

## Variation in Subject-Verb Agreement Marking in Two Kibena Dialects: The Highland Dialect and the Lowland Dialect

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### **Abstract**

*Many traditional dialectologists tend to describe language dialects in favour of phonological and lexical analysis. This paper is a comparative description of variation in subject-verb agreement marking between two Kibena varieties: the Highland Dialect (HD) and Lowland Dialect (LD). This study is guided by the Bantu Divergence-Convergence Theory. The findings reveal that in both the HD and the LD, subject prefixes obligatorily co-occur with all personal pronouns and all noun classes. Unlike in HD, nouns denoting animals take agreements from class 1/2 in LD. For coordinated subject noun phrase, semantic and morphological criteria are used for subject-verb agreement marking in HD. For LD, three strategies are employed: semantic, syntactic and morphological criteria. The variation in agreement marking between the HD and LD is contributed by geographical and historical factors, as well as language contact. This analysis provides evidence that both HD and LD are still varieties of Kibena.*

**Key words:** *Agreement marking, Kibena, highland dialect, lowland dialect, morphosyntax*

### **Introduction**

Morphosyntactic variation is commonly observed across languages rather than internal language variation. However, language variation can be revealed at any level of linguistic analysis: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse; and all languages can exhibit internal variation. In one sense language is the sum of several varieties which also termed as dialects. Language and dialect can change their status. This means a dialect of one language can grow into a language because of long time separation geographically, socially and economically from other dialect speakers. The vice versa is also possible: two or more languages that are genetically related could change into dialects of one language after coming into contact geographically, socially and economically. This concurs with the Bantu divergence-convergence Theory (Massamba, 2018).

Traditionally, dialectological researches have mainly focused on phonological and lexical variations; this means syntactic variables

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have been given less emphasis in classical dialectology. Therefore, syntactic dialectology is an innovative branch that could help in recent theoretical developments relating to grammatical variation. This paper describes morphosyntactical variation in Kibena language.

Kibena is a Bantu language classified in Bena-Kinga group (Guthrie, 1948, 1967-1971; Maho, 2009), and it is particularly assigned G63. It has mainly two dialects morphosyntactically and sociolinguistically: the Highland Dialect (HD) and the Lowland Dialect (LD) (Mgecha, 2019). Geographically, HD is found in areas of the highlands of Njombe Region and in Madaba area in Ruvuma Region (LoT, 2009). The LD is found in lowland zones of Morogoro Region, specifically in Kilombero and Malinyi Districts. LD speakers migrated as a group from the highland zones of Njombe to the lowlands of Morogoro in the later part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and this group is known as Bena-Manga (Nyangava, 2000; Mitterhofer, 2013; Morrison, 2015). The LD speakers reside among other linguistic communities which are Ndamba, Ndweve and Ngoni.

### Subject Agreement Marking across Bantu Languages

Subject agreement marking is among the central morphosyntactic aspects in Bantu languages, and it is obligatory in most of these languages. In most Bantu languages, subject marking is done through prefixing a subject marker to the verb stem; and it agrees with noun class or personal pronoun features of the preverbal subject (Zeller, 2008). Noun class prefixes govern the grammatical agreement of other constituents such as verbs, adjectives and associatives (Matei, 2008; Chaula, 2017). In the example below, Lusekelo (2015) indicates how grammatical agreements are revealed in Kihaya.

#### Example (1) Agreement marking in Kihaya

<i>Abasigazi</i>	<i>Bashatu</i>	<i>Bambele</i>	<i>bakagenda</i>	<i>Tanga.</i>
<i>a-ba-sigazi</i>	<i>ba-shatu</i>	<i>ba-mbele</i>	<i>ba-ka-genda</i>	<i>Tanga</i>
AUG-CL2-	CL2-three	CL2-first	3PL-PST-go	Tanga
boy				

‘The first three boys went to Tanga.’ (Lusekelo, 2013:25)

One of the features of Bantu languages is that the subject of a sentence may be left out, then its information is indicated by the subject marker (Mugari, 2013). Some of these languages are Cisukwa, Cindali and Cilambya (Mtenje, 2016). Mtenje affirms that

all these three languages are pro drop languages; but the subject noun phrase and the personal pronoun can be included when a speaker usually wants to show emphasis. Below in (2) are sentences showing these settings from Cilambya.

Example (2a) Subject marking with overt subject noun phrase in Cilambya

<i>Mwanalúme</i>	<i>avula</i>	<i>ifáti</i>	<i>muúnda.</i>
<b>mu-</b>	<b>a-vul-a</b>	<i>i-øfati</i>	<i>mu-mu-unda</i>
<b>analume</b>			
CL1-man	1SM-undress-FV	AUG-CL.9 shirt	CL18-CL3-garden
‘The man has taken off his shirt in the garden.’			

Example (2b) Subject marking with covert subject noun phrase in Cilambya

*Waangwíle.*

*w-aa-ngw-ile*

2SMsg-PST-drink-PF

‘You drank.’ (Mtenje, 2016:259-260)

Again, in some languages, subject marking is mandatory in some contexts while in other environments it is not allowed. For instance, in Chiyao, subject marking is prohibited in declarative sentences for present simple tense and simple past tense (particularly in narratives).

Example (3) Non-subject agreement marking in Chiyao

<i>Mwanáche</i>	<i>kutakúlaga</i>	<i>nguwo.</i>
<i>mu-anáche</i>	<i>-ku-takúl-aga</i>	<i>nguwo</i>
CL1-child	-PRES-wear-HAB	CL9clothes
‘A child puts on clothes.’ (Taji, 2017:108)		

Also in Kikuria (of Kenya) subject agreement is required on all verbs except in imperatives (Diercks *et al.*, 2015).

Bantu languages employ different strategies in agreement marking system. Taji (2017) indicates that subject marking in Chiyao is in two ways: first, subject prefix can be marked as an agreement marker: it coreferences a subject noun which is overtly indicated in the construction. Second, subject prefix can function as an anaphoric binder; it coreferences the subject which has topical function. Both strategies are exemplified below.

Example (4a) Subject prefix as an agreement marker in Chiyao

<i>Mbíisu</i>	<i>sikúlúmá.</i>
<i>mbíisu</i>	<i>si-kú-lúmá</i>
CL9caterpillar	9SM-PRES-bite
‘Caterpillars do bite.’	

Example (4b) Subject prefix as an anaphoric binder in Chiyao

<i>Matambá</i>	<i>galilé</i>	<i>ngondolo.</i>
<i>ma-tambá</i>	<i>ga-lilé</i>	<i>ngondolo</i>
CL6-meal	6SM-eat.PERF	CL9sheep
‘Cassava meal has been eaten by sheep.’ (Lit: Cassava meal has eaten sheep) (Taji, 2017:144–145)		

For topicalization case, either logical or grammatical subject is marked on the verb in some Bantu languages like Chiyao. In some languages, only logical subject is allowed to be marked on the verb even if it appears post-verbally as the example from Kimatengo reveals below.

Example (5) Subject agreement marking in Kimatengo

a.	<i>Máhimba</i>	<i>gaatamiti</i>	<i>mukítengu.</i>
	<i>má-himba</i>	<i>ga-a-tam-iti</i>	<i>mu-kí-tengu</i>
	CL6-lion	6SM-PST-live-PERF	CL18-CL7-forest
	‘Lions lived in the forest.’		
b.	<i>Mukítengu</i>	<i>gaatamiti</i>	<i>máhimba.</i>
	<i>mu-kí-tengu</i>	<i>ga-a-tam-iti</i>	<i>má-himba</i>
	CL18-CL7-forest	6SM-PST-live-PERF	CL6-lion
	‘In the forest lions lived.’ (Yoneda, 2010:320)		

Some Bantu languages allow the verb to carry locative subject marker in locative inversion. Such languages are Kami, Kutu, Kwere, Luguru, Nguu and Zigua, while in language like Zalamo, locative subject marker is not allowed (Petzell and Hammarström, 2013).

In coordinated subject noun phrase, when two nouns are joined making up a subject, challenges arise on which noun should be marked on the verb; and which criterion should be used. Difficulties increase when the nouns involved come from different noun classes. These challenges bring variations in agreement marking strategies among Bantu languages. Varying strategies are reflected in several languages such as Kiswahili (Marten, 2000), Kihaya (Katamba,

2003), Xitsonga and Isixhosa (Mitchley, 2015), and Chiyao (Taji and Mreta, 2014; Taji, 2017).

Marten (2000) reports that three strategies are used in marking coordinated subject nouns, namely: morphological agreement which involves singular-plural pairing of most noun classes; anaphoric agreement which is the most common to non-animate nouns. It includes the use of default agreement with class 8 or 10; and syntactic agreement which is based on the closest subject noun to the verb. According to Marten (2000), the third strategy is used with some restrictions to animate versus non-animate nouns.

In Kikuria (of Kenya), three strategies are commonly used for coordinated noun phrase subject marking: first, verb takes the agreement marker of the first subject noun (the singular form of the first conjunct); second, the resolved agreement is used (the plural form of the first subject noun); third, subject agreement is marked by default agreement noun class 8. Example (6) below indicates subject marking in coordinated non-human nouns.

(6) Coordinated subject noun phrase in Kikuria (of Kenya)

- |                      |                     |                    |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| a. <i>u-mu-bíírá</i> | <i>ní-í-ri-géná</i> | <i>η-gí-síir·é</i> |
| AUG-CL3-ball         | and-AUG-CL5-stone   | FOC-CL4-           |
|                      |                     | disappear.PST.FV   |

‘The ball and the stone disappeared.’

- |                      |                     |                    |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| b. <i>u-mu-bíírá</i> | <i>ní-í-ri-géná</i> | <i>m-bí-síir·é</i> |
| AUG-CL3-ball         | and-AUG-CL5-stone   | FOC-CL8-           |
|                      |                     | disappear.PST.FV   |

‘The ball and the stone disappeared.’ (Diercks *et al.*, 2015:31)

In example (6a), the verb is marked with subject prefix from the plural noun class 4 of the first conjunct or a default class 8 is used as in (6b).

In Chiyao, three principle criteria are employed, namely semantic criterion, syntactic criterion and morphological criterion (Taji and Mreta, 2014; Taji, 2017). The semantic criterion is based on the meaning of the coordinated subject nouns disregard for their classes; syntactic criteria are used to mark the closest subject noun to the verb when the coordinated subject nouns are formed by different noun classes. Morphological criteria take the plural form of the coordinated subject nouns or use a default agreement. For instance,

when the verb is marked with the subject noun closest to the verb as in example (7) below, it signifies syntactic criterion.

(7) Coordinated subject noun phrase in Chiyao

<i>Mkáti</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>Paása</i>	<i>páná</i>	<i>chitukuta.</i>
<i>m-kati</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>pa-asa</i>	<i>pa-na</i>	<i>chi-tukuta</i>
CL18-inside	an	CL16-	CL16-there is	CL7-hotness
	d	outside		

‘The inside and outside are hot.’ (Taji, 2017:139)

Generally, subject agreement in coordinated noun phrase depends on several factors which are (i) human/non-human conjuncts (ii) whether the conjuncts are singular or plural (iii) whether or not both conjuncts carry the same noun class feature, and (iv) the order of the conjuncts (Mitchley, 2015:i). These strategies presented are not used similarly across all languages. There are multiple factors which trigger a specific agreement marking strategy within a specific language context (Mitchley, 2015).

The above reviews indicate that there are wide variations in subject-verb 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 subject-verb agreement marking in two Kibena Dialects: the Highland Dialect and the Lowland Dialect.

### Previous Studies on Language Dialectology

Kanana (2011) investigates linguistic variations among six dialects of Kimeru in Kenya, namely Imenti, Tharaka, Igoji, Mwimbi, Muthambi and Chuka. Parameters used are phonology, morphology and lexis. The findings indicate that all six dialects share many of phonological aspects. A minor variation is noted in noun classes. This study provides phonological and morphological information particularly in pronunciation and noun classes respectively. However, variation in agreement 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 linguistic variations among Kiswahili dialects. Linguistic variables involved are phonology, morphology and lexis. Hans (2014) also describes

lexical variation between three Kiswahili dialects spoken in Zanzibar, namely Kimakunduchi, Kitumbatu and Kipemba. However, morphosyntactic aspects are not included in both studies. This is an area that the paper examines.

In Kibena, we are aware of two dialectological studies. The first study is done by Mitterhofer (2013) who describes the dialects of Kibena basing on phonological and lexical parameters. The study reveals three varieties, namely: the East dialect, the South dialect and the North-west dialect.

Mitterhofer's study (2013) does not indicate morphosyntactic features that can also manifest dialectical variation. Additionally, the groups of Kibena speakers living outside Njombe Region were not studied. For instance, 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 study is done by Morrison (2015) who identifies six dialects of Kibena: Twangabita, Ngaveta, Maswamu, Sovi, Vanyikolwe, and Mavemba. Like Mitterhofer (2013), the study also confines itself to Njombe and Wanging'ombe Districts. However, Morrison concurs with Nyagava (2000) on the presence of another variety known as Bena-Manga, who migrated to Morogoro Region during the twentieth century. The study is mainly based on some phonetic, phonological and lexical variables in classifying the dialects of Kibena. Like Mitterhofer's study, this study also does not include some morphosyntactic aspects that could also reveal significant dialectical variations.

To synthesize, both studies on Kibena are based on the traditional approach of dialectology; their description of Kibena varieties is dominated by phonological and lexical parameters. Also, other groups of Kibena speakers outside Njombe Region are excluded by both studies. Even their results are quite different. One identifies three dialects and the other identifies six with varying names. All these set grounds for examining dialect of Kibena using different parameters and methodology.

Again, most of traditional dialectologists devote much of their time to lexical and phonological variations rather than syntactical variation. However, most of previous studies (like Hinnebusch, 1999; Nurse & Philippon, 2003; Petzell & Hammarström, 2013; Sibajene, 2013;

Mtenje, 2016) indicate that lexical items are easily borrowed while phonological features can slightly change across time and space rather than morphosyntactic variables. Therefore, this paper describes variations in subject-verb marking as one of morphosyntactic variables aiming: first, to determine whether using this relatively stable variable could indicate either great or minor variations between the Highland Dialect and the Lowland Dialect; secondly, to make contribution on existing Kibena dialectological studies (Mitterhofer, 2013; Morrison, 2015) which focused on phonological and lexical variations. Finally, to identify if the two dialects are still varieties of one language due to distant geographical relationship they have between them.

This study is guided by the Bantu Divergence-Convergence Theory (BDC). This theory was developed by Massamba (2007) and it is revised in Massamba (2018). 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 analyse the historical assumptions which indicate that, there were small group/s of Kibena speakers separated from other Kibena speech community during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and lived in other areas (such as Kilombero and Malinyi) outside Kibena homeland (Mhiche, 2000; Nyagava, 2000; Morrison, 2015). Again, the theory is useful in determining if HD and LD are still varieties of one language due to historical facts and geographical distance between them. This is done by observing similarities and variations in morphosyntactic variables. This theory was also applied by Hans (2014) in describing lexical variation among Kimakunduchi, Kitumbatu and Kipemba dialects.

## **Methodology**

The study is based on field data which were collected from three regions particularly in areas inhabited by native Kibena speakers: Njombe, Ruvuma and Morogoro. Sampling process was done through



purposive sampling technique. Informants involved were: Kibena native speakers, aged 50 and above, both speakers with formal and informal education, those residing in remote areas which have no great linguistic influence from other languages. In addition, clanship relationship and religious factors also helped in identifying significant informants. Using purposive sampling, a total of 36 informants were selected. HD involved 27 informants found in Njombe Region, and 3 informants from Madaba area found in Ruvuma Region. LD involved 6 informants; 3 from Kilombero area, and 3 from Malinyi, Morogoro Region. HD involved many informants (30) compared to LD because HD covers large area and it is the homeland of Kibena speakers (particularly areas found in Njombe Region).

Data were elicited by 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. Reverse translation was followed by review elicitation which was used to note some agreements, disagreements as well as discrepancies found in the translated sentences. Oral texts were used to elicit data on subject-verb agreement marking, sociolinguistic information and the reasons for variations between HD and LD. In this technique, four short speeches were collected. These included 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/LD speakers was elicited. The story provided historical data for LD speakers' separation and movement from Njombe Kibena Homeland.

### **Subject-Verb Agreement Marking in Kibena**

In Kibena, concordial agreement markers are categorised into two forms: noun class subject markers and personal pronoun markers. Noun class subject markers are divided into two categories. The first category includes subject markers that use the same form of the noun class. These concur with noun classes 2, 5, 7/8, 11, 12/13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20. The second category involves subject markers that do not resemble the form of the inherent noun class prefixes. These are subject markers for noun classes 1, 3/4, 6 and 9/10. Subject markers for classes 1 and 2 refer also to 3<sup>rd</sup> personal pronouns, singular and plural respectively. Table 1 below presents noun classes and subject agreement markers in Kibena.

Table 1: Noun Classes and Subject Agreement Markers in Kibena

No	Augment	Noun Class Prefix	Subject Prefix	Example	Gloss
1	<i>u-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>U<b>mu</b>nu <b>a</b>dzile.</i>	A person has come.
1a	<i>u-</i>	<i>ø</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>U<b>da</b>a<b>a</b> <b>a</b>dzile.</i>	A father has come.
2	<i>a</i>	<i>va-</i>	<i>va-</i>	<i>A<b>va</b>nu/avada<b>a</b><b>a</b> <b>v</b>adzile.</i>	People/fathers have come.
3	<i>u-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>gu-</i>	<i>U<b>mt</b>wangilo <b>g</b>udenyike.</i>	The pestle is broken.
4	<i>i-</i>	<i>mi-</i>	<i>gi-</i>	<i>I<b>mi</b>twangilo <b>g</b>idenyike.</i>	Pestles are broken
5	<i>i-</i>	<i>li-</i>	<i>li-</i>	<i>I<b>li</b>tuli <b>li</b>li kunyumba.</i>	The mill is inside.
6	<i>a-</i>	<i>ma-</i>	<i>ga-</i>	<i>A<b>ma</b>tuli <b>ga</b>li kunyumba.</i>	Mills are inside.
7	<i>i-</i>	<i>ki-</i>	<i>ki-</i>	<i>I<b>ki</b>dego <b>ki</b>li kunyumba.</i>	The chair is inside.
8	<i>i-</i>	<i>fi-</i>	<i>fi-</i>	<i>I<b>fi</b>dego <b>fi</b>li kunyumba.</i>	Chairs are inside.
9	<i>i-</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>yi-</i>	<i>I<b>ng</b>'uku <b>y</b>ili kunyumba.</i>	The hen is inside.
10	<i>i-</i>	<i>n-</i>	<i>dzi-</i>	<i>I<b>ng</b>'uku <b>dz</b>ili kunyumba.</i>	Hens are inside.
11	<i>u-</i>	<i>lu-</i>	<i>Lu</i>	<i>U<b>lu</b>lenga <b>lu</b>li mukiviya.</i>	Water is in the pot.
12	<i>a-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>ka-</i>	<i>A<b>ka</b>twangilo <b>k</b>adenyike.</i>	The small pestle is broken.
13	<i>u-</i>	<i>tu</i>	<i>tu-</i>	<i>U<b>tu</b>twangilo <b>t</b>udenyike.</i>	Small pestles are broken.
14	<i>u-</i>	<i>vu-</i>	<i>vu-</i>	<i>U<b>wu</b>tine <b>wu</b>li mukiviya.</i>	Flour is in the pot.
15	<i>u-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>U<b>ku</b>tola <b>k</b>winoga (<b>ku</b>-inoga).</i>	The marriage is interesting.
16	<i>*a-</i>	<i>pa-</i>	<i>pa-</i>	<i>P<b>pa</b>nyumba <b>pi</b>noga (<b>pa</b>-inoga).</i>	At the house, it is interesting.
17	<i>*u-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	<i>K<b>ku</b>nyumba <b>k</b>winoga (<b>ku</b>-inoga).</i>	Inside (the house), it is interesting.
18	<i>*u-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>M<b>mu</b>nyumba <b>m</b>winoga (<b>mu</b>-inoga).</i>	Inside (the house), it is interesting.
20	<i>u-</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>gu</i>	<i>U<b>gu</b>dego <b>gu</b>li kunyumba.</i>	The big chair is inside.

The use of augments for locative classes (16/17/18) is not common in Kibena except for the inherent locative noun *-ono* ‘place’. The stem *-ono* can be derived to *apoono* ‘at the place’, *ukoono* ‘to the place’, *umoono* ‘in the place’. Among the three locative nouns, *apoono* is the most common. In addition, the noun *nyumba* ‘house’ when attached locative marker *ku-* and *mu-* displays the same meaning ‘inside’ (see Table 1).

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

**Table 2: Kibena Personal Pronouns and Personal Pronoun Markers**

No	Personal Pronoun	Gloss	Personal Pronoun Marker	Example	Gloss
1 <sup>st</sup> SG	<i>uneene</i>	I/me	<i>ndi-</i>	<i>Uneene ndikaalimile igolo.</i>	I cultivated yesterday.
1 <sup>st</sup> PL	<i>uneefwe</i>	we/us	<i>tu-</i>	<i>Uneefwe tukaalimile igolo.</i>	We cultivated yesterday.
2 <sup>nd</sup> SG	<i>uveeve</i>	you/you	<i>u-</i>	<i>Uveeve ukaalimile igolo.</i>	You cultivated yesterday.
2 <sup>nd</sup> PL	<i>unyeenye</i>	you/you	<i>mu-</i>	<i>Unyeenye mukaalimile igolo.</i>	You cultivated yesterday.
3 <sup>rd</sup> SG	<i>umweene</i>	he/she/him/her	<i>a-</i>	<i>Umweene akaalimile igolo.</i>	He/she cultivated yesterday.
3 <sup>rd</sup> PL	<i>aveene</i>	they/them	<i>va-</i>	<i>Aveene vakaalimile igolo.</i>	They cultivated yesterday.

Kibena subject prefixes can appear pre-verbally or they can be preceded by other prefixes like negation and relative markers. Table (3) below indicates the Kibena verb structure and the slot that subject prefixes can occupy.

**Table 3: Kibena Verb Structure**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
NEG <sub>1</sub> /REL	SM	NEG <sub>2</sub> /INF	NEG <sub>3</sub>	TAM <sub>1</sub>	TAM <sub>2</sub>	OM	RT	EXT	FV/TAM	CLITI C	Gloss
<i>Si-</i>	<i>a-</i>	-	-	<i>dzi-</i>		<i>mu-</i>	<i>lim-</i>	<i>il-</i>	<i>a</i>		He/she will not cultivate for him/her.
<i>A-</i>	<i>va-</i>	<i>si-</i>	-	-		-	<i>lim-</i>		<i>ile-</i>		Who have not cultivated
	<i>Ndi-</i>	-	-	<i>kaa-</i>	<i>dzi-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	<i>lim-</i>	-	<i>iyē (ile)</i>		I went and cultivated for him/her.
	<i>U-</i>	<i>si-/ki-</i>	<i>ta-</i>	-		<i>va-</i>	<i>lim-</i>	<i>il-</i>	<i>a</i>		Do not cultivate for them.
	<i>Tu</i>	-		<i>la-</i>		<i>mu-</i>	<i>lim-</i>	<i>il-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>ga</i>	We will be cultivating for him/her.
		<i>Ku-</i>					<i>lim-</i>	-	<i>a</i>		To cultivate

### Variation in Subject-Verb Agreement Marking between the Kibena HD and LD

This part first presents subject-verb agreement marking in HD, followed by subject-verb agreement marking in LD, and it ends by displaying the general variations in subject-verb agreement marking between the two main dialects.

### Subject-Verb Agreement Marking in the HD

The subject prefix in Kibena HD, can occupy pre-initial verb position or can be preceded by other verb prefixes like negation and relative markers (see Table 3). Subject prefix reflects the noun class prefix using the same form or different form (see Table 1). It is obligatory to appear with all finite verbs. This is illustrated in example (8) below.

#### (8) Subject prefix in finite verbs

- a. *Avadimi*                      *Avatali*                      *Vikina*                      *ingoma.*  
*a-va-dimi*                      *a-va-tali*                      *va-i-kin-a*                      *i-ngoma*  
 AUG-CL2-boy                      AUG-CL2-tall                      CL2-PRES-dance-FV                      AUG-CL9.drum  
 ‘Tall boys are dancing.’
- b. *Ilibiki*    *liguwe.*  
*i-li-biki*    *li-guw-e*  
 AUG-CL5-tree    CL5-fall-FV  
 ‘The tree has fallen.’

- c. *Ilibiki* *siliguwe.*  
*i-li-biki* *si-li-guw-e*  
 AUG-CL5-tree NEG-CL5-fall-  
 FV

‘The tree has not fallen.’

In example (8a&b), subject prefix occupies pre-initial verb position whereas in (8c) it appears after negation marker *si-*. In relative clause constructed with relative prefix, the subject prefix appears after relative marker while in the relative clause formed by a relative pronoun, the subject occupies pre-initial verb position as illustrated in (9) below.

(9) Subject prefix in relative clause

- a. *Ilibiki* *Iliguwe*  
*i-li-biki* *i-li-guw-e*  
 AUG-CL5-tree REL-CL5-fall-FV  
 ‘The tree which has fallen’

- b. *Ilibiki* *Lye* *liguwe*  
*i-li-biki* *Lye* *li-guw-e*  
 AUG-CL5-tree REL.PRO CL5-fall-FV  
 ‘The tree which has fallen’

The subject prefixes agree with persons and/or noun class prefixes as exemplified below.

(10) Subject agreement markers in HD

- a. *Uneefwe* *Tukaalimile* *igolo.*  
*u-neefwe* *tu-kaa-lim-ile* *i-golo*  
 AUG-1PRO 1PL-P<sub>3</sub>-cultivate-  
 PERF AUG-  
 CL9.yesterday  
 ‘We cultivated yesterday.’
- b. *Avaana* *Avadebe* *vaguwe.*  
*a-va-ana* *a-va-debe* *va-guw-e*  
 AUG-CL2-child AUG-CL2-little CL2-fall-FV  
 ‘The children have fallen.’
- c. *Udaada* *Ayavile* *idzayi.*  
*u-daada* *a-yav-ile* *i-dzayi*  
 AUG-CL1.father CL1-pick-PERF AUG-CL9.tea  
 leaves

- d.      ‘The father has picked tea leaves.’  
*Idzayi*                      *Ayavile*                      *udaada.*  
*i-dzayi*                      *a-yav-ile*                      *u-daada*  
 AUG-CL9.tea              CL1-pick-FV              AUG-  
 leaves                      CL1.father  
 ‘The father has picked tea leaves.’

Even in the topicalized sentence where the subject noun occupies the postverbal position, still its subject prefix governs the concordial agreement in the sentence as in example (10d). It is the logical subject which is verb-marked.

In HD, human nouns take subject prefixes from noun classes 1/2 (see example 11b&c), while animal nouns usually agree with noun classes 5/6 or 9/10 as illustrated below.

(11) Subject markers for human and animal nouns in HD

- a.      *Inyau*              *Yangu*              *ysisaka*              *kugona*              *pakitanda.*  
*i-nyau*              *yi-angu*              *yi-i-sak-a*              *ku-gon-a*              *pa-ki-tanda*  
 AUG-              CL9-              CL9-PRES-              CL15-sleep-FV              CL16-CL7-  
 CL9.cat              POSS.1SG              want-FV                              bed  
 ‘My cat wants to sleep in the bed.’
- b.      *Iliteemba*                      *likaayagile*                      *igolo.*  
*i-li-teemba*                      *li-kaa-yag-ile*                      *i-golo*  
 AUG-CL5-hen                      CL5-P<sub>3</sub>-loose-PERF                      AUG-CL9.yesterday  
 ‘The hen was lost yesterday.’
- c.      *Amateemba*                      *Gakaayagile*                      *igolo.*  
*a-ma-teemba*                      *ga-kaa-yag-ile*                      *i-o-golo*  
 AUG-CL6-hens                      CL6-P<sub>3</sub>-loose-PERF                      AUG-CL9-yesterday  
 ‘Hens were lost yesterday.’

However, in storytelling, speakers have the tendency of personifying animal nouns and therefore, these nouns are marked with subject marker from classes 1/2 as indicated in example (12) below.

(12) Subject markers for personified animal nouns in storytelling

- a.      *Usude*              *Itigilaga*              ‘Ng’wale      *ng’wale*              *wipiya.....*”  
*u-sude*              *a-i-tigil-ag-a*              *ngwale*              *ngwale*              *u-i-piy-a*  
 AUG-              CL1-PRES-say-              CL9.              CL9.frankolin              2SG-PRES-burn-  
 CL1.hare              NAR-FV              francolin                              FV  
 ‘The hare said “Frankolin, francolin! You will burn yourself”.....’

In locative constructions, HD have three distinctive locative prefixes *pa-*, *ku-* and *mu-*. In normal conversation, speakers prefer to use subject prefix *ku-* mostly in the contexts of *pa-* and *ku-* itself. This is exemplified in (13) below.

(13) Locative subject prefixes in HD

- a.      *Kukaye*                      *kuli*                      *vagedzi.*  
           ***ku**-kaye*                      ***ku**-li*                      *va-gedzi*  
           CL17-home                      CL17-be                      CL2-guest  
           ‘There are guests to/at home.’
- b.      *Munyumba*                      *Mna*                      *liyoka.*  
           ***mu**-nyumba*                      ***mu**-na*                      *li-yoka*  
           CL18-house                      CL18-have                      CL5-snake  
           ‘There is a snake inside (the house).’

Topicalization in locative construction, either logical or grammatical subject is marked on copula verb *-li* ‘to be’. However, it is ungrammatical for existential verb *-na* ‘to have’ to be marked with non-locative subject markers. The examples from (13) above are reversed in (14) below.

(14) Subject prefixes in reversed construction

- a.      *Vagedzi*                      *vali*                      *kukaye.*  
           *va-gedzi*                      ***va**-li*                      ***ku**-kaye*  
           CL2-guest                      CL2-be                      CL17-home  
           ‘At home, there are guests.’
- b.      *\*Liyoka*                      *Lina*                      *munyumba.*  
           *li-yoka*                      ***li**-na*                      ***mu**-nyumba*  
           CL5-snake                      CL5-have                      CL18-house  
           Lit. ‘In the snake, there is house’. ‘There is a snake inside (the house).’

Subject markers of existential verbs come from the three locative classes as illustrated in (15) below.

(15) Locative subject prefixes in existential verb

- a.      *Panyumba*                      *Pana*                      *liyoka.*  
           ***pa**-nyumba*                      ***pa**-na*                      *li-yoka*  
           CL16-house                      CL16-have                      CL5-snake  
           ‘There is a snake at the house.’

- b. *Kunyumba*                      *Kuna*                      *liyoka.*  
*ku-nyumba*                      *ku-na*                      *li-yoka*  
 CL17-house                      CL17-have                      CL5-snake  
 'There is a snake inside (the house).'
- c. *Munyumba*                      *Mna*                      *liyoka.*  
*mu-nyumba*                      *mu-na*                      *li-yoka*  
 CL18-house                      CL18-have                      CL5-snake  
 'There is a snake inside (the house).'

As in example (15) above, meaning of the noun *nyumba* 'house' depends on the locative class prefix attached on it. When it is prefixed with *pa-* locative class, it means 'at the house', when it is affixed with *ku-* (class 17) or *mu-* (class 18) it means 'inside'.

#### Subject-Verb Agreement in Coordinated Noun Phrase for HD

In coordinated subject noun phrase such as those containing human + human, animate + human, and human + inanimate, the subject-verb agreement marker comes from the plural form of class 2 noun prefix (human) *va-* in HD. Examples in (16) below are illustrative.

#### (16) Subject agreement markers in coordinated noun phrase in HD

- a. *Umuhidza*                      *nu*                      *Mudimi*                      *vahеле*                      *kusule.*  
*u-mu-hidza*                      *na*                      *u-mu-dimi*                      *va-hel-e*                      *ku-sule*  
 AUG-CL1-girl                      and                      AUG-CL1-boy                      CL2-go-FV                      CL17-school  
 'The girl and the boy have gone to school.'
- b. *Ilibuwa*                      *nu*                      *Mudimi*                      *vikina.*  
*i-li-buwa*                      *na*                      *u-mu-dimi*                      *va-i-kin-a*  
 AUG-CL5-dog                      and                      AUG-CL1-boy                      CL2-PRES-play-FV  
 'The dog and the boy are playing.'
- c. *Umwayuva*                      *ni*                      *Ndiilo*                      *vali*                      *kula.*  
*u-mu-ayuva*                      *na*                      *i-ndiilo*                      *va-li*                      *ku-la*  
 AUG-CL1-                      and                      AUG-CL9.basket                      CL2-                      CL17-there  
 woman                      be  
 'The woman and the basket are there.'

Speakers prefer the use of subject prefix of noun class 2 plural because semantically they treat human nouns as having the highest status compared to non-human nouns. Semantic motivation, therefore, requires the speakers to opt for class 2, *va-* subject prefix and not any from non-human beings.





- c. *Lulenga na kiviya Fili munyumba.*  
*lu-lenga na ki-viya fi-li mu-nyumba*  
 CL6-water and CL7-pot CL8-be CL18-CL9.inside (the house)  
 ‘Water and the pot are inside (the house).’

In example (18a&b) above, the conjuncts have exchanged positions but the subject prefix *fi-* noun class 8 is used in both sentences.

Generally, in coordinated subject noun phrase, HD use two strategies for subject marking: first, the verb takes subject agreement marker from the plural form of class 2 noun prefix *va-* when the conjuncts involve human and non-human. Second, the verb takes the subject prefix *fi-* from noun class 8 when two non-human nouns from different or same noun classes are coordinated.

### Subject-Verb Agreement Marking in LD

Just like in HD, subject prefixes in Kibena LD have the same distribution. They can occupy pre-initial verb position, or they can be preceded by a slot of pre-subject markers (like negation markers, see example 8a, b&c). Unlike in HD where subject prefixes are attached after relative prefixes, in LD relative pronouns are used instead of relative prefixes. This is because LD speakers have lost relative prefixes as relativization strategy. Here, the subject prefix occupies the pre-initial verb position. Example in (19) is illustrative.

#### (19) Subject prefix in relative clause

<i>Ilibiki</i>	<i>Lye</i>	<i>liguwe</i>
<i>i-li-biki</i>	<i>Lye</i>	<i>li-guw-e</i>
AUG-CL5-tree	REL.PRO	CL5-fall-FV
‘The tree which has fallen’		

Speakers from LD different from HD, have the tendency of personifying animal names using subject prefixes of the noun class prefixes 1 and 2 in all contexts as exemplified in (20) below.

#### (20) Subject markers for personified animal nouns in LD

- a. *Mwanyau Vangu isaka kugona pakitanda.*  
*mua-nyau va-angu a-i-sak-a ku-gon-a pa-ki-tanda*  
 NG- CL2- CL1- CL15-sleep- CL16-CL7-  
 CL9.cat POSS.1SG PRES- FV bed  
 want-FV  
 ‘My cat wants to sleep in the bed.’

- b. *Mwaneemba*      *akaayagile*      *igolo.*  
*mua-neemba*      *a-kaa-yag-ile*      *i-golo*  
 NG-CL9.hen      CL1-P<sub>3</sub>-loose-FV      AUG-CL9.yesterday  
 ‘The hen was lost yesterday.’

- c. *Vaaneemba*      *Vakaayagile*      *igolo.*  
*va-neemba*      *va-kaa-yag-ile*      *i-golo*  
 CL2-CL9.hens      CL2-P<sub>3</sub>-loose-FV      AUG-CL9.yesterday  
 ‘Hens were lost yesterday.’

Kibena speakers from LD usually affix natural male gender prefix *mwa-* from personal names (like in *mwa-Mgedza*, *mwa-Matimbwi*, *mwa-Ngumbuke*) to the head noun for singular and noun class 2 prefix *va-* for plural. The subject concordial agreements are *a-* and *va-* respectively.

For locative expressions, subject prefix has similar behaviour in LD and in HD. Among three locative prefixes *pa-*, *ku-* and *mu-*, speakers prefer to employ subject prefix *ku-* in the contexts of *pa-* and *ku-* itself (see example 13). In the case of topicalization of locative expression, either logical or grammatical subject is marked on the verb formed by copula verb. It is ungrammatical to mark an existential verb *-na* ‘to have’ with non-locative subject markers (see examples 14&15). Like in HD, only logical subject is verb-marked for a construction formed by an action verb (see example 10c&d).

#### Subject-Verb Agreement in Coordinated Noun Phrase for LD

Like in HD, opting for plural subject markers in LD depends on the animacy hierarchy. In coordinated subject nouns involving human and non-human conjuncts, class 2 noun prefix (human) *va-* is used in the slot of subject marker for LD (see example 16). Speakers attach the highest status to human nouns.

However, LD speakers use a different strategy in marking subject of the nouns given in example (17). In this dialect, when the subject consists of two non-human nouns belonging to same class, the subject concordial agreement comes from its plural form as shown in example (21) below.

#### (21) Subject markers for coordinated non-human nouns in LD

- a. *Libiki*      *na*      *Lisoli*      *gikwaka.*  
*li-biki*      *na*      *li-soli*      *ga-i-ku-ak-a*  
 CL5-tree      and      CL5 grass      CL6-PRES-CL15-burn-FV  
 ‘The tree and grass are burning.’

- b. *Madziva*      *na*      *Malenga*      *giheluka.*  
*ma-dziva*      *na*      *ma-lenga*      ***ga-i-heluk-a***  
 CL6-milk      and      CL6-water      CL6-PRES-boil-FV  
 ‘Milk and water are boiling.’

- c. *Mwasenga*      *nu*      *Mwambisi*      *viliya*      *madzebele.*  
*mua-senga*      *na*      *mua-mbisi*      ***va-i-li-a***      *ma-dzebele*  
 NG-      and      NG-      CL2-PRES-eat-      CL6-maize  
 CL9.cow      CL9.rooster      FV  
 ‘A cow and a rooster are eating maize.’

In LD, there is no shift of noun classes when the subject consists of two nouns belonging to the same class as in examples (21a&b). When coordinated subject noun is formed by two non-human conjuncts from different noun classes, LD speakers employ two strategies to resolve the situation: the most preferred strategy is to take the singular subject prefix from the second conjunct noun class prefix which appears closest to the verb; or though very rarely, they use noun class 8 prefix. Both strategies are shown in example (22) below.

(22) Subject markers for coordinated non-human nouns from different classes in LD

- a. *Lituli*      *na*      *mtwangilo*      *Guli*      *munyumba.*  
*li-tuli*      *na*      *m-twangilo*      ***gu-li***      *mu-nyumba*  
 CL5-      and      CL3-pestle      CL3-be      CL18-CL9.inside      (the  
 mill      house)  
 ‘The mill and the pestle are inside (the house).’
- b. *Mtwangilo*      *na*      *Lituli*      *lili*      *munyumba.*  
*m-twangilo*      *na*      *li-tuli*      ***li-li***      *mu-nyumba*  
 CL3-pestle      and      CL5-mill      CL5-      CL18-CL9.inside      (the  
    be      house)  
 ‘The pestle and the mill are inside (the house).’
- c. *Malenga*      *na*      *kiviya*      *Kili*      *munyumba.*  
*ma-lenga*      *na*      *ki-viya*      ***ki-li***      *mu-nyumba*  
 CL6-water      and      CL7-pot      CL7-be      CL18-CL9.inside (the house)  
 ‘Water and the pot are inside (the house).’
- d. *Malenga*      *na*      *Kiviya*      *fili*      *munyumba.*  
*ma-lenga*      *na*      *ki-viya*      ***fi-li***      *mu-nyumba*  
 CL6-water      and      CL7-pot      CL8-be      CL18-CL9.inside (the house)  
 ‘Water and the pot are inside (the house).’

In example (22a&b) between the two conjuncts, one comes from noun class 3 and another from noun class 5. In (22a) the verb is marked with the subject prefix from the closest conjunct *mtwangilo* while in (22b) the conjuncts have exchanged positions and the closest conjunct to the verb is *lituli*. This makes the verb to be attached the subject prefix from class 5. This also applies to example (22c). In (22d) the verb is inflected with the subject prefix from noun class 8. The latter strategy (using noun class 8) is not much common in this variety. Speakers concur with the construction but the form is too formal to them; they do not employ it in many contexts.

Therefore, LD speakers use four strategies for subject-verb marking in coordinated noun phrase. First, noun class 2 prefix *va-* is used for coordinated noun phrase involving human and non-human conjuncts; second, plural form for the conjuncts belonging to the same class. The third and the fourth, subject prefix of the closest conjunct to the verb is used or a default class 8 is used for conjuncts coming from different noun classes.

### **Variation in Subject-Verb Agreement between HD and LD**

In single subject noun constructions, HD and LD share many of their traits. In both, subject prefix appears on pre-initial verb or it can be preceded by other pre-subject markers. In locative expressions, speakers from both varieties prefer to use subject prefix *ku-* in the place of locative prefix *pa-* and *ku-* itself. For topicalized noun in locative expressions, either logical or grammatical subject is marked on copula verbs; whereas only locative subjects *pa-/ku-/mu-* are marked on existential verbs. For action verbs, only logical subject is marked on both HD and LD (see example 10c&d). Apart from a long time separation, this similarity signifies that HD and LD are still variety of the same language as per Divergence-Convergence Theory.

However, in single subject noun constructions, speakers from LD have the tendency of personifying animal names using subject prefixes of the noun class prefixes 1 and 2 in normal speech contexts. HD speakers do personification but only in storytelling. For this case, language contact could be one of the factors for these variations. Both varieties get influence from other languages particularly Kiswahili but not equal in status. LD is much influenced by Kiswahili compared to HD because it is situated outside Kibena. Living with non-Kibena speakers like the Ndamba, the Ndweve and the Ngoni may be one of the reasons for LD to use Kiswahili frequently. Consequently, it has impact on the LD grammar. For instance,

Kiswahili treats humans and animals in the same noun classes hence it uses the same agreement markers; the LD speakers do the same.

In coordinated subject noun phrases, both HD and LD depend on the animacy hierarchy in opting for plural subject markers. When coordinated subject nouns involve human and non-human conjuncts, class 2 noun prefix *va-* is used in the slot of subject marker.

However, some variations are observed in coordinated subject noun phrases. In HD, when two non-human nouns from different or same noun classes are coordinated, the verb takes the subject prefix *fi-* from noun class 8. In LD, three strategies are applicable: when the subject consists of two non-human nouns belonging to the same class, the subject agreement comes from its plural form. When the subject is formed by two non-human conjuncts from different noun classes, speakers employ two strategies: the most preferred strategy is to take the singular subject prefix from the second conjunct noun class prefix which appears closest to the verb; another option, albeit rare, is to use the class 8 prefix. Table (4) below summarises subject-marking strategies between HD and LD.

**Table 4: Variation in Subject-Verb Agreement Marking Strategies in Coordinated Noun Phrase**

Context	HD	LD
HUMAN + NON-HUMAN	noun class 2 prefix <i>va-</i>	noun class 2 prefix <i>va-</i>
NON-HUMAN + NON-HUMAN from same class	noun class 8 prefix <i>fi-</i>	plural form from the same class
NON-HUMAN + NON-HUMAN from different classes	noun class 8 prefix <i>fi-</i>	noun class prefix of the noun closest to the verb, and class 8 prefix in rare occasions

Generally, all these strategies can be classified into three categories: semantic, syntactic and morphological criteria. Semantic criterion is used when the noun phrase involves human and non-human conjuncts; this observes the status of the conjuncts on the animacy hierarchy. Syntactic criterion is based on marking the closest conjunct to the verb for non-human conjuncts; morphological criterion adheres to plurality of noun class prefixes. In this case, it signifies the use of plural form for marking nouns from the same

class or using default agreement class 8 for nouns belonging to different noun classes. Hence, according to the content in Table (4) above, HD uses semantic criterion and morphological criterion in subject-verb agreement marking for coordinated noun phrase. The LD employs three criteria: semantic criteria, syntactic criteria and morphological criteria.

The variation in agreement marking between the HD and LD is likely to have been contributed by three factors, namely geographical and historical factors, and language contact. As already indicated in previous sections, LD speakers had been separated for a long time from speakers of HD. The dialect is located in the lowland zones of Kilombero and Malinyi Districts, Morogoro Region while HD are found 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.

### **Conclusion**

The study examined variation in subject-verb agreement marking system between Kibena HD and LD. Variation in subject-verb agreement in single noun phrase construction and in coordinated noun phrase is analysed.

Variations are revealed in two cases: first, LD has the tendency of personifying animal names in normal conversation; all animals therefore take class 1/2 concordial agreements. This is not experienced in HD. In general, HD uses semantic and morphological criteria while LD adds syntactic criterion to the two employed in HD. According to the BDC theory, HD and LD are still dialects of Kibena language; none has developed into distinct language.

This analysis contributes to syntactic dialectology which is an innovative branch that could help in developing recent theories on grammatical variations.

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### Abbreviations

1SG	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Singular	FOC	Focus	PERF	Perfective
1PL	1 <sup>st</sup> Person Plural	HAB	Habitual	POSS	Possessive
2SG	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Singular	HD	Highland Dialect	PRES	Present
2PL	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Plural	INF	Infinitive	PRO	Pronoun
3SG	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Singular	LD	Lowland Dialect	PST	Past
3PL	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Plural	NAR	Narrative	REL	Relative
AUG	Augment	NEG	Negation	RT	Root
CL	Class	NG	Natural Gender	SM	Subject
EXT	Extension	OM	Object Marker	Marker	
FV	Final Vowel	P <sub>3</sub>	Past three	TAM	Tense, Aspect and Mood