Clan as a sociolinguistic variable

Three approaches to Sui clans

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As lesser studied minority languages are added to the purview of quantitative variational sociolinguistics, we naturally expect to see lesser studied sociolinguistic variables brought to the forefront. One such variable is clan. Among the Sui people of southwest China and in many other societies, clan has a powerful sociolinguistic influence. Therefore, following the tradition of "age as a sociolinguistic variable" (Eckert 1997), "gender as a sociolinguistic variable" (Meyeroth 1996; Wodak & Benke 1997), and so on, the present article suggests that clan, too, may be viewed as a key player in variational sociolinguistics. Using insights from Sui and other communities, this chapter investigates clan as a sociolinguistic variable in terms of each of the three approaches to language and identity outlined by Mendosa-Denton (2002): "sociodemographic category-based identity," "practice-based identity," and "practice-based variation." Clan is shown to be a highly relevant and meaningful sociolinguistic variable from all three perspectives.

1. Introduction

Clan-level social distinctions may be less evident in urban, majority societies, yet clan plays a crucial role in the sociolinguistic experience of many rural indigenous minority communities. Clan variables are often just as influential as other more commonly studied sociolinguistic factors such as social class, gender, ethnicity, region, and age. Therefore, in order to develop a more inclusive theory

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1. I would like to thank the many Sui people who taught me their language and customs and welcomed me into their villages. I would also like to thank Dennis Preston, David Dyer, Grover Hudson, Yen-Hwei Lin, Norma Mendosa-Denton, Tim and Debbie Vinesani, Bob and Ali Burcham, Patrick Nobbs, and David Rose. I am also grateful for comments from various audiences, including New Ways of Analyzing Variation 36, Linguistic Society of America Summer Meeting 2006, and the 106th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association.
of language variation and change, the sociolinguistic role of clan should be thoroughly investigated.

Many rural indigenous societies are largely egalitarian (cf. Ochs & Schieffelin 1982; Jackson 1983:164; Smith & Johnson 1986). However, a fine-grained analysis of such societies may uncover the presence of an "organized diversity" (Gumperz 1982:24) that bears some resemblance to the stratification and segmentation found in majority societies (see also Clarke, this volume). For residents of a rural indigenous community where broad-based factors of socioeconomic class and ethnicity are less relevant, social distinctions can be found on other levels. Among the Sui people of southwest China, the Nganbara of Cape York, Australia (Smith & Johnson 1986), the Yan nanhu speakers of Arnhem Land, Australia (Browne 2006), and other societies, distinct linguistic variants bearing socially meaningful contrasts are found on the clan level. Since these clan-level variables often represent relatively stable differences within a single speech community, research of such variables naturally follows in the tradition of quantifying variation (e.g. Labov 1963, 1966; Trudgill 1974). After all, anthropologists have long recognized the role of clan, but this variable has not been carefully examined in the paradigm of variationist sociolinguistics. This chapter sets out to help fill that gap.

2. Sui clan exogamy and dialect contact

The Sui people in rural areas of Guizhou Province in southwest China preserve their own customs, worldview, and language. According to Sui clan exogamy, the wife and husband are required to originate in different clans, and the wife moves to the husband's village upon marriage. Sui clans view themselves as having descended from a single ancestral family through male lineage, thus corresponding to the common definition of clan as "a consanguineal kin group constructed by unilinear descent in which members cannot actually trace their descent to the common, often mythological, ancestor (Fortes 1953)" (Kang 1979:88, citing Fortes 1953:25; see also Broude 1994:66; Birx 2006:516; and Radcliffe-Brown 1950:40, cited in Madan 1962:66).

Subtle dialect differences are found between Sui clans, although the dialects are mutually intelligible. Therefore, as a result of the immigration required by exogamous customs, Sui married women often have dialect features that differ from their husbands' villages. By contrast, the speech of the men, children, and unmarried women of each clan is locally considered to be a homogeneous variety.

A notion of place also interacts with this clan ideology; many clans are considered to be roughly isomorphic with some particular region (e.g., the Li region is primarily occupied by members of the Lu clan). However, the relationship between place and clan is not always straightforward; villages change over time and do not necessarily match local notions of correspondences between place and clan (Stanford forthcoming). Furthermore, individual clan members maintain their original dialects regardless of mobility, as explained below. For the analysis presented here, then, the notion of clan dialect is considered fundamental, rather than regional dialect.

The immigration and dialect contact resulting from Sui marriage customs lead to intriguing linguistic situations where, for example, a woman uses a different 1st person singular than her own husband and children. Dialect features vary between clans in cognate and non-cognate lexical items and in phonetic variables (diphthong variables and lexical tone variables).

Sui married women maintain their original clan dialects (henceforth clanlect) to a very high degree, even after a decade or more of married life in the husband's village (Stanford 2007, 2008a). In this way, each Sui person continually performs and constructs his or her clan identity linguistically. Likewise, the very notion of clanlects is continually constructed as each person associated with a given clan performs a set of linguistic features.

3. Other examples

Clan-based exogamy with linguistic effects is not limited to the Sui people, of course. A well-known case of exogamy is found in the Vaupes region of the Amazon where "linguistic exogamy" is reported (e.g., Jackson 1974, 1983; Alkhenvald 2002:219; Gomez 1986 inter alia); i.e., the spouses' fathers must speak different languages. However, unlike Vaupes linguistic exogamy, the linguistic differences between Sui wives and husbands are an epiphenomenon of clan exogamy, not a requirement. Sui wives and husbands differ in terms of clan origins but not necessarily linguistically. Moreover, since nearby clans do not always have significant dialect differences, in many Sui households the wife and husband have few or no distinctive dialect differences. Secondly, across the Sui communities in the current study, the variation is clearly dialectal, unlike the Vaupes region where differences are viewed as language-level distinctions. For the Sui clans in this study, contrast is observed only in a relatively small set of features, and all speakers agree that the varieties in the current study are easily mutually intelligible.

Nonetheless, there are likely to be similarities between the Sui and Vaupes regions' linguistic experiences. For example, Vaupes researchers (Jackson 1983:165; Alkhenvald 2002:17) report that language use is a "badge of identity" in the exogamous cultures of the region. Such identity issues appear to be influencing the Sui linguistic behavior described in the current study. Jackson reports Vaupes
consultants saying, "My brothers are those who share a language with me. Those who speak other languages are not my brothers, and I cannot marry their sisters" (1974:62). Jackson further notes that residents of the Vaupes community identify themselves with their father's language alone (Jackson 1983:164), and this resembles Sui sociolinguistic attitudes as well.

Thus, the Vaupes region shares some similarities with the Sui experience. However, an exogamous situation in northern Australia provides a much closer parallel to Sui clan exogamy. Smith & Johnson (1986) investigate the Ngangacara people of Cape York Peninsula who have an exogamous system where the wife and husband must be from different clans (see also Sutton 1978). The situation is closely parallel to Sui in the following respects: (1) Dialect contact is an epiphenomenon of clan-based exogamy (unlike Alkhenvald's linguistic exogamy 2002:11). (2) The linguistic varieties involved are mutually intelligible dialects. (3) Dialect features are one of the means by which clans are distinguished; the communities are consciously aware of many dialect markers between the clans, thus giving rise to a notion of clan. (4) The society lacks stratification by socio-economic class. Instead, the clan system provides meaningful social groupings.

In addition, Smith & Johnson report that clan marker differences are centered primarily around lexical variables. They find few phonological, morphological, or syntactic variables. Similarly, in Sui many of the differences are lexical (such as highly salient pronoun variables), while no morphosyntactic differences are apparent (to date). However, in Sui the differences do extend significantly beyond lexical items since tone and vowel variables are observed.

Smith & Johnson report that Ngangacara children identify with the father's dialect rather than the mother's, which is the same effect found among the Sui people (Stanford 2008b), and also in the Vaupes region for that matter. Further, Smith & Johnson determine that linguistic markers such as salient lexical differences are prominent features precisely for the reason of identifying groups (p. 40). They suggest that lexical variables are under more conscious control than other linguistic levels and therefore provide "a more suitable source of sociolinguistic markers in the learning situation of the Ngangacara children, who must consciously learn to use their father's clan dialect in a polyglot environment" (p. 40).

Other examples of clan-based distinctions have been reported as well. Bowern (2008) observes clan-level variation among three exogamous clans of Yan-nahaj speakers in Eastern Arnhem Land, where lexical, morphological, and phonological variants are used to distinguish clan membership. David A. Peterson (p.c.) reports evidence suggesting clan-level variation in a Ruk-Chin language of Bangladesh. In Crogen, a moribund language of northwest China, older speakers report that clan-level variation once existed, although such distinctions have now been lost as

the Crogen-speaking community has dissipated in contact with Chinese (Lindsay Whaley p.c.).

Thus, among these diverse societies and languages, from the Amazon to Australia to Bangladesh to China, linguistic marking on the level of clan plays an important social role. As Smith & Johnson conclude, "It should not come as any surprise to find that social groups as important as the Ngangacara patriclans (patrilineal clans) should be marked linguistically" (Smith & Johnson 1986:39). Clan, therefore, is a significant sociolinguistic variable.

4. Clan in variationist sociolinguistics

Given these robust clan-level ties between language, identity, and social organization, how should clan be approached in variationist sociolinguistics? Following Mendoza-Denton's (2002) outline of three approaches to language and identity, the role of clan as a sociolinguistic variable is considered here with respect to (1) "sociodemographic category-based identity," (2) "practice-based identity," and (3) "practice-based variation" (Mendoza-Denton 2002:479).

4.1 Clan as a sociodemographic category

The first approach described by Mendoza-Denton (2002), "sociodemographic category-based identity," has been very effective in describing "large-scale patterns of variation" (cf. Labov 1994, cited in Mendoza-Denton, p. 481). Mendoza-Denton notes that successful studies in this framework recognize its achievements, but she also cautions that this approach generally assumes that identities are "relatively stable" (p. 482), and one must also be careful to avoid the potential pitfalls of assuming that Euro-American analyses of identity categories (age, class, gender, etc.) can be directly transferred and applied to other communities (p. 478). Moreover, studies in this first approach often have broad-based viewpoints that aim for large-scale patterns, so it is harder to see variation on the level of small communities and the role of small-scale interactions of individuals.

In the current study the Sui consultants made it clear from the beginning that clan is a highly meaningful category in variation, and so one possibility would be to simply add clan to the traditional list of independent variables of age, class, class,
gender, region, and ethnicity. After all, it would be unwise to allow the list of independent variables to be "frozen prematurely into a standard list – class, age, ethnicity, region" (Chambers 1993: 143, quoted in Hazen 2002:241). Otherwise, the field of sociolinguistics could overlook fundamental social factors in many lesser studied communities. The present chapter suggests, then, that clan should receive this level of variationist sociolinguistic attention as well.

From this demographic perspective, perhaps the clan-level social organization of such indigenous societies could be viewed as a subset of the category of ethnicity. For example, a Sui villager views him or herself as a member of the Sui ethnic minority, i.e., a member of an ethnic group within mainland China (Sui is one of the 55 official ethnic minorities of mainland China). But each Sui person also views him or herself as a member of a particular clan within Sui society, a level which might be considered "micro-ethnicity." Such clan membership closely resembles the social construct of ethnicity in general, having all the traits identified in Giles & Johnson's (1987:95) analysis of ethnolinguistic identity. Giles & Johnson determine that "stable pluralism" (cultural and linguistic) is achieved between ethnic groups when

ethnic group members identify relatively strongly with their ethnic group as well as the society of which they are a part; perceive the norms and values of their ethnic boundaries to be hard and closed; and perceive the vitality of their ethnic group to be relatively high. These conditions may be considered to provide relatively stable and secure support for ethnicity, enabling constructive contact with ethnic outgroups. (p. 95, emphasis in original)

The Sui clan construct appears to meet all of Giles & Johnson's criteria for an ethnic division with stable pluralism: The Sui people identify strongly with their own clans and with the larger Sui society as well; they perceive their clan memberships to be "hard and closed" boundaries; and they report a high degree of vitality on the clan level.

In this way, a variationist study of Sui or another clan-based society would have a demographic category of ethnicity (e.g., Sui ethnicity in contrast to the majority Han Chinese ethnic group or nearby minorities), as well as the subcategory of "micro-ethnicity," namely, clan membership. A "sociodemographic category-based" sociolinguistic study yields meaningful patterns under this paradigm. In an initial survey of clan-related features, Bowern (2008) finds evidence suggesting contrasts among different clans of Yan-nhau speakers in Eastern Arnhem Land, where "clan, kinship and language are culturally extremely salient." (1) shows examples for "Clan A" and "Clan B."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clan A</th>
<th>Clan B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'tobacco'</td>
<td>[nalar]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'pipe'</td>
<td>[luinjy]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vowel nasatization</td>
<td>pre- and post-nasatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consonant glottalization</td>
<td>pre-glottalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sui clans illustrate similar contrasts. First, I compiled a list of lexical variables based on my own research as well as a dialect survey in Shady Diao-da Baqiao (1956). In Table 1, results are given for lexical variation among members of two clans located about 10 miles apart, labeled here as the "North Clan" and the "South Clan." Speakers were asked to identify simple objects or physical actions and produce the word in a short phrase, repeating several times. In the Words column, the first number represents the number of words produced in the North clan dialect, while the second number represents the number produced in the South clan dialect. Thus, 0:12 indicates that there were 12 words produced in the South variant and zero words in the North variant. Similarly, in the Tokens column, the first number represents the number of tokens in the North variant, while the second number represents the number in the South variant. For the teenagers, the mother's home clan is listed if known.

As Table 1 shows, most speakers produced the lexical variables expected of their clans. The few exceptional tokens were primarily found in teenagers' speech, and such a result is not surprising due to lingering effects of their mothers' speech during upbringing. In the whole data set, teenagers produced 28 such tokens (5 words) of the opposite dialect (i.e., variants that didn't represent their fathers' dialect), but there were only 3 such exceptional tokens for the adults.

In addition to lexical differences, two diphthongs vary between the North and South clans, in words such as mta 'hand' and tma 'salt.' The phonetic variants of the diphthongs in the two dialects are given below. In (2) the two diphthong variables are designated (ia) and (ua).

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3. All members of Sui society, mobile and non-mobile, participate in the construction and differentiation of dialects through their daily use of dialectal features that identify themselves with their home clan (Stanford 2007, 2008a, forthcoming). Nonetheless, for the purpose of establishing dialectal features for comparison here, non-mobile speakers' dialectal features are used in order to control for possible effects of mobility.

Table 1. Results for lexical variables (both cognate and non-cognate; in phrase-list style) (Stanford 2007, 2008b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker non-mobile speakers:</th>
<th>Words North:South</th>
<th>Tokens North:South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 year-old male</td>
<td>0:12</td>
<td>0:52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 year-old female</td>
<td>0:12</td>
<td>0:63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 year-old female</td>
<td>0:14</td>
<td>0:87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 year-old female</td>
<td>0:14</td>
<td>0:75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 year-old male</td>
<td>1:13</td>
<td>1:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 year-old male</td>
<td>0:13</td>
<td>0:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 year-old male</td>
<td>0:14</td>
<td>0:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 year-old male</td>
<td>0:11</td>
<td>0:23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| North non-mobile speakers:  |                  |                    |
| 16 year-old female (South mother) | 12:1          | 53:4               |
| 15 year-old female (South mother) | 14:0          | 64:0               |
| 15 year-old male (South mother) | 12:1          | 48:8               |
| 14 year-old male (South mother) | 14:0          | 61:0               |
| 16 year-old female (Northeast mother) | 11:1          | 46:4               |
| 15 year-old female (Northeast mother) | 11:2          | 60:12              |
| 30 year-old male             | 13:1            | 62:1               |
| 28 year-old male             | 13:0            | 28:0               |
| 45 year-old male             | 13:1            | 28:1               |
| 24 year-old male             | 12:0            | 23:0               |
| 40 year-old male             | 11:0            | 22:0               |

\[(2) (ia): North South [-ia] - [-ia] \]

\[(ua): North South [-ua] - [-ua]\]

In an impressionistic analysis, the North and South non-mobile speakers showed very precise correspondence to the (ia) and (ua) variants expected of their respective regions (Stanford 2007). In fact, there was only one instance where a non-mobile speaker was observed not using the diphthong variant of the home clan; one 16 year-old North girl pronounced 'female' 'shik' with the South variant five times and with the North variant four times. No other non-mobile speaker was observed to deviate from his or her home clan. Since the results of the non-mobile speakers are so overwhelmingly categorical, a table of results is not provided. In addition, acoustic analysis confirms this clanect contrast in the (ua) diphthong (Stanford 2007); the /-a/ element of the (ua) diphthong in words such as 'dua 'salt' was shown to be significantly different between the North and South clans. Figure 1 illustrates the two different trajectories of the (ua) diphthong in terms of formant values.

Finally, clan-level variation manifests itself in lexical tone as well. Among the six phonemic tones of Sui, two tones vary between the North and South clans (Stanford 2008a). Figure 2 shows the clan contrast in "Tone 1" (henceforth T1), and Figure 3 shows the clan contrast in the other tone variable, "Tone 6" (henceforth T6). (The tone numbering system is based on L. Zhang 1980; Zeng & Yao 1996; and Edmonson & Schnit 1998.)

In Figures 2–3, each line represents the mean of all the tone tokens of T1 or T6 for a given speaker. The tones are plotted in semitones, and the time axis is normalized for tone (as 600 "relative time" points for the duration of each syllable).

5 One (logarithmic) semitone is a half-step in the musical scale; there are 12 semitones in an octave. Such a scale makes it possible to normalize speakers who have different pitch ranges (see Zha 1999:47, 78).
As for pitch normalization, Figure 2 investigates a contrast in contour (slope), so a particular point in relative time (time = 200) is set to 0.0 semitones for all speakers. Figure 3 investigates a contrast in pitch, so the mean of speakers’ mid-level Tone 3 is set to 0.0 semitones. The figures both focus on time ranges within the syllable that illustrate the relevant clanject contrast in the given tones.

Rather than minor differences, these clanject distinctions affect the tone system at a deep structural level. Figures 4–5 provide phonemic models of the tone spaces for all six tones in the two clanects. Tone trajectories and symmetry are idealized in order to show phonemic contrasts. Notice the (boldface) dramatic shifts in T1 and T6, and the shift in unused space. One might also speculate about...
a chain shift involving T1 and T6, i.e., the low rising South T1 is perceptually similar to the low rising North T6. In sum, the examples provided in this section show quantifiable variation with respect to the category of clan, illustrating a "sociodemographic category-based" approach (Mendoza-Denton 2002) to clan.

4.2 Clan as "practice-based identity"

Clan is more than just a demographic category. Whether considered a subset of ethnicity ("micro-ethnicity" as described above) or some other demographic category, clan is tightly woven with the identity of each speaker. Sui dialects and clan identities are continually (re)constructed through daily performances of clan-level linguistic features.

The notion that clan identity is continually being performed and constructed leads to the second approach that Mendoza-Denton outlines: "practice-based identity" (2002: 486). Mendoza-Denton cites such work as Bourdieu (1978, 1991), Weng (1998), Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992), and Le Page & Taboure-Keller (1985), and she notes that this approach has the advantage of allowing for "evolving conditions" and putting the focus at "the level of the construction of social relationships." Such a perspective has been especially effective in communities where traditional class and other hierarchical notions cannot be applied in a straightforward manner. Exemplified by Le Page & Taboure-Keller's (1985) model of acts of identity, this approach involves group-oriented patterns but at the same time considers individual agency and the social construction of identity; it therefore may be applied to the Sui situation described here.

From this perspective, in-migrant married Sui women are viewed as performing clan identity through meticulous adherence to the linguistic variants of their home clans, even after a decade or more in the husband's village. As shown below, the married women's lexical variants corresponded closely to their original dialects, as did their pronunciation variants and tonal variants.


Yet in-migrant Sui women maintain their original clan dialects to a very high degree. Among 12 such married women, significant acquisition of the husband's clan dialect was observed in only one woman, a 59-year-old woman who had been married 40 years (Stanford 2007, 2008a). Even in her case, most of her dialect features still firmly matched her original clan dialect (see discussion of Speaker 13 below). From this perspective, one could say that Sui speakers' linguistic construction of clan identity outweighs linguistic accommodation, even in the face of change, long-term inter-clan contact. Sui married women are performing acts of identity through choices of linguistic features that have social meaning on the level of clan, and such linguistic acts of identity are maintained even after many years living in another clan.

Most married women claimed they hadn't changed their dialect features. Other community members agreed that married women maintain their original clan dialects even after migrating to the husband's region. When pressed, some consultants recalled rare cases where an older woman might begin to acquire a few features if she had been married a very long time. But the overall consensus in the community was that all clan members (non-mobile men, in-migrant women, and children) retain their original clan dialects for life. When asked what would happen if a woman accommodated to the dialect of the husband's village, consultants often mentioned community criticism and ridicule: "Other people would laugh at you. Laugh a lot!"

4.2.1 Empirical investigation

The reliability of such comments is borne out in an empirical investigation of the married women's dialect features. First, the in-migrant married women's lexical results are given in Table 2 as well as Table 1, in the Words and Tokens columns, the first number represents the number of words or tokens produced in the North clan dialect, while the second number represents the number produced in the South clan.

Comparing the North and South in-migrant married women (see also the non-mobile speakers in Table 1), it is clear that the married women produced the lexical variants expected of their home clans to a very precise degree (Stanford 2008b). In addition to the elided words above, in free speech the women also produced 1st singular according to their original clan dialects (North sh and South ju). Moreover, a distinctive South discourse marker ju ("like", "so", "then", "like that", etc.) appeared in the speech of non-mobile South speakers and South married women, but never in the speech of non-mobile North speakers and North married women (Stanford forthcoming). One South married woman used ju 25 times in a span of just six minutes of free speech.
Table 2. Results for married women's lexical variables (cognate and non-cognate; in phrase-list style) (Stanford 2008b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaker &amp; North/South married women:</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Tokens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41 years old, married 20 years</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 years old, married 35 years</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 years old, married 12 years</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years old, married 16 years</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 years old, married 10 years</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 years old, married 60 years</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 years old, married 17 years</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 years old, married 23 years</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71 years old, married 43 years</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North married women:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 years old, married 11 years</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 years old, married 20 yrs</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 years old, married 17 years</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, the in-migrant married women maintained their original clanlects with respect to the (iə) and (ua) diphthong variables. The impressionistic analysis of (iə) and (ua) for the married women showed perfect correspondence with each speaker's home clan. The North married women's diphthongs were all realized as the expected North variants; the South married women's diphthongs were all realized as the South variants. An acoustic analysis of the (ə) vowel in the variable (ua) also supports this conclusion (Stanford 2007). The in-migrant Sui married women closely maintain their original clanlects' (ə) variant even after more than a decade in the husband's region.

As for tone, Figure 6 shows how the South married women maintained their original clanlects with respect to the Tone 1 (T1) variable. The South married women's mean T1 tone tracks are plotted as gray lines, and the North non-mobile speakers' mean T1 tone tracks are plotted as black lines.

Comparing Figure 6 with Figure 3 above, the graphical evidence strongly suggests that the South married women have not significantly acquired the T1 contour of the North (their husbands' region), and Stanford (2008a) gives statistical support for this conclusion.

The results for T6 were similar. The South married women's T6 tone tracks are plotted in Figure 7 along with the North non-mobile speakers. Comparing Figure 7 with Figure 6, notice that the South married women have maintained the North-South contrast in T6 very accurately. One exception is a 59 year-old

Figure 6. North non-mobile mean T1 tracks (black) and South married women's mean T1 tracks (gray), N = 436, plotted in semitones, pitch = 0.0 semitones at t = 200 (Stanford 2008a)

Figure 7. North non-mobile speakers' mean T6 tracks (black) and South married women's mean T6 tracks (gray), in semitones, normalized for mean T3 and duration, N = 326 (Stanford 2008a)
woman, "Speaker 15," who had been married for 40 years. Her mean T6 tone track is represented by the lowest gray line in Figure 7. She appears to show signs of lowering her T6 pitch in the direction of the low North variant.

This conclusion was also borne out by a classification tree analysis (Stanford 2008a). However, even with Speaker 15, the acquisition was quite limited; her lexical variables, diphthong variables, and other tone results all matched her original clanlect. In fact, Speaker 15 matches the expectations of the local folk understanding; consultants report that married women do not normally acquire the husband's clanlect. They report that in rare cases, a woman may begin to acquire some features if she has been married a very long time.

The overall conclusion from the empirical study is that Sui married women maintain their original clanlects very accurately, despite spending a decade or more in the husband's region (Stanford 2007, 2008a–b). Such a finding is in contrast to the accommodation and dialect acquisition observed in prior studies of other communities, and so the Sui result suggests that the women are involved in ongoing linguistic identification with their original clan. Le Page & Tabouret-Keller (1985:14) view linguistic behavior as "a series of acts of identity" in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles. Similarly, the Sui married women are performing acts of clan identity as they maintain their original clanlect features regardless of long-term daily interaction with members of the husband's village. They are not mechanically absorbing the dialect around them (unlike models of dialect acquisition as a simple function of density of social interactions). Each linguistic act by a speaker associated with a given clan serves to (re)construct the community's notion of a particular clanlect. As these linguistic acts are multiplied over many speakers, the clanlect maintains its integrity in the face of contact with other varieties in the village. The case of Sui exogamy and clanlect contact, then, shows an example of the role of clan-level linguistic variables in a "practice-based identity" approach. Such an approach should, however, be tempered with moderation and cultural sensitivity. As Stanford (forthcoming) points out, many situations previously described by practice-based models have assumed the presence of highly flexible, individualistic, gradient variation. By contrast, clan-related linguistic features are usually performed with a much more stable sense of collective, lifelong loyalty.

4.3 Clan as "practice-based variation"

Lastly, Mendoza-Denton describes a third approach, "practice-based variation," which moves ever more into the realm of fine-grained study of behavior at the level of individual variation. For example, she cites the work of Johnstone & Bean (1997), who point out the importance of recognizing subjects' "self-expression and individuality" in variationist research (Mendoza-Denton 2002:490). A further example of this viewpoint is given in Johnstone, Andrus, & Danielson's (2006:78) description of the speech and attitudes of five Pittsburgh residents, a study conducted at "very fine-grained level of particularity." This approach is especially effective in investigating "moment-by-moment dynamics of interaction" (Mendoza-Denton 2002:489) as speakers reflect and construct their identities linguistically. Mendoza-Denton (2002:491) also notes that her own research of Latina gang members in California follows such an approach as well (1997, 1999).

For the clan-level variation investigated in the case of Sui, the majority of adult speakers maintained their respective home clanlect features almost categorically, both among in-migrant married women as well as non-mobile speakers in their respective home clans. Future research using more naturalistic recordings may yield more fine-grained variation, especially if a large set of natural conversations could be recorded in the daily life of Sui households. The present data contain examples where speakers voice other clans using clan-level stereotypes (Labov 1972). For example, members of both clans can choose to perform the South clanlect with the (otherwise meaningless) phrase ja-ju, which is a combination of the discourse marker ja 'this, like this' (a lexical item that indexes South clan speakers) placed adjacent to ju, 1st singular in the South clan. Both clans also perform clanlect differences with phrases like (3). Such phrases and lexical items are used agentively to mimic and index speakers as belonging to a particular clan.

(3) ej fun ej nja fun ju
1st-North say 1st-North 2nd say 1st-South
I say "T" (North); you say "T" (South)

For example, in one interview, two women reported that they occasionally playfully mimic each other's clanlects. During the recording, each woman produced some stereotypical words and phrases to tease her counterpart, sometimes receiving a measure of playful reproach and pronunciation corrections as a response from the other woman. Both women in (4) had been living in the same village for many years, but they originated in two different clans. Note how they creatively manipulate the norms of clan-level features in order to construct and reflect friendship.

(4) Speaker A: If I feel like joking around, then I speak like her. If we aren't joking around, then each of us speaks our own way.
Speaker B: Each person speaks [like] their own place.
Speaker A: Only if I want to make fun with her and speak [like] her place, that's when I speak [like] her place. If she wants to have fun and
speak like me, then she speaks like me. She [normally] says “Like I…” <Imitates Speaker B’s dialect features>, so I say, “Where are you going?” <Uses Speaker B’s dialect features>, I say it like that to her. If she likes me, she might say, “Where are you going?” <Uses Speaker A’s own dialects>, She’ll talk like that to me...

Speaker A: She says, “Where are you going?” <Imitates some of Speaker A’s features but uses Speaker B’s high variant of Tone 6>

Speaker B: <Imitates it> “Where are you going?” <Imitates some of Speaker A’s features, including the lower Tone 6>

Further investigation of the specific motivations and uses of such mimicry in naturalistic settings could lead to additional insights into identity and clan, helping to determine fine-grained meanings and strategies of clan-level linguistic choices.

A dynamic, moment-by-moment “practice-based variation” approach to clan variables will provide significant insights in clan-based societies.

5. Conclusion

The sociolinguistic variable of clan has been shown to play a key role in all three of the approaches that Mendoza-Denton (2002) outlines (“sociodemographic category-based identity,” “practice-based identity,” “practice-based variation”). Thus, clan-level sociolinguistic effects are useful as the variationist researcher (1) looks at relatively broad-based demographic categories to draw general conclusions, and also (2) examines practice-based social relationships, and then (3) moves on to “fine-grained particularity” in moment-by-moment interaction.

In study after study of comparatively well-known language communities, sociolinguists have observed linguistic variation with respect to the social factors relevant for each given community. As quantitative variationist sociolinguistics continues to expand into lesser studied languages, it is natural to expect that the types of relevant sociolinguistic variables will expand as well. Clan clearly plays an important sociolinguistic role in many close-knit communities around the world with strong lineage traditions. Therefore, with clan as a sociolinguistic variable, the quantitative sociolinguist has many new avenues to explore.

Finally, clan has significance beyond the relatively small rural societies discussed here. First, clan relationships are not limited to rural indigenous minority communities. Among immigrant communities in the U.S., maintain strong clan loyalties despite urban environments and dispersion (Kewen-Bomar 2004; Stanford 2008), and other communities around the world with strong patri- or matrilineal traditions may share similar patterns. Secondly, the clan-oriented sociolinguistic patterns currently observed in many rural indigenous communities may hint at a deeper history of human social and linguistic development. After all, much of human society as a whole traces back to rural and agrarian communities, and exogamy at some level is generally considered to be a universal (e.g., Raddcliffe-Brown 1950:40; Kottak 1991:45, 114). It may well be that some of the structures of other modern languages – even major world languages – have their roots in ancient clan-level distinctions much like those discussed here.

References


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CHAPTER 2.1
Language loss in spatial semantics
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This paper presents a cognitive semantic description of the ongoing process of language loss in the encoding of spatial topological relations in a Northern Athapaskan language, Dene Sulyén. Using the Topological Relation Markers elicitation tool (Pederson, Wilkins & Bowerman 1998), results are presented that show a difference in the encoding of spatial topological relations between younger and elder speakers. This difference becomes visible through selected data points that show elder speakers encoding spatial topological relations on a higher degree of specificity than younger speakers. This is reflected by a larger inventory of morpho-syntactic and semantic choices. In addition, younger speakers produce rather restricted and often ungrammatical utterances; their inventory for linguistic variety is limited or simply not available. As I will argue in this paper, this limitation is due to ongoing language loss and the influence of English as the dominant way to communicate.

1. I am grateful to the speakers of the Cold Lake First Nations, especially to Valerie Wood for her profound help in the transcription and translation of the data. I also thank Sally Rice at the University of Alberta for introducing me to the language and the very generous speakers of the Cold Lake Community. This research has been supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Daghista Project; Sally Rice and Valerie Wood). In addition, I would like to thank Ray Jackendoff and Tufts University, and the TOPOI Project Cluster at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (Excellence Cluster 8-2) for enabling me to finish this paper. Any errors of analysis or interpretation are my own.

2. Following Cook (2004), the diacritic under a and other vowels indicates nasализation.