Female Indicators in the Twana Language

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Differences between the speech of men and women is documented for languages of North America, South America and Asia (see Haas 1964 for a brief review of the literature). These differences may be in the lexicon (e.g. the use of certain words by one sex only), the phonology (e.g. the presence of two sets of rules yielding distinct phonetic shapes from the same underlying form) and/or the morphology (e.g. the addition of an affix to mark the speech of one sex). Which sex uses the unmarked version is apparently language specific. In Koasati (found in Louisiana) female forms are closer to the underlying (Haas 1964) while in Yana (from California) the men's forms are basic (Sapir 1929).

Within the Salishan family, Davis (1971:13) notes a difference between the speech of men and women in Mainland Comox:

> 2. Within the sample of the Mainland Comox population which provided data for this paper, a marked difference was noted between the speech of men and that of women in two respects.
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> 2.1. Women employ horizontal lip rounding, with concomitant lip protrusion.
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> Men employ vertical lip rounding with the consequence of an absence of lip protrusion. The resulting impression is almost that men don't move their lips.
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> 2.2. Women pronounce the glottal stop as a stop and glottalized stops as ejectives.
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> Men pronounce the glottal stop as stød ["a glottal roll"] in the environments V_V and V_C and pronounce the glottalized consonants, especially /p'/, somewhat weaker than ejective. Furthermore, one older man states an analogy between the glottalized stops of Mainland Comox and the voiced stops of English.

In this paper I will present evidence that Twana, a Salishan language of Hood Canal, also differentiated between male and female speakers. The initial discussion of this topic deals with a proposed correlation between the sex of the speaker and the height of certain vowels. Although data does not appear to bear out this hypothesis, it does point to an earlier use of sound symbolism to indicate a female speaker or addressee. In order to properly place the female/male speaker distinction within the context of the Twana language, I will begin with an overview of the differentiation of female referents. This distinction is made lexically and morphologically.

In Twana adult speech there is a differentiation between the names of certain body parts based on the sex of the possessor. While the sexual associations of [dux^{w}bú$\underline{t}$'əbəd] 'breast, nipple', [splə́q] 'penis', [bə́čad] 'testicle' and [dux^{w}sɬə́daybəd] 'vagina' are dictated by human anatomy, speakers also distinguished between the 'female anus' [sk^{w}IlÉʔ] and the 'male anus' [skəlÉʔ], 'female urination' [kə́s] and 'male urination' [sə́xo], and 'female defecation' [míš] and 'male defecation' [p'ə́c']. Thus, a woman would express [bikə́sčId] 'I am urinating' while a man would use [bisəxóčId].

In Twana baby talk, both men and women used the female forms of 'urinate' and 'defecate' for the actions of children of either sex. The use of the female terms for bodily excretions is probably due to the fact that women were the principle caretakers of young children. The baby talk forms of the verbs 'urinate' and 'defecate' are formed by the insertion of the diminutive infix -ʔ-: [kə́ʔs] and [míʔš].

Feminine nouns are the marked case in terms of morphological affixes. For example, the feminine affix -s occurs at the end of [dəbə́də] 'my son' to form [dəbə́dəs] 'my daughter'. It is also infixed into the non-feminine articles tə 'the', ti 'a' and tiɬə 'that', all used with masculine, neuter and common genders" (Eells ms.), to yield the feminine articles tsə [cə], tsi [ci] and tsiɬə [ciɬə]. For example, 'a man' is [tistibʔə́t] while 'a woman' is [cisɬə́day]. Thus, 'cow' [ciəq^{w}íst] differs from 'ox' [tiəq^{w}íst] by the inclusion of the feminine affix in the article prefix.

The nouns [stibʔə́t] 'man' and [sɬə́day] 'woman' can be used as singular or plural adjectives: [stibʔə́t píšpš] 'male cat' or [sɬə́day píšpš] 'female cat', and [stibʔə taɬ xóʔbat] 'males' paddle' or [sɬə́dIɬ xóʔbat] 'females' paddle'.

Among the two languages of the Puget Sound region, Twana and Puget Salish, no male/female distinction for speakers has been found of the type identified by Davis for Comox. However, two proposals have been made regarding differences in the phonetic output which are more explicit. One concerns the choice between mid vowels and high vowels while the other relates to the presence of nasal consonants versus voiced obstruents.

Elmendorf (p.c.) feels that vowel height may be a sex characteristic of Twana speech, with men more frequently using the high vowels [i,u] and women the mid vowels [e,o]. In a 1969 letter to Drachman, Elmendorf stated:

> I have one comment, on your note 2 on fig. 5 (p. 28) [of Drachman 1969], which might be of interest. You suppose that my choice of /i,u/ (rather than /e,o/) for the high vowels "was made on typological grounds." Actually, this may have been part of the motivation, but my principal reason was that I heard predominately the higher "allophones." Occasionally there was fluctuation, but I heard [i] or [u] in most environments from Henry Allen, Frank Allen and Charley Cush, the three informants from whom I made attempts (most successfully from the first) to record carefully. I have also heard Twana forms from Lucy Allen and Mary Adams; while I didn't record much from either of them, my impression is that both used consistently [e] and [o] where I heard [i], [u] from the men. This isn't much to go on, but it does at least suggest that a sex difference in pronounciation may be involved here ...

All the above persons were native speakers (with the possible exception of Lucy Allen, who was however said by her husband Henry to be fluent), and all are now dead. Thus, this hypothesis of mine may be futile, in that it is possibly untestable as of this date.

In Twana, the vowels /i,u/ are lowered to [e,o] when adjacent to a uvular consonant. We are concerned here with the occurances of [e,o] in other enviornments where there is an alternation. The following examples contrast the [e] of Mary Adams (based on Gunther 1945) with the [i] of Henry Allen and Frank Allen (Elmendorf 1960; Elmendorf ms.), and Louisa Pulsifer, Lee Cush and Emily Miller (Thompson ms. A).

	[e]	[i]
cedar tree	q'ʷé·le	q'ʷé·li
	(Mary Adams)	(Henry Allen, Lee Cush, Louisa Pulsifer)
maple tree	k'o·́ɬuwe	k'o·́ɬuwi
	(Mary Adams)	(Henry Allen, Louisa Pulsifer, Emily Miller)
cherry tree	yIli?a·́ɬpe	yIli?a·́ɬpi
	(Mary Adams)	(Louisa Pulsifer)
		yəli?I·́ɬpi
		(Henry Allen)
red huckleberry bush	č'xʷé·las	(š)č'xʷí·las
	(Mary Adams)	(Frank Allen, Louisa Pulsifer)

The same contrast is found in the word for 'song'. Lucy Allen and Mary Adams (Elmendorf p.c.) used [e] while Frank Allen, Henry Allen, Charley Cush (Elmendorf p.c.), Louisa Pulsifer (Thompson ms. A) and Liza Purdy (from a tape recording made by Leon Metcalf) used [i]:

	[e]	[i]
song	s?é··la·l	s?í·la·l
	(Lucy Allen, Mary Adams)	(Frank Allen, Henry Allen, Charley Cush, Louisa Pulsifer, Liza Purdy)

These data do not support the hypothesis linking vowel height to the sex of the speaker. My own impression (based on my field work with speakers of both sexes as well as the notes and tapes of other researchers) is that vowel height (where not determined strictly by phonological environment) is linked to family lines. I find the use of mid vowels most pronounced in the speech of both male and female speakers of the Adams family (i.e. Mary Adams [in Gunther 1945], her son Archie [recorded by Drachman], his niece Georgina Miller and her son Gerald [Thompson ms. A]) from the Hoodsport community (slala?a·́ɬtəbixʷ); they use [bo·́sas] 'four' rather than [bu·́sas] and [sc'o·́c] 'rain' rather than [sc'u·́c]. The absence of this trait among other Hoodsport families such as the Lewis family (e.g. Liza Purdy [recorded by Metcalf] and her daughter Emily Miller [Thompson ms. A]) suggests that it may be subdialectic in nature.

In modern-day Twana and neighboring Puget Salish, the segments b,d are both underlying and the usual surface forms for Proto-Salish *m,n. I argue elsewhere (Thompson ms. B) that, at least for Twana, the change from m,n to b,d was a gradual one involving other processes within the language such as intervocalic gemination and deglottalization, as well as denasalization. The denasalization process was underway by 1841 but was not fully completed until the early 1900's.

During the period of transition, Gibbs (1877) listed several instances in Puget Salish where nasal consonants were associated with females while the corresponding voiced obstruents were associated with males. For example, 'friend' is pronounced Ash-dals when speaking to a man but As-nals' when addressing a woman (p.285-6). He further states (p.324) that the non-nasal version "cannot be used to a woman without insult." Gibbs also notes (p.321) a distinction between male and female speakers in pronouncing the word 'for shame': as-sash-i-ma (female speaker) but as-sash-ib'ho-yo (male speaker).

I believe that there are bits of evidence in modern-day Twana which point to a similar situation at an earlier stage of that language. These, in turn, support the observations of Gibbs for Puget Salish and indicate that it was an areal phenomenon.

One example is from baby talk, the speech of adults to young children. Although nasals appear in a very limited number of modern-day Twana adult speech forms, namely diminutives, they do appear which some regularity in baby talk as replacements for corresponding voiced obstruents (Thompson ms. B). The difference in the nasality of the initial consonant of the possessive prefix in [dəba·́bəd] 'my little son' (Thompson ms. A) and [nək'a·́?] 'my mommy' (Elmendorf ms.) is based on the sex of the kinship term referent. A nasal consonant is used for the female term [k'a·́?] 'mommy' while the corresponding voiced obstruent is found with the male term [ba·́bəd] 'little son'.

Another example concerns the previously mentioned word mi·́š 'female defecation', which contrasts with the term p'əc' used exclusively for males. The presence of [m] in miš is not due to the application of a diminutive process. Rather, it is a reversal of the ~~deglottalization~~ process which created b's from Proto-Salishan *m's. The form miš is the reflex of an old Salishan root, cf. the cognate in the Interior Salishan language Spokan, mn'eč 'defecate' (Carlson 1972:135).

denasalization

The sociolinguistic factors involved in the marking of female speakers and addressees (both phonologically, e.g. with nasals, and lexically, e.g. by the use of miš) suggests that 'female speech' was in the past one of a set of registers within Twana grammar. Ferguson (1977:210, 212) offers the following description of what a register is:

> One of the central facts about human language is the way it varies in structure depending on the use to which it is put. Every speech community and every individual user of language exhibits this kind of variation in language behavior. It is not only the semantic content which varies according to the use but also phonological and syntactic patterns, choice of vocabulary and forms of discourse. In some societies this variation can be illustrated dramatically by turning the dial of a radio to find a particular program. It often takes less than a sentence of speech to decide whether we are hearing a news broadcast, commercial message, 'soap opera', campaign speech, or sermon. In other societies a tape recording might just as readily be identified as adolescent instruction, recitation of a myth, joking between uncle and nephew, or spirit possession.
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> Since most of this variation is conventional, systematic and culturally shared, it lies in the province of the linguist to analyze it and search for universal tendencies and explanatory principles. The notion of 'register' serves as a basic organizing concept in this kind of analysis (Reid, 1956; Ellis & Ure, 1969). On the one hand, register variation is distinct from regional and social dialect variation and, on the other hand, it is distinct from idiosyncratic and stylistic variation. A register in a given language and given speech community is defined by the users for which it is appropriate and by a set of structural features which differentiate it from the other registers in the total repertory of the community.

The Twana female speech register was used as a polite way of addressing women and as a distinctive manner for women to speak. In the lexicon, certain registers such as female speech, baby talk and speech to animals shared a set of phonological rules, including the change from d to n. Although female referents were the marked forms in adult speech (see the earlier discussion regarding tə and tsə, for example), male referents could be the marked forms in these registers (for example, [d] appears in the baby talk form [dəba´bəd] 'my little son' instead of the usual [n] segment).

The female speech register in Twana would have disappeared in the late 1800's, perhaps due to contact with English. The special lexical items of that register (e.g. words for body parts and excretions) however remained, along with some sex differentiation in the baby talk register (e.g. nə- 'my (female referent)' but də- 'my (male referent)'.

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