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On the (In)Significance of English Language Variation: Cherokee English and Lumbee English in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

The Eastern Band of Cherokee in the western mountains of North Carolina and the Lumbee Indians in the eastern sand hills of North Carolina represent two of the most significant American Indian groups east of the Mississippi River, but the symbolic role of English language variation differs dramatically. Descriptive sociolinguistic and perceptual studies demonstrate the uniqueness of Lumbee English as an ethnolinguistic repertoire. The English spoken by the Cherokee is strongly influenced by vernacular Southern Appalachian English, complemented by some substrate features from Cherokee that results in a variety of “Cherokee English.” The narrative analysis of more than 20 hours of video footage in terms of space, place, and identity indicates that the groups share the construct of “Talking Indian” but in contrastive ways. For the Lumbee, an ethnicized repertoire of English is embraced as “Indian Talk” whereas the Eastern Band of Cherokee define this construct exclusively as a discrete, endangered heritage language that erases variation in English. The analysis indicates that “place as location” and “place as meaning” are integrated and interactive. Meaning may be emplaced in physical region but it can also supersede it. The comparison further illustrates that a dynamic, critical historical perspective and interactive discourse are critical to the perspective of *Heimat* in language variation, and that interpretive forms of ethnographic study are complementary to the quantitative study of language variation.

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Walt Wolfram, Jaclyn Daugherty, and Danica Cullinan*

1 Introduction

While the increasing quantitative sophistication of variation analysis over the past half-century has been a hallmark achievement, the quest for the explanation of these differences remains one of its greatest challenges. What do differences signify in terms of meaningful social behavior on an individual and group level, and what additional kinds of data might be needed to justify a sociolinguistic interpretation of differences? In early, structural variationist approaches, the interpretation was largely *post-hoc* and *ad hoc*, as sociolinguists attempted to explain how significant differences between predetermined groups might be explained socially (e.g., Labov 1966, Wolfram 1969, Trudgill 1973). But the successive waves of variationism, particularly the so-called “third-wave approach” (Eckert 2012), seems dedicated to going beyond broad correlations between social groups and language variation by examining how social meaning is constructed in unfolding interactions in which a full range of historical, cultural, and ideological issues come into play (e.g., Mendoza Denton 2008). Accordingly, qualitative discourse analysis as well as a broad net of socio-historical and sociocultural context and circumstance may inform interpretation as we attempt to explain the social meaning of language variation.

In this presentation, we compare the social meaning of English language varieties in disparate groups of Native American Indians in North Carolina as they relate to space and place. The Eastern Band of Cherokee in the western mountains of North Carolina and the Lumbee Indians in the eastern sand hills of North Carolina represent two of the most significant American Indian groups east of the Mississippi River. Descriptive sociolinguistic (Wolfram and Dannenberg 1999, Wolfram, Dannenberg, Knick, and Oxendine 2002) and perceptual studies (Hammonds 2000) demonstrate the uniqueness of Lumbee English as an ethnolinguistic repertoire. The English spoken by the Cherokee is strongly influenced by vernacular Southern Appalachian English, complemented by some substrate features from Cherokee (Anderson 1999, Coggshall 2008), also resulting in a distinctive variety of “Cherokee English.” Given the broader and local contexts of these respective tribes, how does their English variety fit into their respective identities? We explain the differential interpretation of English language variation by the Cherokee and Lumbee in terms of their respective historical language contexts, their tribal status, and their locally constructed language ideologies, showing how an extended social and historical framework contextualize their perspectives on English language variation. In particular, we show how references to spatial language and homeland language variety help shape their differing language identities.

1.1 The Lumbee Indians of Robeson County

The Lumbee Indians are the largest Native American Indian group east of the Mississippi River, the largest non-reservation tribe in the United States, and arguably the most debated group in terms of their tribal status. Approximately 45,000 Lumbee Indians live in Robeson County, NC, in a stable tri-ethnic situation where approximately 40 percent of the population is Lumbee, 35 percent European American, and 25 percent African American. The location of Robeson County is given in Figure 1.

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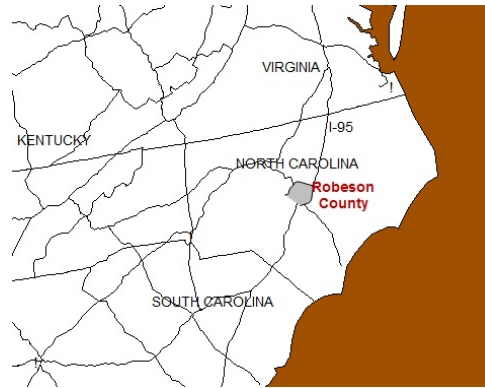


Figure 1. Location of Robeson County.

Their quest for federal recognition has been a long, arduous journey, starting in the 1880s and continuing to the present. In 1885, the North Carolina General Assembly recognized the Indians of Robeson County as Croatan, an American Indian tribe, preceding even the recognition of the Cherokee in North Carolina. Just a few years later, in 1888, the Lumbee petitioned the U.S. government for recognition and assistance. They were denied by the Bureau of Indian Affairs due to a lack of funding, the start of a series of failed petitions for federal recognition that have routinely taken place since then. Finally, in 1956, they were officially recognized by a congressional act that ironically managed yet again to underscore their marginal status. The Lumbee Recognition Act, H.R. 4656, recognized the Lumbee as having American Indian origins and designated them as the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina, but stipulated that “nothing in this Act shall make such Indians eligible for any services performed by the United States for Indians because of their status as Indians.” Since that time, new petitions for full recognition have been submitted, and there is currently yet another petition to gain full recognition under consideration as this article is published (Senate April 2013, House of Representatives October, 2013).

Without doubt, part of the Lumbee struggle for federal recognition is related to their historical language situation. If the Lumbee had a heritage language that they still used, or that they were familiar with, their argument for full federal recognition would have been settled in their favor long ago. The historical circumstances surrounding the Lumbee, however, make it difficult to trace the roots of their indigenous, ancestral language. Little documentation of the languages of the Lumbee River region (currently called “Lumber River”) exists, and linguists can't even be certain about what language or languages the Lumbee spoke in the past. By the mid-1700s, the Lumbee apparently were no longer reliant exclusively on their ancestral language for communication, at least in their interactions with outsiders, and that would have masked their ancestral language roots. An additional problem comes from the cultural dynamics of the area. According to archeological and linguistic evidence, the Lumbee River region was a zone of cultural interaction for different American Indian groups, so that it is quite possible that the Lumbee community developed not from a single, unitary cultural group but from a conglomerate of American Indians.

Though the Lumbee lost their ancestral language generations ago, they have developed a variety of English that is ethnolinguistically marked as “Lumbee English,” described in a number of descriptive studies by researchers (Wolfram and Dannenberg 1999, Wolfram et al. 2002, Dannenberg 2002). Furthermore, it is a local variety that the Lumbee identify perceptually (Wolfram et al. 2002) and explicitly recognize.

1.2 The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (pop. approximately 13,000) are a fully recognized federal tribe who reside across different counties in Western North Carolina (Qualla Boundary in Swain, Jackson, Haywood Counties) as well as in smaller, non-contiguous sections (Snowbird and Tomotla in Cherokee and Graham County). The location of the tribal lands in western North Carolina are given in Figure 2.

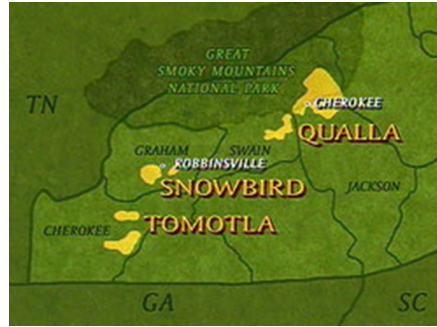


Figure 2. Cherokee Tribal Trust.

Most of the Cherokee residents are descended from those who escaped the infamous “Trail of Tears” Indian removal initiated under President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s. Though their land, which is interspersed among land owned by non-Indians, is often referred to as a “reservation,” it is, in fact, a “land trust” since it was purchased from the government by the Cherokee rather than given to them (Wolfram and Reaser 2014). The Cherokee are well-known for their establishment of a syllabary in the 1820s and their high literacy rates in the mid-1800s. In fact, 90 percent of the Cherokee were literate, making them the most highly literate group in America at the time; American-born European Americans as a group did not reach this level for another fifty years, and America as a whole took until 1910 to reach that level of literacy. Among those currently enrolled in the Eastern Band of Cherokee, fewer than 10 percent speak the language with moderate proficiency, and a much smaller percentage speak it fluently. Current estimates of native Cherokee speakers range from 200 to 300, notwithstanding a strong movement to revitalize the language that includes a Cherokee immersion school and mandatory classes in Cherokee in the local schools in Qualla Boundary (Cullinan and Hutcheson 2014).

At the same time, the regional variety of English accommodated by the Cherokee is full of Southern Highland dialect traits used in Western North Carolina (Anderson 1999). The accommodation of these Southern traits, even among native speakers of Cherokee who learned English as a second language, is highly salient to linguists and outsiders. For many bilingual Cherokee speakers, strong regional accommodation co-exists with transfer structures from Cherokee, resulting in a unique variety or an ethnolinguistic repertoire that might be identified as “Cherokee English.” Cherokee English, however, is not considered a “homeland variety” that shapes American Indian identity.

2 Space, Place, and Identity

The question of physical and phenomenological space and place is one of the emerging issues in understanding the notion of language variety in the context of a speech community. As Benwell and Stoke (2006:211) note, “Not only do people make spaces, but spaces also make people, by constraining them but also offering opportunities for identity construction.” Space and place are similar concepts, though space serves as a relatable, two-dimensional abstraction, while places serve as functional nodes within that space (Rohkrämer and Schultz 2009). Physical places are also socially constructed, and it is necessary to consider place as not just a demographic fact about a speaker, but as an ideological construct that is created through interaction (Johnstone 2013). Social lives unfold within these symbolic and material environments and allow individuals the opportunity to construct an identity on the basis of region or nationality (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, Wallwork and Dixon 2004). At the same time, a group consciousness based on space and place can shape an idealized group membership, by justifying the inclusion or exclusion of particular categories of persons (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). This sense of inclusion can encompass a group’s shared sense of belonging based on a commonly shared heritage—or *Heimat* (Rohkrämer and Schultz 2009). *Heimat* protects “the self by stimulating identification whether with family, locality, nation, folk or race, [or] native tongue” (Rohkrämer and Schulz 2009:1344) and ties these culturally symbolic aspects to a physical homeland. Thus, a homeland becomes imbued with mul-

multiple social meanings for group members but can become a site of transgression or resistance in the reproduction of marginalized groups or outsider identities (Sibley 1995).

Because space and place are important in shaping individual and group identities, the social meanings and values that are instilled within that place can be examined within personal narratives (De Fina 2010). Just as narrators can index their positioning with respect to social categories such as gender, race, and ethnicity (De Fina et al. 2006, Bucholtz 1999), “a positioning of someone who is of a place can connect a speaker to the established meanings and identities of that place” (Taylor 2003:193). De Fina (2010) observes that it is important to look at the linguistic strategies narrators use to convey the social meaning of place and how they index subjective positions within personal narratives, considering how deictic shifts allow a narrator to construct place and through this construction and address a range of questions. In this analysis, we apply De Fina’s methodology to examine the importance of spatial language and homeland language variety in constructing an ethnic group notion of *Heimet* as related to identity. The personal narratives come from members of the Lumbee and Cherokee tribes of North Carolina—both of which convey differing notions of *Heimet*. In this discussion, a selected set of narratives are selected; a more complete inventory of narratives is included in Daugherty (2014).

The analysis of the spatial language of narratives for the comparison is based on video footage of interviews conducted with various tribal members filmed by producers Neal Hutcheson and Danica Cullinan of the North Carolina Language and Life Project. The Lumbee footage is represented in the documentary *Indian by Birth: The Lumbee Dialect* (Hutcheson 2001) and Cherokee footage is from three different sources: out-take footage from the Cherokee vignette from *Voices of North Carolina* (Hutcheson 2005), footage used to produce a forthcoming documentary on the Cherokee language revitalization (Cullinan and Hutcheson 2014), and natural conversations with tribal members in the process of collecting footage for the production of the current documentary. More than 20 hours of documentary footage were reviewed and discussions relevant to spatial language and language identity were transcribed for comparison and analysis.

3 Lumbee Spatial Language and Identity

In examples (1) through (3), we provide several representative narratives related to spatial language that separate the Lumbee from outsiders while emphasizing the importance of speaking Lumbee English to symbolize Lumbee group identity.

- (1) Lumbee male, born 1963, teacher and store owner
 01 I went with a friend to church to see a Christmas play last year
 02 and this *white gentleman* who was *from Hamlet or Rockingham* went
 03 with us, and he thought the preacher was *speaking in tongues*
 04 But he was actually *speaking in Lum*

The narrator uses spatial language and identity to situate an outsider (“*from Hamlet or Rockingham*” and “*white gentleman*,” line 02). Racial categorizations alone would not be sufficient for positioning the figure as an outsider without the spatial language, as there is also a white population in Robeson County. But by positioning the figure from outside of Robeson County, the speaker also positions him outside of the Lumbee cultural meanings that are associated with Robeson County as well (Taylor 2003). The narrator expresses the character’s outsider status further by noting that the character did not understand the Lumbee dialect, thus implying that he is a speaker of an oppositional variety. In Robeson County, tribal membership is not only tied with space, but a distinct tribal dialect that is spoken within the community space. The term *Lum* “is reserved for those who have identified with their Lumbee cultural heritage; it also indicates a sense of community and peoplehood that distinguishes it. In effect, it “stimulat[es] identification ... with locality” and ties into the symbolic notion of *Heimet* (Rohkrämer and Schulz 2009).

The narrative in (2) highlights how outsiders from the dominant culture may create opposition when expressing their views against the Lumbee dialect.

- (2) Lumbee male, born in 1946, preacher:
 05 We’d always heard, teachers that would come *from outside the*

06 *community* would really downgrade ...the words we would use was just
 07 not proper. And you'd be punished in certain cases. A *Lum, that's just*
 08 *lingo, that's just belonging*. When you say you're a *Lum...that's*
 09 *identity*...But you get anywhere outside *this immediate area*, people
 10 they know it's different. They know it's something they've never heard
 11 before and a lot of times they're fascinated by it.

As is implied by the narrator, the dialect used by the Lumbee population of Robeson County signifies belonging and identity (“*A Lum, that's just lingo, that's just belonging*” lines 7 and 8). Those who are not from the community have a reductionist attitude toward the dialect, and are thus recognized as outsiders. The narrator also makes a clear distinction that “from outside the immediate area” (line 9) would find their dialect distinct, thus confirming their outsider status at the same time that it localizes the dialect spatially. Because the outsiders (teachers) in this passage degrade the dialect in an institutional setting, we can assume that they speak a more institutionalized, mainstream variety of English — one that is likely more esteemed than the Lumbee dialect. In this example, the homeland of Robeson County becomes a site of transgression when outsider identities bring their conflicting views opposed to the native language variety into the Lumbee homeland (Sibley 1995).

The role of community space is not limited to other racial groups; it can be applied to marginalized Lumbee as well. In (3) a Lumbee from Robeson County addresses the status of the well-known actress Heather Locklear, whose paternal grandfather was from Robeson County.

- (3) Lumbee male born circa 1950s, youth leader and artist
 12 this Heather Locklear thing *Heather Locklear ain't no Lum* I don't care
 13 what nobody says I don't care if her *grand-daddy, great grand-daddy*
 14 *came from* here she's *never lived as a Lum she's never been involved*
 15 *in this community* she's never certainly had to experience the things that
 16 is just gonna be part of your life experience if you're Lum and you know if
 17 you *live in Robeson County* so it's hard for me to see somebody like that
 18 as a Lum. To me, it's got to be, you just got to *be a part of this*
 19 *community, even if it is from a distance*, you know, so I guess it's got to
 20 be genetics and culture

The narrator in this passage equates the geographical space of Robeson County with cultural heritage, “I don't care if her grand-daddy or great grand-daddy came from here, she's never lived as a Lum” (lines 13 and 14). He mentions that she has never been involved in “this community,” and to him, a group member must be a part of “this community.” By using spatial language such as “here” and “this community” (lines 15, 18 and 19) and pairing these with the word “Lum” (lines 12, 14, 16 and 18) the speaker solidifies his group membership by making his spatial orientation in the community one of clear-cut group membership. He then notes that Heather Locklear cannot claim Lumbee tribe membership because she does not understand what it's like to “live in Robeson County” (line 17). Living in Robeson County is critical to group membership and highlights its symbolic significance to the group (De Fina 2010). However, there is some negotiation of group identity in the final line, when the speaker notes that one has to be a “part of this community, even if it is from a distance” (line 19). The speaker uses space to note that despite spatial distance, it is still possible to be a part of the tribe, thus emphasizing how material space coordinates are imbued with larger social meanings (De Fina 2010). Spatial distance from Robeson County, in the opinion of this speaker, does not alone indicate outsider status, as participation in the community is possible even “at a distance.”

Participation in and proximity to the Robeson County community is not just important to group membership—but it is a qualification on a larger tribal scale. For example, Lumbee Tribal rolls require either historical or present day tribal contact. Historical contact can be demonstrated through a Lumbee's attendance of a Lumbee Indian public school prior to desegregation or by membership to a Lumbee church. Present day contact, however, consists of frequent visitation to the tribal territory and knowledge of “Lumbee churches, schools and communities,” as well as a “knowledge of community-based and/or tribal leadership” as indicated in the Tribal Enrollment

Ordinance Act, January 21, 2010). Lumbees must be historically or currently involved in the community, which includes regular visitation to the tribal territory of Robeson County. The inclusion of tribal territory visitation in the Ordinance Act reflects the larger social meanings that pervade the physical place/social space of Robeson County—allowing the Lumbee to officially construct tribal identities based on the material environment (Benwell and Stokoe 2006, Paasi 2001, Wallwork and Dixon 2004).

4 Cherokee Spatial Language and Identity

We now consider several examples from Cherokee speakers. In the narration excerpted in 4, an elderly Cherokee woman discusses how Cherokee was the only language she knew until she played with English-speaking kids.

- (4) Elderly Cherokee (Qualla Boundary) (born circa 1930)
 21 *I didn't learn how to speak any [English] until I was ten years old*
 22 *I talked Cherokee all the time. I had some friends up the road we'd play*
 23 *around with some people that lived up the road*
 24 *they'd come down and visit us then we'd go up there*
 25 *and play with them I'm just...being around them white kids and I just*
 26 *learned my speech that way.*

This speaker uses spatial language in a way that separates the “white kids” in line 25 from her Cherokee home place. She explains that she didn’t learn English until she visited her friends *up the road*. These “white kids” also come *down* (line 24) and visit her, but then she would *go up the road* (lines 22, 23). The speaker notes that the English-speaking children lived upward in relation to her three times. It is through this spatial language that the narrator indicates distance between her Cherokee home and the “white kids,” though it also implies social hierarchy. Note that the narrator has positioned the home of the English speakers above her in relation to her Cherokee home. The spatial language of this narrative implies her awareness of the dominant culture—one that is spatially above her own. This spatial language is used with respect to language as well—this Cherokee speaker didn’t learn English until she was ten years old — though English quickly became the dominant language of the community thanks to Cherokee boarding schools that forbade the Cherokee to speak their native language and immersed them in the English language and culture. English language and culture was positioned above those of the Cherokee, and the implications of this dominance is reflected in the spatial language of this narrator. At the same time, the spatial language the speaker uses keeps her and the “white children” separate, by noting that the children would travel “up” or “down” the road to visit one another, though she never spatially mentions them as being on the “same” road. Cherokee language (and the implied culture) was found within the speaker’s home while English was spoken elsewhere. The narrator spatially confirms her membership in the Cherokee tribe and designates the English speakers as outsiders; they are clearly separate from each other within her narrative.

In the narration in (5), a Cherokee from the Snowbird community of Robbinsville, North Carolina, discusses her status in the community. The Snowbird community still has a relatively high percentage of “full-blooded” Cherokee (Neely 1991) based on a quantum blood definition for tribal status. In this context, spatial language is used to discuss the distribution of tribal people and non-Indians.

- (5) Female Cherokee (Snowbird) born between 1950-60, manager of Snowbird Library
 27 *Well we live among the non-Indians. Our lands are*
 28 *Uh, it's not just tribal land. It's sort of mixed in with the non-Indians so*
 29 *And to me it seems like we get along real well with them and still keep our*
 30 *traditions which is very unusual. Our tribal lands will be over here and*
 31 *There won't be none 'til way over here. So it borders our tribal lands.*
 32 *So you might have an Indian family here and a non-Indian family here.*

The narrator notes that they “live among” (line 27) and are “mixed in” (line 28) with non-Indian peoples; however, the Cherokee tribal lands “will be over here” (line 30) and there will not be any “‘til way over here” (line 31). As was the case with example (3), this speaker uses spatial language to note a difference between the lands of the Indians and non-Indians. Note that the speaker makes this distance between the tribal lands significant by stating that some of the land will be “over here” (line 30), but there won’t be any until “way over here” (line 31). This is paired with her observation that they live “among the non-Indians” (line 27) and the non-Indian land “borders [their] tribal lands” (line 31). Her choice of spatial deictics to note that the Cherokee live among the non-Indians — rather than the non-Indians living among the Cherokee — also implies a hierarchy; there is a clear awareness of the dominant culture through the speaker’s description of the population as being “among” the whites. At the same time, the speaker considers the non-Indians as outsiders based on the difference between the “tribal lands.” The narrator does not appear to be threatened by living near the non-Indians, though she notes that this is “very unusual.” She mentions that they get along well with the outsiders because they still keep their traditions. Though her spatial language she creates a clear distinction in the mixing of Cherokee lands and non-tribal lands, this sharing of space does not appear to cause conflict between insider and outsider identities.

The boarding schools that were erected by the dominant European American culture stripped the Cherokee of their traditional culture and practices, and many Cherokee were punished for using the Cherokee language. As is described in (6), the inability to use the Cherokee language results in a loss of culture.

- (6) Female Cherokee (Qualla Boundary), teacher and Language Project Manager
 33 So not only was their language diminishing with this process but also, their
 34 culture. And they were taken *away* from their *home* and *put in boarding*
 35 *school* and some of them spent very little time with their parents and *in*
 36 *their homes* at that time. I think that it’s important for the Cherokee people
 37 to know their language and to also know their culture. Language is culture,
 38 and without culture you don’t belong.

The speaker in (6) uses spatial language to address how the Cherokee people have been spatially displaced in a way that has compromised their identity. The “home” in this passage (lines 34 and 36) is implied as a place where tribal members can exercise their culture and use their native language. When the tribe members were spatially displaced, “put in boarding school” (line 34) their identity was compromised because they spent little time with their parents and “in their homes” (lines 35 and 36). The boarding school is shown in this narrative as the site of transgression, where ascribing a displaced group identity (Sibley 1995) that contributed to the loss of the Cherokee language. As the narrator observes, when the language is lost, the culture is lost, and the culture defines group membership. This speaker places language and culture within the “home” space crucial to Cherokee group identity. The Cherokee’s “shared sense of belonging” relies heavily on “locality,” the Cherokee home, and is tied to “native tongue.”

As indicated in (6), the Cherokee language is implicated in the construction of *Heimat* (Rohkrämer and Schulz 2009). From this vantage point, English is a threat against “Indian language,” as noted by a Snowbird Cherokee in (7)

- (7) Female Cherokee (Snowbird) born in 1958, health worker
 39 and a lot of people says, “Well, *our Indian language*
 40 is not the first language in the United States.”
 41 English is now. And if we let English take over then *our language*,
 42 then *our language* will die, you know?

In (7), the speaker notes the Cherokee’s awareness of language loss by hypothetically quoting the larger Cherokee community and emphasizing the group’s fear of language death. She highlights Cherokee group solidarity with terms like “our Indian language” and “our language” in lines 39 and 42, while also noting the dichotomy and threat of the oppositional language, English. This speaker also aligns group identity with the ability to speak the Cherokee language. For the speak-

ers in examples 8 and 9, the oppositional nature of the language of the dominant culture is crucial in maintaining a group identity (Sibley 1995).

This form of idealized group membership that has emerged with respect to English is one that is dichotomous: “Indian” versus “non-Indian” (Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Notwithstanding the group awareness of English and its dominance, Cherokee speakers in North Carolina have been recognized as having an English dialect that accommodates local Southern Highland norms. Unlike the distinct regional English dialect of the Lumbee, however, this regional dialect of English seems to play no role in Cherokee identity. Tyler Howe, a Historic Preservation Specialist with Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, notes that the Oklahoma Cherokees have pointed out this dialect difference in the speech of the North Carolina Cherokees.

I’ve heard, Oklahoma Cherokees say that Cherokees of Cherokee, North Carolina or Snowbird, are the only Cherokees they’ve ever spoken with that have a Southern accent. So somehow the language here in the East has this twist of, it’s Cherokee with a mountain accent. Now that’s something you don’t hear out in Oklahoma...the way they speak Cherokee is Cherokee with a mountain slash Southern accent.

Tyler Howe, North Carolina Language and Life interview, 2013

Howe notes that even in Cherokee, there is accommodation to the local European American English dialect. Our personal interaction with members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee within the Qualla and Snowbird groups supports the observation that they have accommodated the local highland regional variety. However, during our interviewing process, as well as in casual conversations with the Cherokee outside of the filming context, the English dialect of the Cherokee appears to play no role in marking their identity. Variation in English appears to be erased under the Indian vs. English language dichotomy presented above. As noted in (8), the notion of “dialect” appears to be reserved for Cherokee, not English.

- (8) Female Snowbird Cherokee born in 1953, Cherokee language teacher
 43 So, that’s what we’re trying to do is preserve,
 44 not just our dialect, because we’ve got *a lot of dialects even in Snowbird*,
 45 what we’re trying to preserve is the old way of saying things in Cherokee.
 46 And that has *nothing to do with dialect*.
 47 That’s just the way you say things.

Our questions to Cherokee interviewees about dialects during our documentary fieldwork and in other interactions were always interpreted as questions about Cherokee dialects, and the issue of varieties of English was never raised by Cherokees in our discussions about language. The focus of language identity by the Cherokee communities in both Snowbird and Qualla Boundary rests on the preservation and revitalization of the Cherokee language. In the process, English language variation is erased. Even within Cherokee, where dialects are recognized (line 44), the issue of dialect differences — between residents of Qualla Boundary and Snowbird, and even the Oklahoma Cherokee — are minimized by comparison with the preservation of the Cherokee language.

5 Conclusion

The comparative differences between the Lumbee and Cherokee American Indians demonstrate how physical and phenomenological space play a role in the construction of insider and outsider identities. For the Lumbee, proximity to the physical and social place of Robeson County serves as a defining characteristic of group membership. Tribal status is linked to Robeson County in terms of traditional activity (segregated schools, churches, family, etc.) and membership on the tribal rolls is secondary to self-identification related to place. As noted, the Lumbee have no reservation land and their federal recognition is without entitlements. At the same time, their identity is strongly associated with the arbitrary boundary of a county within North Carolina. And in the absence of an identified ancestral language, their language identity is indexed by a unique English variety.

In contrast, the Cherokee have a land trust that is interspersed with non-Indians and extends over different counties, including non-contiguous physical space. Though they identify a physical location (Kituwah) as a ritualistic cultural homeland, their identity is tied to blood quantum and, at one point, the tribal council even voted to use DNA to certify tribal status as a Cherokee. Furthermore, the Cherokee language is central to their group identity. For both the Lumbee and the Cherokee, physical tribal spaces are imbued with social meaning, though the tribes differ in what values comprise their ideas of *Heimat* — be it native language, English language variety, or community involvement and connection to tribal space. “Place as location” and “place as meaning” are integrated and interactive; a physical place can carry social meaning, and social meaning can supersede physical region in defining group identity. In many respects, the Lumbee and the Cherokee represent extremes, from criteria for tribal status to how they view each other. In Table 1 we summarize some of the traits differentiating their relations to space, place, and language identity, along with other contrastive behaviors described in more detail in Wolfram and Reaser (2014) and Daugherty (2014).

Eastern Band Cherokee (Qualla Boundary/ Snowbird)	Lumbee (Robeson County)
<i>Physical Space</i>	
Interspersed, fluid space, regional distribution, designated land trust (reservation) space	Arbitrarily bounded county location, imagined community, iconic physical status (Lumbee River)
<i>Indian Identity</i>	
Established, definitional criteria for inclusion in tribal roll, “blood” quantum	Self-reported identity, internal validation, appropriated homeland place, secondary tribal roll
<i>Status of Non-Indians</i>	
Cultural others, generic, racialized white	Racialized other, hierarchical black and white ethnic group
<i>Status of Other Indian Group</i>	
Alignment with dominant culture, opposition to federal recognition of Lumbee	Non-oppositional, inclusion of Cherokee, feeling of betrayal by Cherokee
<i>Role of Language Variety</i>	
Exclusive association of discrete, endangered language, erasure of English dialect in oppositional language— <i>talking Indian vs talking white</i>	Indexical English language variety, localized ethnolinguistic variety, sociopolitical fusion of dialect-language
<i>Internal Perception of Homeland Variety</i>	
Overt prestige, exclusive symbolic capital of heritage language, language revitalization movement	Covert prestige, ambivalent cultural capital, Indian identity countered with linguistic subordination
<i>External Perception of Homeland Variety</i>	
Iconic language-culture connection, erasure of English language variation	Ambiguous localization of dialect, linguistic subordination
<i>Language and Dialect</i>	
Dialect and language discretely bounded, “Cherokee Language,” “English Language”	Language and dialect fused socio-politically, “Lumbee Language”

Table 1: Cherokee vs. Lumbee Differences related to space, place, and language identity.

Our comparison illustrates how physical and phenomenological space interact in varied ways in the construction of a homeland community; including the role of language and dialect (Johnstone 2004, 2013). We have seen that “place as location” and “place as meaning” are integrated and interactive. Meaning may be emplaced in physical region but it can also supersede it. Furthermore, our comparison illustrates that a dynamic, critical historical perspective, and interactive discourse are critical to the perspective of *Heimat* in language variation. In the process, we have demonstrated that the examination of narratives and interactive discourse are crucial in understanding sociolinguistic communities, and that these interpretive forms of ethnographic study are complementary to the quantitative study of language variation.

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