



ISRG PUBLISHERS

Abbreviated Key Title: ISRG J Edu Humanit Lit

ISSN: 2584-2544 (Online)

Journal homepage: <https://isrgpublishers.com/isrgjehl/>

Volume – III Issue – V (September-October) 2026

Frequency: Bimonthly



LEXICAL DIALECTAL VARIATIONS IN KĪKAMBA: A STRUCTURAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NOUN MORPHOPHONOLOGY

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| Received: 28.09.2026 | Accepted: 03.10.2026 | Published: 10.10.2026

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Abstract

This paper undertook to examine the Kĩkamba noun dialectal variation at the lexical level. The study used the variation theory by Labov (1972). Accordingly, a descriptive research design was adopted. The findings of this paper revealed that dialectal variation existed within Kĩkamba noun at the lexical level and that such variations were phonologically and lexically determined. This meant that Kĩkamba noun lexically and phonologically varied across the three dialects of Kĩkamba these are; Kíkĩtui, Kĩmasakũ and Kíkĩlũngũ.

Keywords: Lexeme, Variation, Dialect, Kĩkamba

1. INTRODUCTION

Kikamba, a Bantu language spoken in Kenya, exhibits dialectal variation at both the lexical and phonological levels. Lexically, different dialects may use different words for the same concept, while phonologically, variations in pronunciation and tone patterns can occur. Different Kĩkamba dialects may use distinct words for the same object or idea. The study of language dialectal variation is crucial because the most unifying features of a language can only be identified through the standard dialect or the most used dialect in a certain language. Lexical dialectal variation in Bantu languages refers to the differences in vocabulary (lexicon) found across different dialects of the same Bantu language. This means

that speakers of different dialects might use different words to refer to the same concept, even though they speak a language that is fundamentally the same. These variations can arise from various factors, including geographical isolation, language contact, and historical developments. In summary, lexical dialectal variation is a fundamental aspect of Bantu languages, reflecting the dynamic nature of language and the diverse ways in which communities use and adapt their languages. This paper proposes to determine the dialectal differences in Kĩkamba at the lexical level that can be observed in the Kĩkamba noun. With regards to Kĩkamba

dialects, Kivuko (2026) recognized three dialects of Kikamba; Kikĩtui, Kikĩlũngũ and Kĩmasakũ.

Kikamba dialectal variation at the lexical level deals with distinct vocabulary choices, and loanword absorption across the three geographical areas of Ukambani: Machakos (Kĩmasakũ), Kitui (Kikĩtui), and Makueni (Kikĩlũngũ). While the grammatical structure remains largely uniform, lexical variations frequently arise due to environmental factors, neighboring communities, and historical isolation. For instance, the northern/Kitui dialect often retains older Bantu vocabulary or shares more lexical similarities with the neighboring Kigikũyũ and Kĩmeru languages, while the southern/Machakos dialect has adopted more loanwords, particularly from Kiswahili and English, due to higher urban interaction (Kasiva, 2023).

Lexical differences also manifest in the specific terminology used to describe daily life, farming, and livestock management. Regional variations exist in the vocabulary used for kinship, agricultural tools, and local flora. Additionally, younger speakers in urban centers like Nairobi are experiencing a significant loss of native Kikamba lexical items, replacing them with English or Swahili equivalents, which introduces a generational dimension to lexical variation. For instance, the lexical item *Soko* 'Market' borrowed from Kiswahili, is realized as *Ndũnyũ* in Kĩmasakũ and Kikĩlũngũ dialects though it is interchangeably used across the three dialects of Kikamba. While Kasiva (2023) worked on the '*Phonological Variation in Kikamba Livestock Bargaining Register*', where she showed distinct lexical choices (such as variations in possessive pronouns like *syaku* in Kĩmasakũ versus *kyaku* in Kikĩlũngũ) that were influenced by regional lexical choices. The current study is a morphophonological study of the Kikamba noun segment in general and not restricted to only the livestock bargaining register. According to Labov (2013), 'the study of dialectal variation in language is crucial because the most unifying features of a language can only be identified through the standard dialect or the most used dialect in a certain language' (p. 123).

This study endeavoured to determine the dialectal differences in Kikamba that can be observed in the language's noun morphophonological alternations as an objective of the morphophonological analysis of the Kikamba noun. Linguistic variation is brought about by the way speakers choose their words, the way they pronounce them, and the way they change the form of the words as they speak. Thus, language variation can be analyzed at all levels of linguistic analysis.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Variation theory was used in the analysis and description of data for dialectal variations in Kikamba. According to Labov (1960), different people speak differently with regards to their pronunciation and the words they use. Again people from different regions speak differently hence the dialectal classification of languages. The knowledge of speakers with regards to language is different therefore the reason why they speak differently. In view of the foregoing, the current study will employ the tenets of variation theory in order to analyze and describe the data on the dialectal variation at the lexical level of Kikamba.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a descriptive research design and employed qualitative procedures in sampling, data collection and data analysis. Descriptive studies are mainly used to investigate social issues, and they enable researchers to come up with solutions or recommendations on how to deal with the disparities observed (Kothari, 2019). This study was based in South Eastern Region of Kenya specifically in the following sub-counties Kitui West Sub-county of Kitui County, Mwala Sub-county of Machakos County and Kilome Sub-county of Makueni County where the subjects will be drawn from. This study targeted male Kikamba language native speakers for the analysis of the language's noun morphophonology. This was informed by Bowern (2000) who describes a population suitable for a phonological and morphological analysis as 'the one who have native speakers of the language under study, have all their own teeth, should not have any speech disorders and should not be too young or too old' (p. 90). These will constitute the accessible population defined as 'that part of the target population which the researcher can practically reach' (Cresswell, 2020 p. 182).

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Lexical Variation involves those differences that are realized at the vocabulary level of the dialects under analysis. This paper focused on two parameters of variation that defined the three Kikamba dialects. These were; cases where same concept was represented by different forms and the cases which were similar in all respects except pronunciation

4.1 Same Concept Represented by Different Forms

In this sub-section, lexical variables that are different in spelling and pronunciation but similar in meaning in all three dialects of Kikamba are given. Six variables in this parameter emerged, namely: the 'sheep' variable, the 'boiled maize' variable, the 'serving spoon' variable, the 'lizard' variable, the 'ground' variable, and finally, the 'monday' variable.

4.1.1 The 'Egg' Variable

The first variable that emerged in the parameter of the same concept represented by different forms was the 'egg' variable. The variable 'egg' was represented by different forms in Kikĩtui on the one hand and Kĩmasakũ and Kikĩlũngũ dialects of Kikamba language. For instance, 'egg' had two variants: *ĩthae* and *ĩtumbĩ*. In Kĩmasakũ dialect, the variable was called *ĩtumbĩ*, in Kikĩtui dialect it was called *ĩthae*, while in Kikĩlũngũ the variable had two variants; *ĩtumbĩ* and *ĩthae*. More research needs to be done to establish the use of the two variants with regard to variable 'egg'. See Table 1 below..

Table 1: The 'Egg' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
'egg'	S1-MW1	<i>ĩtumbĩ</i>	A round or oval body of a shell laid by female birds.
	S1-MW2	<i>ĩtumbĩ</i>	
	S1-MW3	<i>ĩtumbĩ</i>	

	S2-KL1 S2-KL2 S2-KL3	<i>itumbi</i> <i>itumbi</i> <i>itumbi</i>	A round or oval body of a shell laid by female birds.
	S3-KW1 S3-KW2 S3-KW3	<i>ithae</i> <i>ithae</i> <i>ithae</i>	A round or oval body of a shell laid by female birds.

4.1.2The 'Boiled Maize Cob' Variable

The second variable that emerged in the above-mentioned parameter was the 'boiled maize cob' variable. It was a variable that was represented by three variants across the three dialects of Kĩikamba. In the Kĩmasakũ dialect specifically S1-MW1 and MW3 subjects, the variable was called *mũsakwa*. However, to the subject S1-MW2, it was called *mũlikyo*. In the Kĩkitui dialect (S3 subjects), the variable was called *kĩlikyo*. In Kĩkĩlũngũ dialect, S2-KL1 and KL2 subjects, the variable was called *mũsakwa*, however, S2-KL3 subject called it *mũsakwa*. More research was proposed to establish the circumstances of the use of the two variants. The Kĩkĩlũngũ and Kĩmasakũ variants were interchangeably used. For instance, the variants *mũlikyo* and *mũsakwa* were interchangeably used by the Kĩkĩlũngũ and Kĩmasakũ dialects. See Table 2 below:

Table 2: The 'Boiled Maize' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
'boiled maize'	S1-MW1	<i>mũsakwa</i>	A boiled maize cob.
	S1-MW2	<i>mũlikyo</i>	
	S1-MW3	<i>mũsakwa</i>	
	S2-KL1	<i>Mũsakwa</i>	A boiled maize cob
	S2-KL2	<i>mũsakwa</i>	
	S2-KL3	<i>mũlikyo</i>	
	S3-KW1	<i>kĩlikyo</i>	A boiled maize cob
	S3-KW2	<i>kĩlikyo</i>	
	S3-KW3	<i>kĩlikyo</i>	

4.1.3The 'Serving Spoon' Variable

The third variable, that emerged was the 'serving spoon'. It was a variable which had three variants across the three dialects of Kĩikamba: *kĩko*, *kĩvũli*, and *mwĩko*. There were cases that were common between dialects. In Kĩmasakũ dialect, the variable was called *mwĩko*, in Kĩkitui dialect it was called *kĩvũli*. In Kĩkĩlũngũ dialect speakers it emerged that the variable had two variants. To S2-KL1 and KL2 subjects, the variable was known as *mwĩko* while to S2-KL3 subject, the variable was called *kĩko*. There were also cases that were common between two dialects: the form *mwĩko* emerged common between Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ. Consider the data in Table 3 below

Table 3: The 'Serving Spoon' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
'serving spoon'	S1-MW1	<i>mwĩko</i>	serving spoon
	S1-MW2	<i>mwĩko</i>	
	S1-MW3	<i>mwĩko</i>	
	S2-KL1	<i>mwĩko</i>	serving spoons

	S2-KL2 S2-KL3	<i>mwĩko</i> <i>kĩko</i>	
	S3-KW1 S3-KW2 S3-KW3	<i>kĩvũli</i> <i>kĩvũli</i> <i>kĩvũli</i>	serving spoon

4.1.4The 'Lizard' Variable

The fourth variable that emerged from the parameter of different forms across the three dialects of Kĩikamba was the variable 'lizard'. It was a variable that was represented by different forms across the three dialects of Kĩikamba. In the Kĩmasakũ dialect, the variable 'lizard' was known as *ĩng'ala*. In Kĩkitui dialect, it was called *ĩkanza*. To S2-KL1 and 2 subjects, Kĩkĩlũngũ dialect speakers, it was known as *ĩng'ala*. However, to S2-KL3 it was called *ĩtelembũ*. Whereas 'lizard' in Kĩkĩlũngũ dialect was called *ĩtelembũ*/ *ĩng'ala*, internal variation was evident where some respondents from Kĩlome sub-county also called it *ĩng'ala*, like the Mwala sub-county subjects. More research recommended to establish the noted inter-dialectal variation. See Table 4 below

Table 4: The 'Lizard' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
'lizard'	S1-MW1 S1-MW2 S1-MW3	<i>ĩng'ala</i> <i>ĩng'ala</i> <i>ĩng'ala</i>	a cold-blooded reptile
	S2-KL1 S2-KL2 S2-KL3	<i>ĩng'ala</i> <i>ĩng'ala</i> <i>ĩtelembũ</i>	
	S3-KW1 S3-KW2 S3-KW3	<i>ĩkanza</i> <i>ĩkanza</i> <i>ĩkanza</i>	

4.1.5The 'Road' Variable

The fifth variable that emerged from the parameter of different forms across dialects of Kĩikamba was the variable 'road'. The variable was established to have two variants across two dialects of Kĩikamba: *lelũ* and *taali*. In Kĩkitui dialect (S3 subjects), it was called *taali*, while in Kĩmasakũ and Kĩkĩlũngũ (S1 and S2 subjects) it was called *lelũ*. More research recommended to establish the variability of the variable 'road' across the three dialects of Kĩikamba.

Table 5: The 'Road' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
'road'	S1-MW1 S1-MW2 S1-MW3	<i>lelũ</i> <i>lelũ</i> <i>lelũ</i>	a track used by foot or by vehicles
	S2-KL1 S2-KL2 S2-KL3	<i>Lelũ</i> <i>lelũ</i> <i>lelũ</i>	
	S3-KW1 S3-KW2 S3-KW3	<i>taali</i> <i>taali</i> <i>taali</i>	

4.1.6The ‘Monday’ Variable

The sixth variable that varied between Kikilungu and Kimasaku dialects on one hand and Kikitu dialect of Kikamba on the other was the ‘Monday’ variable. To Kikilungu and Kimasaku, the variable ‘Monday’ was called *wakwambililya*. Kikitu dialect speakers called it *yumatatu*. Both forms *yumatatu* and *wakwambililya* were different form and pronunciation. See Table 6 below

Table 6: The ‘Monday’ Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Variants	Gloss
‘Monday’	S1-MW1	<i>wakwambililya</i>	first day of the week
	S1-MW2	<i>wakwambilya</i>	
	S1-MW3	<i>wakwambilya</i>	
	S2-KL1.	<i>wakwambililya</i>	first day of the week
	S2-KL2	<i>wakwambilya</i>	
	S2-KL3	<i>wakwambilya</i>	
	S3-KW1	<i>yumatatu</i>	first day of the week
	S3-KW2	<i>yumatu</i>	
	S3-KW3	<i>yumatu</i>	

The *yumatatu* form was interchangeably used across the three dialects in the sense that even the Kikilungu and Kimasaku occasionally used it. The current study suggested further research in order to establish the reason for the interchangeable uses of the form ‘*yumatatu*.’

4.2 Cases which are Similar in all Respects except Pronunciation.

This sub-section looks at lexical features that were similar in meaning but differed in terms of pronunciation. It is important to note at this juncture that the pronunciation differences at this parameter were not phonologically motivated and thus, they were considered in this parameter as purely idiosyncratic properties of the question words rather than a phonological feature. This simply means that they were not determined by phonological rules. Seven variables emerged with regard to the parameter of lexical items that were similar in all respects except their pronunciations across the three dialects of Kikamba. These were the ‘ground’ variable, the ‘antelope’ variable, the ‘name’ variable, the ‘temptations’ variable, the ‘narrative’ variable, the ‘mango tree’ variable, and the ‘children’ variable.

4.2.1The ‘Ground’ Variable

The first variable that emerged in the above parameter was the ‘ground’ variable. To Kikilungu and Kimasaku, the variable ‘ground’ was called *nthi* phonetically [ⁿðe] while Kikitu dialect speakers called it *nzi* phonetically [ⁿze]. Both forms ‘*nthi*’ and ‘*nzi*’ were similar except in their pronunciation. Whereas in *nthi*, the alveolar nasal /n/ pre-nasalizes a dental fricative /ð/, in ‘*nzi*’ it pre-nasalizes a voiced alveolar fricative /z/. See Table 7 below

Table 7: The ‘Ground’ Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
‘ground’	S1-MW1	[ⁿ ðe]	solid surface of the earth
	S1-MW2	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S1-MW3	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S2-KL1	[ⁿ ðe]	solid surface of the earth
	S2-KL2	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S2-KL3	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S3-KW1	[ⁿ ze]	Solid surface of the earth
	S3-KW2	[ⁿ ze]	
	S3-KW3	[ⁿ ze]	

‘ground’	S1-MW1	[ⁿ ðe]	solid surface of the earth
	S1-MW2	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S1-MW3	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S2-KL1	[ⁿ ðe]	solid surface of the earth
	S2-KL2	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S2-KL3	[ⁿ ðe]	
	S3-KW1	[ⁿ ze]	Solid surface of the earth
	S3-KW2	[ⁿ ze]	
	S3-KW3	[ⁿ ze]	

4.2.2The ‘Antelope’ Variable

The second variable that emerged was the ‘antelope’ variable. To Kikilungu and Kimasaku, the variable ‘antelope’ was called ‘*nthia*’ phonetically [ⁿ ðia]. Kikitu dialect speakers called it ‘*nzia*’ phonetically [ⁿzia]. Both forms, ‘*nthia*’ and ‘*nzia*’, were similar except in their pronunciation. Whereas in ‘*nthia*’ the alveolar nasal /n/ pre-nasalized a voiced dental fricative /ð/, in *nzia* it pre-nasalized a voiced alveolar fricative /z/. See Table 8 below:

Table 8: The ‘Antelope’ Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
‘antelope’	S1-MW1	[ⁿ ðia]	a type of a wild animal in the same class with a domestic goat
	S1-MW2	[ⁿ ðia]	
	S1-MW3	[ⁿ ðia]	
	S2-KL1	[ⁿ ðia]	a type of a wild animal in the same class with a domestic goat
	S2-KL2	[ⁿ ðia]	
	S2-KL3	[ⁿ ðia]	
	S3-KW1	[ⁿ zia]	a type of a wild animal in the same class with a domestic goat
	S3-KW2	[ⁿ zia]	
	S3-KW3	[ⁿ zia]	

4.2.3The ‘Name’ Variable

The third variable that emerged was the ‘name’ variable. To Kikilungu and Kimasaku, the variable was called ‘*isyitwa*’ phonetically [^eet^wa]. Kikitu dialect speakers called it ‘*Syitwa*’ phonetically [^jet^wa]. Both forms ‘*isyitwa*’ and ‘*Syitwa*’ were similar except in their pronunciation. Whereas in *isyitwa* there was a vowel /e/ prefixation, in ‘*Syitwa*’ the vowel /e/ was deleted, though there were cases of inter-dialectal variation where Kikitu dialect speaker (S3 subject) specifically, KW3 called it ‘*isyitwa*’. Table 9 illustrates thus

Table 9: The ‘Name’ Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
‘name’	S1-MW1	[^e et ^w a]	group of words used to identify a person or a thing
	S1-MW2	[^e et ^w a]	
	S1-MW3	[^e et ^w a]	

	S2-KL1	[e ^h et ^w a]	group of words used to identify a person or a thing
	S2-KL2	[e ^h et ^w a]	
	S2-KL3	[e ^h et ^w a]	
	S3-KW1	[j ^h et ^w a]	group of words used to identify a person or a thing
	S3-KW2	[j ^h et ^w a]	
	S3-KW3	[j ^h et ^w a]	

4.2.4The 'Temptations' Variable

The fourth variable that emerged was the 'temptation' variable. All S1 and S2 subjects (Kikilungu and Kimasaku), the variable 'temptation' was called [maotat^wa] written as 'Maûtatawa'. Kikîtui dialect speakers called it [mɔ:tat^wa] spelled as 'Mootatawa.' Both forms, 'Maûtatawa' and 'Mootatawa', were similar except in their pronunciation. While [mau-tat^wa] as used by the Kikilungu and Kimasaku dialect speakers, the prefix to the root was /mao-/, was long vowel with different vowels after the consonant 'm', in [mɔ:-tat^wa] as used by the Kikîtui dialect speakers, the prefix to the root /-tatwa/ was /mɔ:-/ with a long vowel /ɔ:/. See Table 10 below

Table 10: The 'Temptation' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
'temptation'	S1-MW1	[maotat ^w a]	a strong urge to do something which can be avoided
	S1-MW2	[maotat ^w a]	
	S1-MW3	[maotat ^w a]	
	S2-KL1	[maotat ^w a]	A strong urge to do something which can be avoided
	S2-KL2	[maotat ^w a]	
	S2-KL3	[maotat ^w a]	
	S3-KW1	[mɔ:tat ^w a]	a strong urge to do something which can be avoided
	S3-KW2	[mɔ:tat ^w a]	
	S3-KW3	[mɔ:tat ^w a].	

4.2.5The 'Narrative' Variable

The fifth variable that emerged was the 'narrative' variable. While to all S1 and S2 subjects (Kikilungu and Kimasaku speakers), the variable 'narrative' was called [wano] to S3 subjects (Kikîtui dialect speakers) had two variants of the form 'wano': [ɣ^wano] and [wano]. Both forms were similar as in 'wano' except in their pronunciation. While subject S3 (KW3) pronounced it as [ɣ^wano], S3 (KW 1 and 2) pronounced it as [wano]. Therefore, [wano] as used by all S1 and S2 subjects, the prefix to the root was /w-/. In [ɣ^wano] as used by subject S3 (KW3) a Kikîtui dialect speaker, the prefix to the root /-ano/ was /ɣ-/. See Table 11 below

Table 11: The 'Narrative' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
'narrative'	S1-MW1	[wano]	a spoken or written story
	S1-MW2	[wano]	
	S1-MW3	[wano]	
'narrative'	S2-KL1	[wano]	a spoken or written story
	S2-KL2	[wano]	

	S2-KL3	[wano]	
'narrative'	S3-KW1	[wano]	a spoken or written story
	S3-KW2	[wano]	
	S3-KW3	[ɣ ^w ano]	

4.2.6The 'Mango Tree' Variable

The sixth variable that emerged was the 'mango tree' variable. To Kikilungu and Kimasaku, the variable 'mango tree' was pronounced as [ke-embe] orthographically written as 'Kiembe'. Kikîtui dialect speakers pronounced it [t^hembe] orthographically represented as 'Kyembe'. Both forms 'Kiembe' and 'Kyembe' were similar except in their pronunciation as in [ke-embe] and [t^hembe]. Whereas in [ke-embe] as used by the Kikilungu and Kimasaku dialect speakers, the prefix of the root was /ke-/, in [t^hembe] as used by the Kikîtui dialect speakers, the prefix of the root was /t^h-. Consider Table 12 below

Table 12: The 'Mango Tree' Variable

Variable	Subject Code	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
'mango Tree'	S1-MW1	[keembe]	a type of tree grown for its sweet fruits
	S1-MW2	[keembe]	
	S1-MW3	[keembe]	
'mango tree'	S2-KL1	[keembe]	a type of tree grown for its sweet fruits
	S2-KL2	[keembe]	
	S2-KL3	[keembe]	
'mango tree'	S3-KW1	[t ^h embe]	a type of tree grown for its sweet fruits
	S3-KW2	[t ^h embe]	
	S3-KW3	[t ^h embe]	

4.2.7The 'Children' Variable

The seventh and the last variable in this parameter of similar forms across all dialects but differing in pronunciation that emerged was the 'children' variable. To all S1 subjects (Kimasaku speakers), the variable 'children' was called [jana] orthographically represented as 'syana'. To S3 subjects (Kikîtui dialect speakers), two variants of the variable 'syana' emerged: the [jana] and [ɣ^wana]. While the first variant [jana] was used by S3, particularly by S3 KW1 and KW2 subjects, the second variant [ɣ^wana] was used by S3, specifically by subject KW3.

To Kikilungu dialect speakers, there were also two variants: [jana] and [t^hana]. Both forms were similar to those in 'syana' except in their pronunciations as in [jana] and [t^hana]. Whereas in [jana], as used by the Kikîtui (KW1 and KW2 subjects) and Kimasaku dialect speakers, the prefix of the root /-ana/ was /j-/, in Kikilungu dialect speakers, the prefix of the root was /j-/ (KL3 subject) and /t^h-/ (KL1 and KL2 subjects). The second variant of the Kikîtui dialect speakers was [ɣ^wana] used by subject KW3 where the prefix of the root was /ɣ/. More research was recommended to establish the reasons behind the occurrence and the use of the three variant prefixes of the Kikilungu and Kikîtui dialects: /j-/, /t^h-, and /ɣ/. See Table 13 below

Table 13: The ‘Children’ Variable

Variable	Kikĩtũĩ	Phonetic Form of the Variant	Gloss
‘children’	S1-MW1	[ʃana]	children
	S1-MW2	[ʃana]	
	S1-MW3	[ʃana]	
‘children’	S2-KL1	[ɛʔana]	chldren
	S2-KL2	[ɛʔana]	
	S2-KL3	[ʃana]	
‘children’	S3-KW1	[ʃana]	children
	S3-KW2	[ʃana]	
	S3-KW3	[ʃ ^w ana]	

5. Conclusion

From the variation theory perspective, Kĩkamba noun variation at the lexical level has illustrated that the variations were not random but a systematic, patterned choices that reflect socio-cultural identity of the Kamba people and their regional dialects demonstrating that Kĩkamba is a dynamic linguistic system

The findings of this paper agree with the variation theory, which holds that different linguistic forms representing the same concepts are not random but are systematically patterned by both linguistic factors and social factors. This demonstrates that language is inherently variable and that these choices are not haphazard but rather reflect systematic preferences and constraints within the language system.

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