders of different ages in the livestock market were plotted in a table and in a pie chart as below.

Table 5: Distribution of Uncommonly used Terms in the Livestock Market According to Age

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage.
Below 40	3	25%
40 and above	9	75%

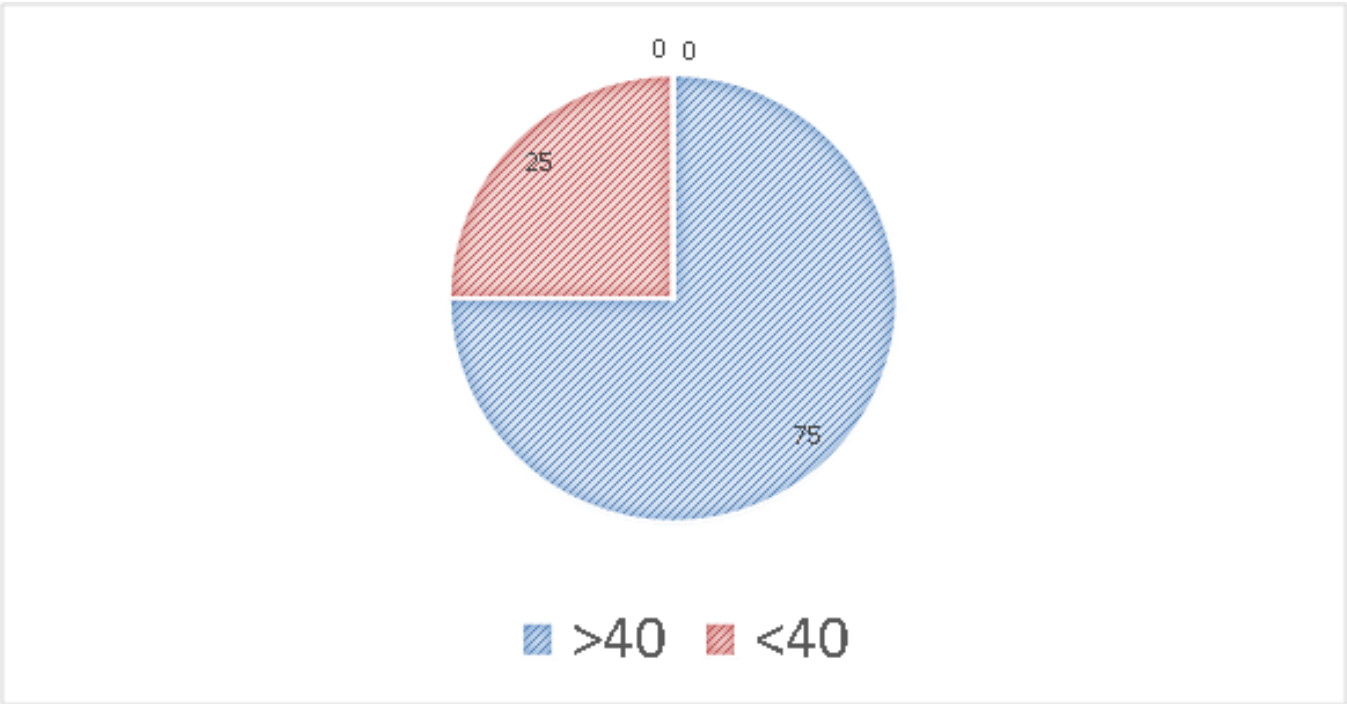


Figure 1: Distribution of uncommonly used terms in livestock markets in relation to age

From the data above, it is evident that the young (<40) are not well versed with most of the original terms used in the livestock market to describe an animal on sale. Only 25% of them make use of these terms. Most of the livestock traders of this age only use simpler terms or borrowed and nativized words. They have shifted to new linguistic variables borrowed largely from English and Kiswahili. On the other hand, 75% of the old livestock traders are well versed with many uncommonly used terms which they employ with ease to make a sale work in their favor. They maintain the most original Kĩkamba linguistic variables and use figurative language in bargaining discourse. They are more conservative and stick to the formal Kĩkamba language forms as shown in table 5 and in Figure 1.

4.2 Lexical Variation Correlated with Gender

This section focuses on gender as a social variable in livestock register. According to (Cheshire, 1978) Gender refers to the social and cultural elaboration of the sex differences - a process that

restricts social roles, opportunities and expectations. The data collected revealed that in livestock register men (male) and women (female) use language differently. Being male or female determines a person’s choice of one lexical item over the other. The findings of this study show a similar situation in the spoken Kĩkamba.

The analysis of lexical variation in nouns in the spoken Kĩkamba shows variation in reference to the speaker’s gender. The data shows that in cases where the male speakers used *kalasinga, kilingĩlĩ, ilombe, ivuseki, sahiwal, moi, malĩ, mĩtambo* to refer to cow the female speakers made reference to variants such as *kana, kasaũ, kasalũ, kalombe, ng’ombe, breed, kĩsenzi* and *kasau*. This shows that the female gender made extensive use of the morpheme *ka-* to show that they only dealt in small stocks such as calves as opposed to their male counterparts who dealt in bigger stocks like bulls and oxen.

Men also made use of figurative language and descriptive terms as shown in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Use of Figurative Language and Descriptive Words among the Male Livestock Traders

Words used (Kĩkamba)	Meaning (English)
malĩ mūtambokelĩtu	Wealth
tũĩ sukulukĩtambaa kũsũvĩa	a railway; a big animal
kũkomana na mbesa	a girl (a good-looking young animal) we are not schooling (we are not naive)
kuma ngala	material (a healthy-looking animal) take care of (gave you a good price)
	to meet with money (make good money)
	to spark (Temperamental)
Kalasingakĩlingĩlĩ ĩvuseki mũthũkũ	a big uncastrated bull
mbũĩ yoko	a sheep with a raised tailan old emaciated animala goat without horns
	a goat that kids twins.

The data shows that while female speakers used the original terms to refer to the cow the male speaker used specific referents. The males seemed to have more variants for the word cow as compared to females. The same trend was also seen in the noun goat where the males used the following terms: *mbũĩ, ngulata, mũoma, mũthũkũ, nthenge, kũtambaa, mbaika, ũhenge*, the female speakers used, *mũtĩng'a, keu, ya kisenzi, mbaika, kathenge* and *tũtena*. Thus, women prefer to use standard forms than men which allows them to sound less local and to have a voice, with which to protest against the traditional norms that place them in an inferior social position to men. This could be because the female livestock traders do not frequently visit the livestock market compared to the males due to the cultural orientation that men are the ones who deal in livestock. The analysis above establishes the relationship between lexical variation and the speaker's gender. The finding attest to the fact that there is a relationship between the linguistic variables studied and the speaker's gender.

The analysis of the conversations revealed that women borrowed words in English and Kiswahili where men used Kĩkamba words as shown in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Borrowed and Polite Words as Used by the Female Gender

English and Kiswahili words used by women in their conversation.	English	Kiswahili
	breed standard	kienyenji mrefu mrefuIko
	Persian black headimproved	sawa
	weightkilo survive	tunaenda kufuga mbuzi
	by the way.actually	
	dorper	
Polite words used by femalelivestock traders.	Terms andphrases	Meaning
	no mbesa	that is still money
	thoowa nĩ kũeya ngewa	price is just but negotiationsleave room
	mũkatialya ndũũ	for friendship.

Table 7 has revealed that women use more polite words in their bargaining than men as shown in the use of phrases such as *no mbesa, thoowa nĩ kũeya ngewa* and *Mũkatialya ndũũ*. The use of polite words by women could be due to cultural norms that dictate that women should be polite as postulated by Lakof (1975).

Gender variation was also shown in the use of figurative language where the language had deeper meaning. The research shows that the Kĩkamba male speakers used deeper Kĩkamba language to describe the animals. For instance, where women described animals as *katiti, kakũũ, komũ, kakũnũku, kamosu* the male counterparts used figurative language as in *kelĩtu kaseo, kũtambaa* and *mũtambo* whose meanings are understood conceptually. This may owe to the fact that livestock rearing and selling is entirely for the male members of this community and that is why when it comes to that, the male respondents get more conservative to cultural concepts. The data collected revealed that it was only the male respondents who used the figurative expression while female respondents preferred the simple common word such *katiti* or *kanene* to describe the animals.

These findings are in line with Fasold (1990) whose study suggests that women use a higher proportion of standard variants than men because this allows them to sound less local and to have a voice with which to protest against the traditional norms that place them in an inferior social position to men. Moreover, the use of the most common terms to describe the animals by female respondents as compared to the male respondent's shows that the females prefer to use the standard forms of Kĩkamba. The study also shows the choices made by the male and female respondents concerning the selected verbs. The data collected reveals that buying and selling verbs were mainly related to the gender roles.

In Ukambanĩ the livestock market is flooded by the males who are responsible for buying and selling of animals. The study therefore records a relationship between the speaker’s gender and their choice of words. The purpose for buying and selling the goats further confirms the above findings as shown in table 8:

Table 8: Purpose for Which the Animal is Being Sold

Purpose	Gloss
ya ũtũtaya ũta	for salefor salefor sale
ya kũũngamiaka kũũthya	for keeping to slaughter for a function
ka ũya kya kyathĩ	to take to the in-laws.
ka ũthi kwa mũthonua	

The purpose for which the animal is being sold relates to gender roles. The activities and functionsdescribed in Table 8 are mostly done by the males. Hence these verbs describe the roles played by men. For instance, the main purpose of taking the animal to the market and for buying the animal especially by broker buyers is for sale as shown by the variants for sale which are: *ya ũtũũta*, *ya ũta* and *ya kũũngamia*. The selling role of animals in Ukambanĩ is associated with the males in Ukambanĩ. There is also a possibility that it is men who participate in the buying as showing the functions *ka ũthi kwa mũthonua* (to take to the in-laws), *ka ũya* (to slaughter), *ka kũũthya* (for keeping) and *sya kyathĩ* (for a function). All these functions relate to the gender roles of the male.

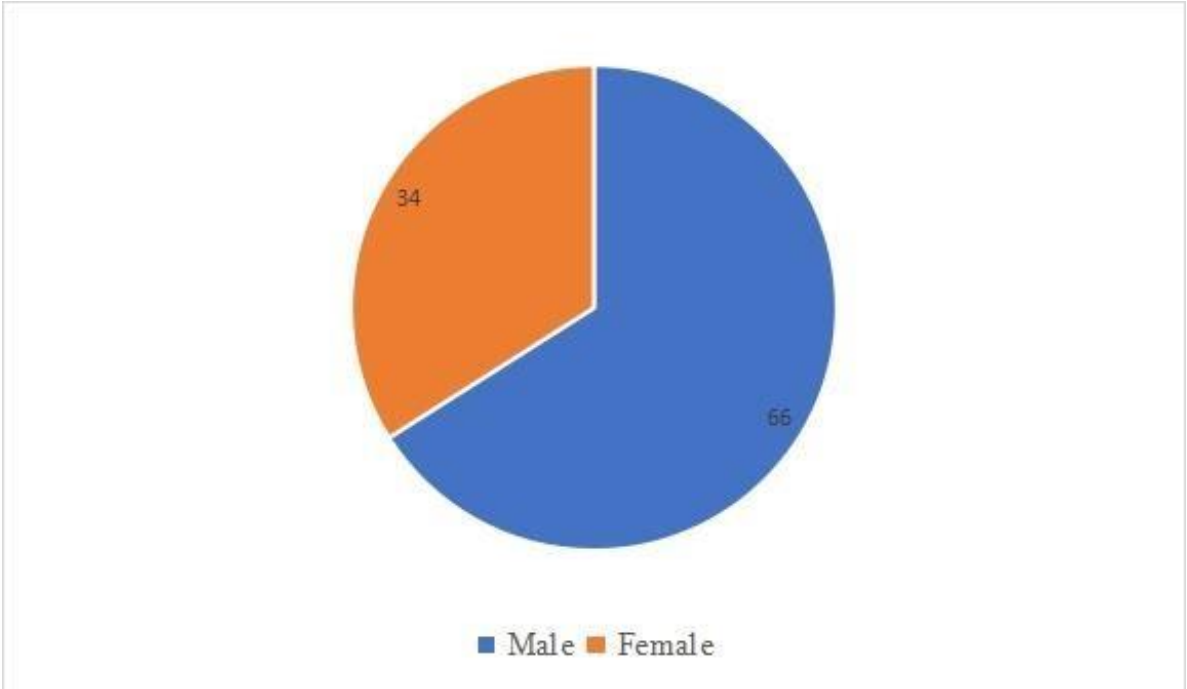
The analysis above reveals that outlining gender roles may significantly affect an individual’s choice of lexical items in LBR. The analysis on verbs shows that the activities of buying and selling are commonly used in the activities related to their gender. The results of this study thereforeindicate a relationship between the speaker’s gender and the speaker’s choice of lexical items.

Table 9: The Distribution of Male and Female Traders in the Livestock Market

Gender	Number of traders	Percentage
Male	35	66%
Female	18	34%
Total	53	100

The distribution of male and female traders in the livestock market as presented in table 9 was plotted in a pie chart as indicated in Figure 2

Figure 2: Distribution of male and female traders in Ukambanĩ livestock market



From the distribution in Table 9 and in figure 2, it is evident that the livestock market in Ukambanĩ is dominated by male traders who formed 66% of interlocutors sampled for this study. Female traders formed 34% of those who participated in the sampled discourses. This distribution could be as result of the cultural orientation of the Kamba people where the buying and selling of livestock is almost a preserve of men who flooded the livestock market.

The young male traders (<40) traded in smaller stocks such as calves, goats, sheep and chicken while the older male traders (>40) traded in larger stocks such as bulls and cows. Females traded in small stocks such as chicken, sheep and goats confining themselves to the outskirts of the main livestock markets where such small stocks are sold leaving the larger stocks to the male counterparts. This could explain why women are limited in their use of language in the LBC. While men have a variety of descriptive terms and figurative language to use during trade, women confine themselves to the common everyday use terms to refer to the animal on sale.

The speaker's gender therefore causes lexical variation in spoken Kĩkamba and in livestock registers. Basing on the results of this study, it can be concluded that age affects the speaker's choice of words in spoken Kĩkamba than gender. Both age and gender were observed to cause variation in the nouns, verbs and adjectives studied. Thus, Labov's Variationist Theory is relevant in studying linguistic variation in livestock register in Ukambanĩ. The findings are in line with (Hudson, 1996) study that observed that speakers who belong to different age groups, social classes and ethnic groups and genders show systemic differences in the way they speak and that speakers will also speak differently when they are conversing with different people. The results in this section therefore reveal that language varies and that the variants that occur in everyday speech are not only linguistically significant but also socially significant.

5. Conclusion

This study sought to analyze how social variables impact on linguistic variation in livestock register. The study was also to examine the social variables that determine linguistic variation in livestock register. The data showed that linguistic variation especially in the spoken Kĩkamba is caused by the individual speaker's age and gender. The older speakers were found to be more conservative and stuck to forms that are closer to standard Kĩkamba. They also made use of figurative language in their bargaining. The younger speakers on the other hand would use simpler terms or borrowed nativized words in their bargaining. The interaction between Kĩkamba, Swahili and English languages causes lexical variation in the spoken Kĩkamba. The female speakers were found to use simple common words in their bargaining instead of the figurative language used by men. They also used more polite words than men in their bargaining.

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