Variation of Object-Verb Marking in Two Kibena Varieties: the Highland Varieties and the Lowland Variety of Tanzania

Perida Mgecha
Assistant Lecturer, Tumaini University Makumira, Tanzania
peridamgecha@gmail.com

Abstract: *Many traditional dialectologists tend to describe language varieties in favour of phonological and lexical analysis. This paper is a comparative description of variation in object-verb agreement marking between two Kibena varieties: the Highland Varieties (HVs) and Lowland Variety (LV). Kibena is a Bantu language spoken in Tanzania mainly in the southern highlands. The paper is based on the Bantu Divergence-Convergence Theory (BDC) which was developed by Massamba (2007). The study is descriptive in nature. Purposive sampling was used to draw thirty-three informants. Data were collected through reverse translation, review elicitation and oral texts. The findings reveal that in both the HVs and the LV, object marking in some verbs is compulsory while in other cases it is optional or not allowed at all. In coordinated object noun phrase, syntactic criterion is used for object-verb marking in HVs. For LV, two strategies are employed: semantic and syntactic criteria. The variation in object-verb marking between the HVs and LV is contributed by geographical and historical factors, and language contact. Generally, this paper contributes to syntactic dialectology which is an innovative branch that could help in developing recent theories on grammatical variation.*

Keywords: object-verb marking, Kibena, Highland Varieties and Lowland Variety

1. Introduction

Kibena is a Bantu language classified in Bena-Kinga group (Guthrie, 1948; 1967-1971; Maho, 2009), and it is particularly assigned G63. In morphosyntactic and sociolinguistic perspectives, it has mainly two varieties. The first is termed the Highland Varieties (HVs), that include nine varieties which share most of morphosyntactic and sociolinguistic features. Geographically, they are found in areas of the highlands of Njombe Region and in Madaba area in Ruvuma Region (LoT, 2009). Speakers of these varieties have several linguistic, socio-economic and ethnological aspects in common. Linguistically, they share most of phonological features and lexical items. They also have in common in socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects, like marriage process, trading, agricultural activities, animal keeping, local foodstuffs and drinks. They have however minor phonological and lexical variations. The second is called the Lowland Variety (LV). It is found in lowland zones of Morogoro Region, specifically in Kilombero and Malinyi Districts. It is reported that LV speakers migrated as a group from the highland zones of Njombe to the lowlands of Morogoro in the later part of the 20th century (Mhiche, 2000; Nyagava, 2000; Mitterhofer, 2013 and Morrison, 2015). The LV speakers live among other linguistic communities which are Ndamba, Ndweve and Ngoni.

The paper is guided by the Bantu Divergence-Convergence Theory (BDC). It is developed by Massamba (2007). As for divergence, the theory holds that once a single speech community has separated first their geographical location changes, slowly creating socio-cultural differences. New experiences and contacts lead to differences in speech, which then develops into distinct dialect and consequently, language. On the convergence side, linguistic communities that were separated for a long time and ended up into different dialects/languages are forced to interact (due to social and/or economic reasons like trade and intermarriage) because of speech contact, naturally begin to look similar linguistically and/or sociolinguistically (Massamba, 2007).

In this paper, the BDC Theory helps to confirm the historical assumptions that, there were small group/s of Kibena speakers separated from others during the late 20th century and lived in other areas outside Kibena homeland (Mhiche, 2000; Nyagava, 2000; Mitterhofer, 2013; Morrison, 2015). Through this theory, it is possible to observe linguistic divergence (particularly in object-verb marking) of the Kibena Lowland Variety versus the Kibena Highland Varieties.

The paper is divided into seven sections: section one offers an introduction to Kibena language; section two deals with review of the previous studies. Section three is about methodology. Section four presents agreement marking in Kibena; section five analyses variation in object-verb marking between the Kibena HVs and LV. Section six describes reasons for variations in object-verb marking between HVs and LV. The last section provides a conclusion.

2. Literature Review and Related Studies

2.1 Agreement Marking across Bantu Languages

Agreement marking is among the central morphosyntactic aspects in Bantu languages. It is done through representing noun class or personal pronoun prefixes on other units within a string (Massamba, 2016). Noun class prefixes govern the grammatical agreement of other constituents such as verbs, adjectives and associatives (Matei, 2008; Chaula, 2017).

Different Bantu languages employ different strategies in agreement marking system. Subject agreement does not exhibit great variation across Bantu linguistics like object agreement. Hyman and Duranti (1982) describes three main traits of an object argument: first an object should be able to occupy post-verbal position, second it should be able to be passivized and third it has accessibility to be marked within the verb. The third trait is the concern of this paper. Some Bantu languages like Kiwoso (Mallya, 2016) licence double object marking while others like Ikalanga, Kishona and Chichewa (Mathangwane and Osam, 2006) allow only one object to be marked. In some languages, object marking is mandatory in some contexts while it is optional in other environments. Such languages include Kiluguru and Kiswahili (Marten and Ramadhani, 2001), and Chiyao (Taji, 2017a and 2017b).

In coordinated noun phrase as an object, some studies from Bantu languages also indicate varying strategies for object marking. Kisambaa uses four strategies for object marking with coordinated noun phrase: (i) no agreement, (ii) first conjunct agreement, (iii) plural agreement or (iv) the default class 8 or other classes (Riedel, 2009). For instance when non-human but animate objects from same class are coordinated, three strategies are possible as exemplified in (1) below.
(1) Coordinated object noun phrase in Kisambaa

    a. *Nzaona*   *shimba*   *na*   *shui.*
        n-za-ona   *shimba*   *na*   *Shui*
        SM1-PERF-see   CL9lion   and   CL9leopard
      'I saw the lion and the leopard.'

    b.   *Nzaiona*   *shimba*   *Na*   *shui.*
        *n-za-**i**-ona*   *Shimba*   *Na*   *shui*
        SM1-PERF-OM9-see   CL9lion   and   CL9leopard
      'I saw the lion and the leopard.'

    c.   *Nzaziona*   *shimba*   *Na*   *shui.*

*n-za-**zi**-ona*	*Shimba*	*Na*	*shui*	
SM1-PERF-OM10-see	CL9lion	and	CL9leopard	

'I saw the lion and the leopard.' (Riedel, 2009:194)

Example (1a) above shows object marking with no agreement, example (1b) indicates marking with the closest conjunct, and example (1c) is the marking with class 10 plural agreement of class 9.

Kinyakyusa and Kiswahili also make use of four strategies just like Kisambaa (Lusekelo, 2012). Kiluguru shares three strategies with Kisambaa which are (i), (ii) and (iv) (Marten and Ramadhani, 2001). In some languages, such as Kikuria of Kenya (Diercks *et al.*, 2015) both object conjuncts are marked, otherwise the construction becomes ungrammatical. Below are examples of object agreements for coordinated noun phrases in Kiluguru, which takes the agreement marker of the closest conjunct, and Kiswahili, which does not show any agreement.

(2) Coordinated object noun phrase

a.
Wanzehe	*walighula*	*libanzi*	*na*	*mabwe.*	
wa-nze-he	*wa-**li**-ghul-a*	*li-banzi*	*na*	*ma-bwe*	
CL2-elder	CL2-OM5-buy-FV	CL5-wood	and	CL6-stone	

'The elders bought a wooden board and stones.'
(Kiluguru, Marten and Ramadhani, 2001:12).

b.
Ana	*aliona*	*mito*	*mingi*	*na*	*msitu*	*mnene.*
Ana	*a-li-on-a*	*mi-to*	*mi-ngi*	*na*	*m-situ*	*m-nene*
CL1.Ana	3SG-PST-see-FV	CL4-river	CL4-many	and	CL3-forest	CL3-thick

'Ana saw many rivers and thick forest.'(Kiswahili, Lusekelo, 2012:230).

The above reviews indicate that there are wide variations in object agreement marking across Bantu languages. Though these variations are revealed at language level, this calls for further research into other languages and at dialectological level. This paper therefore examines variations in object-verb marking in two Kibena varieties: the Highland Varieties and the Lowland Variety.

2.2 Previous Studies on Language Dialectology

Apart from variation noted at language level, there are some studies which display variation at dialectical level. Kanana (2011) investigates phonological, morphological and lexical variations among six dialects of Kimeru in Kenya, namely Imenti, Tharaka, Igoji, Mwimbi, Muthambi and Chuka. The study generally reveals that all six dialects are phonologically closely related. A minor variation is revealed in noun classes. This study provides phonological and morphological information particularly in pronunciation and noun classes respectively. However, variation in object marking is not examined which is the concern of this paper.

There are other dialectological studies related to Kanana (2011) that focus either to phonological, morphological and lexical aspects or to one or two of the three aspects. Kipacha (2003) analyses Kiswahili dialects focusing on linguistic variation in terms of phonology, morphology and lexis. Another study is done by Hans (2014) who describes lexical variation between three Kiswahili dialects spoken in Zanzibar, namely Kimakunduchi, Kitumbatu and Kipemba. Ali (2015) also observes lexical variation between the Northern Kipemba and the Southern Kipemba dialects of Kiswahili. Morphosyntactic aspects are not included in all these studies. This is an area that the paper examines.

Sibajene (2013) analyses phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical variations between Valley Tonga and Plateau Tonga, the dialects of Kitonga language. In syntax, three aspects are described: simple negation, yes-no question marking, and question tag formation. Though this study describes some morphosyntactic aspects, it has left out other significant morphosyntactic features that can also reveal variation across varieties of language. Such features are relative marking, agreement system, tense and aspect to mention few. Riedel (2010) also describes Kifipa dialects with reference to morphosyntactic features mainly object marking, relative markers and word order of different varieties of Kifipa and other Bantu languages. This paper deals with variation in agreement marking particularly object-verb marking.

In Kibena, there are two previous studies on Kibena varieties. The first is the study done by Mitterhofer (2013) who describes the varieties of Kibena by analysing Kibena word lists for 301 items from primary survey and 94 items from secondary survey. This study also includes a list of 27 phrases. The researcher identifies three varieties, namely: the East dialect, the South dialect and the North-west dialect. Her survey is based only on phonological and lexical aspects.

Despite its thorough analysis, Mitterhofer's study (2013) does not analyse morphosyntactic features that can also manifest dialectal variation. Additionally, the scope of coverage of the study is very limited as it excludes the groups of Kibena speakers living outside Njombe Region. For example, the Bena-Manga group found in Kilombero and Malinyi, Morogoro Region (Mhiche, 2000; Nyagava, 2000) is not included in the study although the author acknowledges its presence.

The second is a study done by Morrison (2015) who identifies six varieties of Kibena: Twangabita, Ngaveta, Maswamu, Sovi, Vanyikolwe, and Mavemba. The study confines itself to Njombe and Wanging'ombe Districts. However, Morrison (2015) concurs with Nyagava (2000) on the presence of another variety known as Bena-Manga, spoken by people who migrated to neighbouring Morogoro Region during the twentieth century. In the study, Morrison mainly uses some phonetic, phonological and lexical variables to identify Kibena varieties. Like Mitterhofer's study, this study also leaves out some vital linguistic elements that could be used to analyse dialectal variations particularly morphosyntactic aspects.

The two studies on Kibena varieties are based on the traditional approach of dialectology; their description of Kibena varieties is dominated by phonological and lexical features. In addition, other groups of Kibena speakers outside Njombe Region are not included in both studies. These set grounds for examining varieties of Kibena using different parameters.

This paper is based on object-verb marking (as one of morphosyntactic aspects) to analyse varieties of Kibena, namely Kibena HVs and LV. Unlike previous researches, the paper also includes other identified groups of Kibena speakers living in Morogoro Region (Kilombero and Malinyi Districts) and Ruvuma Region at Madaba.

3. Methodology

The paper is descriptive in nature. The data for this study were collected from three regions (particularly in areas inhabited by native Kibena speakers): Njombe, Ruvuma and Morogoro. In Njombe Region, the data were obtained from Njombe and Wanging'ombe Districts as well as in some villages from Njombe Town Council and Makambako Town Council. In Ruvuma Region, they were collected in Songea Rural District particularly at Madaba whereas in Morogoro Region, they were obtained from Kilombero District (at Masagati and Utengule areas), and Malinyi District (Ihowanja, Malinyi and Ngoheranga villages).

Purposive sampling was employed for sampling informants. Purposive sampling is non-probability sampling in which a sample is selected based on certain stipulated criteria that participants possess (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). This technique was chosen because the researcher needed informants with specific criteria in order to obtain the relevant data for the study. Informants involved were Kibena native speakers. Using purposive sampling technique, a total of 33 informants were selected. For HVs 27 informants were involved, taking 24 informants from 8 Kibena varieties found in Njombe Region, and 3 informants from Madaba variety found in Ruvuma Region. 6 informants were taken from LV, taking 3 from Kilombero area, and 3 from Malinyi, Morogoro Region. The informants were selected by considering a number of criteria which were age, level of education and geographical location. Clanship relationship and religious factors also helped in identifying significant informants.

Three techniques were used for data collection namely: reverse translation elicitation, review elicitation and oral texts. In reverse translation elicitation, 54 sentences were translated from Kiswahili to Kibena to extract data on agreement marking variations. Review elicitation was used to note some agreements, disagreements as well as discrepancies found in the data collected by reverse translation elicitation. In oral texts, four short speeches were collected for identification of agreement marking variations. These are procedural texts about traditional activities for making local beer, getting traditional rulers, giving sacrifice to gods and marriage. In addition, one story on the history of Vabena Manga/LV speakers was elicited. The story provides data for sociolinguistic information among others and the reasons for variations between HVs and LV.

4. Agreement Marking in Kibena

In Kibena, concordial agreement markers are categorised into two forms: noun class prefix markers and personal pronoun markers. The forms of object markers are similar as of noun class prefixes except for noun classes 3/4, 6, 9/10, and the personal pronouns 1 singular/plural and 2 singular (see Table 2). Table (1) below presents noun class prefixes and object concordial agreement markers in Kibena.

Table 1
Noun Class Prefixes and Object Concordial Agreement Markers in Kibena

No	Augment	Noun class prefix	Object prefix
1	*u-*	*mu-*	*-mu-*
1a	*u-*	*Ø*	*-mu-*
2	*a*	*va-*	*-va-*
3	*u-*	*mu-*	*-gu-*
4	*i-*	*mi-*	*-gi-*
5	*i-*	*li-*	*-li-*
6	*a-*	*ma-*	*-ga-*
7	*i-*	*ki-*	*-ki-*
8	*i-*	*fi-*	*-fi-*
9	*i-*	*n-*	*-yi-*
10	*i-*	*n-*	*-dzi-*
11	*u-*	*lu-*	*-lu*
12	*a-*	*ka-*	*-ka-*
13	*u-*	*Tu*	*-tu-*
14	*u-*	*vu-*	*-vu-*
15	*u-*	*ku-*	*-ku-*
16	**a-*	*pa-*	*-pa-*
17	**u-*	*ku-*	*-ku-*
18	**u-*	*mu-*	*-mu-*
20	*u-*	*Gu*	*-gu*

Note *Means it is not commonly used among Kibena speakers.

Kibena has six personal pronoun markers, three for singular and three for plural. All are presented in Table (2) below.

Table 2

Kibena Personal Pronouns and Object-verb Markers

No	Personal pronouns	Gloss	Personal pronoun markers	Examples	Gloss
1st SG	*Uneene*	I/me	*-ni-*	*ukaniwene igolo.*	You saw me yesterday.
1st PL	*uneefwe*	we/us	*-tu-*	*ukatuwene igolo.*	You saw us yesterday.
2nd SG	*Uveeve*	you/you	*-ku-*	*ndikakuwene igolo.*	I saw you yesterday.
2nd PL	*unyeenye*	you/you	*-va-*	*ndikavawene igolo.*	I saw you yesterday.
3rd SG	*umweene*	he/she/him/her	*-mu-*	*ndikamuwene igolo.*	I saw him/her yesterday.
3rd PL	*Aveene*	they/them	*-va-*	*Ndikavawene igolo.*	I saw them yesterday.

Kibena object markers occur immediately after tense marker, followed by verbal root. Table (3) below indicates slots that object markers can appear in the Kibena verb template.

Table 3

Kibena Verb Template

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
NEG₁/ REL	SM	NEG₂/INF	NEG₃	TAM₁	TAM₂	OM	RT	EXT	FV/TAM	CLITIC	Gloss
Si-	*a-*	-	-	*dzi-*		***mu-***	*lim-*	*il-*	*a*		He/she will not cultivate for him/her.
A-	*va-*	*si-*	-	-		**-**	*lim-*		*ile-*		Who have not cultivated
	Ndi-	-	-	*kaa-*	*dzi-*	***mu-***	*lim-*	-	*iye (ile)*		I went and cultivated for him/her.
	U-	*si-/ki-*	*ta-*	-		***va-***	*lim-*	*il-*	*a*		Do not cultivate for them.
	Tu	-		*lá-*		***mu-***	*lim-*	*il-*	*a-*	*ga*	We will be cultivating for him/her.
		Ku-					*lim-*	-	*a*		To cultivate

5. Variation in Object-verb Marking between the Kibena HVs and LV

This part first presents object-verb marking in HVs, followed by object-verb marking in LV, and it indicates the general variations in agreement marking between the two main varieties.

5.1 Object-verb Marking in the Kibena HVs

There are three categories of object constructions in Kibena: intransitive verb construction, single object construction and double object construction. Transitive verbs allow one object; ditransitive verbs permit two objects (primary object and secondary object) whereas intransitive verbs do not carry any object. Kibena HVs reveal some behaviours on object marking as illustrated in (3) below.

(3) Object marking in HVs

    a.   *Uneefwe*   *Tulámuwona*   *umwana.*
            u-neefwe   *tu-la-**mu**-won-a*   *u-mu-ana*
            AUG-1PL.PRO   1PL-F_3-OM1-see-FV   AUG-CL1-child
            'We will see the child.'

    b.   *Uneefwe*   *Tulávawona*   *avana.*
            u-neefwe   *tu-la-**va**-won-a*   *a-va-ana*
            AUG-1PL.PRO   1PL-F_3-OM2-see-FV   AUG-CL2-child
            'We will see the children.'

    c.   *Ndiláfiwona*   *Ifinu*   *fyangu.*
            *ndi-la-**fi**-won-a*   *i-fi-nu*   *fi-angu*
            1SG-F_3-OM8-see-FV   AUG-CL8-things   CL8-1SG.POSS
            'I willl see my things.'

    d.   *Ndiláyiwona*   *Imbuwa*   *yangu.*
            *ndi-la-**yi**-won-a*   *i-n-buwa*   *yi-angu*
            1SG-F_3-OM9-see-FV   AUG-CL9-dog   CL9-1SG.POSS
            'I will see my dog.'

Examples above indicate that, the object markers agree with the noun class prefixes of the object nouns being represented like -*mu*- for class 1 noun prefix *mu-/mw-*, -*va*- for class 2 noun prefix *va-*, -*fi*- for class 8 noun prefix *fi* and -*yi*- for class 9 noun prefix *n-*.

Object marking in some verbs is compulsory for humans, animate and inanimate objects like verb *wona* 'see' in example (3) above. In other cases, it is optional or is not allowed at all. The examples in (4) below verify it.

(4) Humanness, animacy and inanimacy object marking in HVs

    a.   *Helele*   *Kamutove*   *umwana.*
            helel-e   *ka-**mu**-tov-e*   *u-mu-ana*
            go-FV   EXH-OM1-hit-FV   AUG-CL1-child
            'Go and hit the child.'

    b.   *Helele*   *katove*   *mbuwa.*
            helel-e   *ka-tov-e*   *n-buwa*
            go-FV   EXH-hit-FV   CL9-dog
            'Go and hit the dog.'

    c.   *Helele*   *katove*   *madzebele.*
            helel-e   *ka-tov-e*   *ma-dzebele*
            go-FV   EXH-hit-FV   CL6-maize
            'Go and hit maize (Lit. Translation).' 'Go and thresh maize.'

    d.   *Ilisakata*   *lyasakága*   *kulya*   *lidzogolo.*
        i-li-sakata   *li-aa-sak-ag-a*   *ku-li-a*   *li-dzogolo*
       AUG-CL5-monitor-   CL5-P_4-want-NAR-FV   CL15-eat-FV   CL5-rooster
       lizard
       'A monitor-lizard wanted to eat a rooster.'

    e.   *Ilisakata*   *lyasakága*   *kumulya*   *umwana.*
       i-li-sakata   *li-aa-sak-ag-a*   *ku-**mu**-li-a*   *u-mu-ana*

AUG-CL5-monitor-lizard	CL5-P$_4$-want-NAR-FV	CL15-OM1-eat-FV	AUG-CL1-child

'A monitor-lizard wanted to eat the child.'

In HVs, it is ungrammatical to place object markers in some verbs such as *tova* 'to beat', *lya* 'to eat' and others to represent non-human object or inanimate object (4b, c & d) except if, it is an anthropomorphized animal. On the other hand, it is grammatically correct to attach object markers to the same verbs for human object representation (4a & e).

For constructions containing double objects, only one object is marked in the verb. The resolution of which object noun to be marked depends on the status of humanness, animacy and inanimacy. If the object nouns comprise human and animate or inanimate nouns, the verb is marked with human subject while in the context of animate and inanimate nouns, the animate is marked. This is shown in the example (5) below.

(5) Object marking for double object constructions in HVs

a.
Udaada	*Akaatupeliye*	*uneefwe*	*wuledzi.*
u-daada	a-kaa-***tu***-pel-il-ile	u-neefwe	wu-ledzi
AUG-father	CL1-P$_3$-OM-give-APPL-FV	AUG-1PL.PRO	CL14-millet

'Father gave us millet.'

b.
Uhoongiye	*Akaamuguliye*	*udaadefyala*	*isenga.*
u-hoongiye	a-kaa-***mu***-gul-il-ile	u-daadefyala	i-ø-senga
AUG-aunt	CL1-P$_3$-OM1-buy-APPL-FV	AUG-father in law	AUG-CL9-cow

'Aunt bought her father in law a cow.'

c.
Uyuuva	*Akunilisa*	*Uneene*	*kyakulya.*
u-yuuva	a-ku-***ni***-l-is-a	Uneene	ki-akulya
AUG-mother	CL1-PRES-CL15-OM-feed-CAUS-FV	AUG-1SG.PRO	CL7-food

'Mother feeds me with food.'

d.
Uyuuva	*Akunilisa*	*Ikyakulya*	*uneene.*
u-yuuva	a-i-ku-***ni***-l-is-a	i-ki-akulya	uneene
AUG-mother	CL1-PRES-CL15-OM-feed-CAUS-FV	AUG-CL7-food	AUG-1SG.PRO

'Mother feeds me food.'

e.
Uyuuva	*Akuyilisa*	*Isenga*	*ikyakulya*
u-yuuva	a-i-ku-***yi***-l-is-a	i-ø-senga	i-ki-akulya
AUG-mother	CL1-PRES-CL15-OM-feed-CAUS-FV	AUG-CL9-cow	AUG-CL7-food

'Mother feeds cow with food.'

It is ungrammatical to mark inanimate as object in the construction having animate + inanimate. For instance, it is impossible for the expression in example (5e) to be constructed as **Uyuuva aku**ki**lisa isenga ikyakulya*. In this, the food becomes beneficiary which sounds awkward among speakers.

In double object constructions, usually the beneficiary is prioritized to be marked in the verb. Even if primary object and secondary objects exchange positions as in (5c & d) the situation remains the same. Also, both orders are grammatically correct and are acceptable by all speakers. In some contexts, the difference in ordering is most likely to carry pragmatic meaning.

In the context of object topicalization the beneficiary is marked as indicated in example (6) below.

(6) Marking the topicalized object in HVs

Udaadefyala	*Uhoongiye*	*Akaamuguliye*	*isenga.*

u-ø-daadefyala	u-ø-hoongiye	a-kaa-**mu**-gul-il-ile	i-ø-senga
AUG-CL1-father in law	AUG-CL1-aunt	CL1-P₃-OM1-buy-APPL-FV	AUG-CL9-cow

'Aunt bought her father in law a cow.'

Furthermore, in passivized constructions, object triggers concordial agreement in the passivized single or double object constructions. In double object constructions only one object (primary object) can be passivized. Both are exemplified in (7) below.

(7) Object marking for passivized object in HVs

a.

Idzayi	Yiyavilwe	nu	daada.
i-ø-dzayi	yi-yav-il-w-e	na	u-ø-daada
AUG-CL9-tea	CL9-pick-APPL-PASS-FV	by	AUG-CL1-father

'The tea has been picked by father.'

b.

Udaadefyala	Akaagulilwe	isenga	nu	uhoongiye.
u-ø-daadefyala	**a**-kaa-gul-il-w-e	i-ø-senga	na	u-ø-hoongiye
AUG-CL1-father in law	CL1-P₃-buy-APPL-PASS-FV	AUG-CL9-cow	By	AUG-CL1-aunt

'The father-in-law was bought a cow by aunt.'

Therefore, object subjectization is common in HVs. Object prefix in coordinated noun phrase is presented below.

5.1.1 Object-verb Marking in Coordinated Noun Phrase for HVs

In Kibena, generally in coordinated noun phrase as object, only one object is marked. In HVs, when both conjuncts are human nouns whether in singular or plural the object closest to the verb governs the object marking as in example (8) below.

(8) Object marking for coordinated human conjuncts in HVs

a.

Ndikaamuwene	Umudimi	na	Vahidza	vavili.
ndi-kaa-**mu**-wen-e	u-mu-dimi	na	va-hidza	va-vili
1SG-P₃-OM1-see-FV	AUG-CL1-boy	and	CL2-girl	CL2-two

'I saw the boy and two girls.'

b.

Ndikaavawene	Avahidza	vavili	Nu	mudimi.
ndi-kaa-**va**-wen-e	a-va-hidza	va-vili	Na	u-mu-dimi
1SG-P₃-OM2-see-FV	AUG-CL2-girl	CL2-two	And	AUG-CL1-boy

'I saw two girls and the boy.'

In the example (8a), the closest conjunct to the verb is in singular form which makes the object marker to be in singular form also regardless of the plural form in the second conjunct. Whereas in example (8b), the closest conjunct is in plural form, likewise the verb is marked with plural object marker.

The strategy of the closest conjunct also applies when human noun and animate or inanimate noun are coordinated as object. The object marker attached to the verb is the one closest to it. The examples in (9) below affirm this.

(9) Object marking for human and animate or inanimate conjuncts in HVs

a.

Ndilámuwona	umudimi	ni	mbuwa.
ndi-la-**mu**-won-a	u-mu-dimi	na	i-n-buwa
1SG-F₃-OM1-see-FV	AUG-CL1-boy	and	AUG-CL9-dog

'I will see the boy and the dog.'

b.

Ndiláyiwona	imbuwa	nu	mudimi.

ndi-la-**yi**-won-a	i-n-buwa	na u-mu-dimi
1SG-F₃-OM9-see-FV	AUG-CL9-dog	and AUG-CL1-boy
'I will see the dog and the boy.'		

c.
Ndikumuwona	umwayuuva	Ni	ligimilo.
ndi-i-ku-**mu**-won-a	u-mu-ayuuva	Na	i-li-gimilo
1SG-PRES-CL15-OM1-see-FV	AUG-CL1-woman	and	AUG-CL5-hoe

'I see the woman and the hoe.'

d.
Ndikuliwona	iligimilo	Nu	mwayuuva.
ndi-i-ku-**li**-won-a	i-li-gimilo	Na	u-mu-ayuuva
1SG-PRES-CL15-OM5-see-FV	AUG-CL5-hoe	and	AUG-CL1-woman

'I see the hoe and the woman.'

In examples (9a) and (9c), the object human noun is placed immediately after the verb, therefore, the object marker is *mu-* of noun class 1. In (9b) the object closest to the verb is animate. It is marked by object prefix *-yi-* which agrees with class 9 noun prefix *n-* while example (9d), the closest object to the verb is noun class 5 (inanimate) represented by object marker *-li-*.

Generally, in HVs, object marking in coordinated noun phrase is guided by syntactic criterion. This criterion is also common in Kisambaa (Riedel, 2009).

5.1.2 Object-verb Marking in the Kibena LV
LVs object marking behaves similar to HVs in single object constructions, double object constructions, object topicalization and passivisation (see examples 3-7). Variation is noted in coordinated noun phrase as an object.

5.1.2.1 Object-verb Marking in Coordinated Noun Phrase for LV
Like in Kibena HVs, in LV only one object is marked for coordinated noun phrase as object. However, due to personification, LV behaves slightly different from HVs in some contexts. When human noun and animate noun are coordinated, the verb is attached the object marker *-va-* which agrees with class 2 noun prefix *va-*. This is done equally whether both conjuncts are in singular or plural form or they interchange positions as exemplified in (10) below.

(10) Object marking for coordinated noun phrase in LV

a.
Ndilávawona	Mudimi	na	mwambuwa.
ndi-la-**va**-won-a	mu-dimi	na	mua-n-buwa
1SG-F₃-OM2-see-FV	CL1-boy	and	NG-CL9-dog
'I will see the boy and the dog.'			

b.
Ndilávawona	mwambuwa	na	mudimi.
ndi-la-**va**-won-a	mua-n-buwa	na	mu-dimi
1SG-F₃-OM2-see-FV	NG-CL9-dog	and	CL1-boy
'I will see the dog and the boy.'			

c.
Ndilávawona	vahidza	vavili	Na	mudimi.
ndi-la-**va**-won-a	va-hidza	va-vili	Na	mu-dimi
1SG-F₃-OM2-see-FV	CL2-girls	CL2-two	and	CL1-boy

'I see two girls and the boy.'

In LV therefore human and animate are marked with equal status.

However, like in HVs, when human and inanimate noun are coordinated, the closest conjunct is marked on the verb in LV as exemplified in (11) below.

(11) Object marking for human and inanimate conjuncts in LV

a.	*Ndikumuwona*	*mwayuuva*	*ni*	*ligimilo.*	
	*ndi-i-ku-**mu**-won-a*	*mu-ayuuva*	*na*	*li-gimilo*	
	1SG-PRES-CL15-OM1-see-FV	AUG-CL1-woman	and	CL5-hoe	

'I see the woman and the hoe.'

b.	*Ndikuliwona*	*ligimilo*	*nu*	*mwayuuva.*	
	*ndi-i-ku-**li**-won-a*	*li-gimilo*	*na*	*mu-ayuuva*	
	1SG-PRES-CL15-OM5-see-FV	CL5-hoe	and	CL1-woman	

'I see the hoe and the woman.'

In example (11a), the closest conjunct *mwayuuva* 'woman' is marked on the verb, while in example (11b) the inanimate noun *ligimilo* 'hoe' is marked in the verb because it is the closest conjunct.

Generally, LV object marking in coordinated noun phrase is governed by semantic criterion and syntactic criterion. Syntactic criterion is also used in other Bantu languages like Kiluguru (Marten and Ramadhani, 2001) and Kisambaa (2009).

5.2 Variation in Object Prefixes between HVs and LV
Both HVs and LV share object agreement marking in single object constructions, double object constructions, object topicalization and passivisation.

Variation is in coordinated object noun phrase. HVs employ syntactic strategy that is the noun class prefix of the conjunct closest to the verb is marked. In LV, semantic and syntactic strategies play great role in marking coordinated object noun phrase. These strategies are summarised in Table (4) below.

Table 4
Variation in Object Marking Strategies in Coordinated Noun Phrase

Context	HVs	LV
HUMAN + HUMAN singular or plural	noun class prefix of the conjunct closest to the verb	noun class 2 prefix *va-*
HUMAN + NON-HUMAN or NON-HUMAN + HUMAN singular or plural	noun class prefix of the conjunct closest to the verb	noun class 2 prefix *va-*
HUMAN + INANIMATE or INANIMATE + HUMAN singular or plural	noun class prefix of the conjunct closest to the verb	noun class prefix of the conjunct closest to the verb

6.0 Reasons for Variations in Object-Verb Marking between HVs and LV
The variation in agreement marking between the HVs and LV is likely to have been contributed by geographical and historical factors. LV speakers had been separated for a long time from speakers of HVs (see Section 1). The variety is located in the lowland zones of Kilombero and Malinyi Districts, Morogoro Region while HVs are in highland zones. This makes them to vary in most cases. Massamba (2007) in the BDC theory also insists that once the members of a single speech community have been separated for a long time, their culture and speeches become different.

Language contact is another factor for these variations. Both varieties get influence from other languages particularly Kiswahili but not in equal status. LV is much influenced by Kiswahili compared to HVs because it is situated outside Kibena homeland. Living with non-Kibena speakers like the Ndamba, the Ndweve and the Ngoni may be one of the reasons for LV to use Kiswahili frequently. Consequently, it has impact on the LV grammar. For instance, Kiswahili treats humans and animals in the same noun classes hence it uses the same agreement markers; the LV speakers do the same. As Mkude (2011:127) observes "Swahili is known to exert strong influence on other ethnic languages in Tanzania".

7. Conclusion

The study examined variation in object-verb marking system between Kibena HVs and LV. Variation in single object noun phrase and coordinated object noun phrase are analysed.

The findings reveal that in both HVs and LV, object marking in some verbs is compulsory for humans, animate and inanimate objects while in other cases it is optional or is not allowed at all. In double object construction, only one object is marked on the verb. In coordinated object noun phrase, only one object marker is marked on the verb for both conjuncts in both varieties. The variation is: in HVs, when human noun and animate or inanimate noun are coordinated, the object closest to the verb is marked whereas in LV, the object marker -va- which agrees with class 2 noun prefix is attached to the verb for noun phrase formed by human and non-human nouns. When coordinated noun phrase is formed by human and inanimate conjuncts, the closest conjunct to the verb is object marked in LV. Generally, the findings imply that the HVs and LV are dialects of Kibena language; none has developed into independent language as per the BDC theory. It is recommended that morphosyntactic features such as variation in agreement marking, negation system and tense-aspect system should be examined across varieties of other Bantu languages.

Abbreviations

1SG	1st Person Singular	F_3	Future three	PERF	Perfective
1PL	1st Person Plural	FV	Final Vowel	POSS	Possessive
2PL	2nd Person Plural	HVs	Highland Varieties	PRES	Present
3SG	3rd Person Singular	INF	Infinitive	PRO	Pronoun
3PL	3rd Person Plural	LV	Lowland Varieties	PST	Past
APPL	Applicative	NEG	Negation	REL	Relative
AUG	Augment	NG	Natural Gender	RT	Root
CL	Class	OM	Object Marker	SM	Subject Marker
EXH	Exhortation	P_3	Past three	TAM	Tense, Aspect and Mood
EXT	Extension	P_4	Past four		

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