

ESSELEN LINGUISTIC PREHISTORY

by

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ABSTRACT

A model of Esselen prehistory based on linguistic data is formulated in two stages. In the first, basic grammatical features of Esselen are compared to similar features in adjacent languages and in languages that might have been adjacent at an earlier horizon. Given positive results (identity in form, function and positioning of specific grammatical markers) of such a comparison, it is predicted that lexical similarities between Esselen and (former) neighbors would also obtain, assuming that lexical diffusion is likely if grammatical diffusion has occurred. The second stage of the method, comparison of lexical similarities, serves to check predictions based on the first part (grammatical similarities). The results of the study indicate contact between Esselen and two of its neighbors: Uto-Aztecan and Chumashan. Both Uto-Aztecan and Chumashan are not closely related to Esselen. It may be inferred from this that Esselen was once spoken over a wider territory, perhaps into the Central Valley of California. This model agrees with one posited by Kroeber (1925) and others for Esselen prehistory. It may be possible to test this model in the archaeological record by using Esselen basketry as an ethnic marker.

LINGUISTIC MODEL

The Huelel (Esselen) language isolate was spoken in the South Coast Range of California in the Big Sur country (see Beeler 1977 for a discussion of the source materials for this language). Kroeber (1925:544) assumes that the remote location of such a small speech community in marginal ecological zones indicated that the Esselen were a remnant population that had been shoved aside. Map 1 shows the historic location of the Esselen speech community. Archaeological sites within the historic Esselen territory have yielded radiocarbon dates that document occupation of the area from at least the Middle Period (Breschini, Haverset and Erlandson 1983). Continuity of any *in situ* archaeological ("It" 01 rt'

into the historic period as Esselen culture is IE-e1y, but is only indirectly related to the argument pursued here.

I will sketch a model of Esselen prehistory using linguistic data. I will first discuss briefly the proposed genetic connection of Esselen with the Hokan grouping, and will then propose more recent dynamics of Esselen prehistory by considering evidence of past linguistic interaction between the Esselen speech community and its historic neighbors and some groups that may have been neighbors of Esselen prehistorically.

Esselen is a member of the Hokan grouping of languages (see Gursky 1974; Jacobsen 1979 and Langdon 1979 for reviews of the Hokan hypothesis). Interpretation of this grouping as a family or as a linguistic area is still controversial. Neither interpretation is crucial to the argument pursued here. Most of the classic symptoms of Hokan are lexical: a root structure of CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant), some twenty-odd roots including both

nouns and verbs, and at least four affixes. A sampler of some of this classic lexical data for Hokan is given in Figure 1.

If the Hokan languages of California are charted on a map (Map 2), they are seen to occupy position peripheral to the California heartland. The traditional interpretation of this is that the Hokan peoples were pushed out of the way by the more aggressive Penutians (another hypothetical grouping of languages and language families). Esselen displays most of the lexical traits of Hokan, except that it lacks roots with the CVC shape. If there is any validity to either interpretation of the Hokan hypothesis, Esselen was probably located further inland than its historic location.

To the north of the Esselen were various Ohlonean (Costanoan) groups. Ethnohistoric sources indicate hostility between Esselen and neighboring Ohlonean tribes at the beginning of the historic period. However, Esselen and Ohlonean languages share lexical terms indicating earlier interaction of an intimate sort. Shared faunal terms (Figure 2), for example, are fairly numerous and cover many species common to the inland and coastal biomes. It will eventually be possible to test direction of borrowing (by using the Miwokan languages which are genetically related to Ohlonean as a control); at present it can only be stated that Esselen and Ohlonean speech communities interacted during some past period long enough to produce several shared lexical domains (groups of semantically related vocabulary terms), and that an Esselen (-like) speech community may have existed to the north of the historic location of the Esselen.

Before considering lexical diffusion with other actual/possible neighbors (Salinan, Chumashan, Uto-Aztecan, and Yuman; Yokutsan and Miwokan have been omitted), I would like to briefly review the highlights of plausible grammatical diffusion that may have taken place between Esselen and other speech communities (Shaul 1982a). The key assumption in examining grammatical diffusion is that if there was sufficient interaction for basic grammatical traits to be borrowed, one would expect lexical borrowing as well (if vocabulary items were not being used as ethnic markers).

Esselen phonology, as we can infer it (Shaul 1982b), is most like (in descending order of similarity): Ohlonean, Uto-Aztecan, Chumashan, Yuman and Salinan. The problem here is that Esselen may have had an ejective series of consonants that were not recorded in the surviving data; hence phonological similarity is only a partial key to past interaction between Esselen and other speech communities.

Word order in Esselen is SOV consistently with postpositions and relative clauses following their heads [both of these features correlate with Subject-Object- Verb word order cross-linguistically], as it is in Yuman and Uto-Aztecan (Chumashan is VOS and other orders; Salishan is VOS). Word order typology - again perhaps too general to rely on solely - links Esselen with languages (Uto-Aztecan, Yuman) that it was not in contact with during the historic period.

A noun syntagma [word formula] shared by Esselen and various Chumashan languages is more specific as an indicator of past linguistic interaction in that it is remarkably similar in terms of order and shape of the particularly grammatical marker involved (-~~ or -~~- '+alienable' [inherently possessed or not]).

Esselen	possessor-.s.-noun
Island Chumash	<u>possessor-is</u> or <u>is-noun</u>
Barbareno Chumash	<u>possessor-Is-</u> noun
Inezeno Chumash	possessor-~-noun

Could this be inherited from a Hokan ancestor (Chumashan is also a member of the Hokan hypothesis)? If not, and a borrowing hypothesis is correct, we have another datum for contact between Esselen and a language spoken out of its historic territory.

Esselen nouns, which are distinguished by a set of endings that do not appear to be case markings and definitely are not postpositions group fairly reasonably into classes based on a human vs. animate vs. inanimate basis (Shaul 1983). This subset of suffixes may be taken as class markers. This suffix system is very similar to a noun classifier system which is reconstructible for Uto-Aztecan; a similar situation may be postulated for Salinan.

<u>Esselen</u>	<u>Uto-Aztecan</u>	<u>Salinan</u>
-s, -sa, -sis(s)		
-s, -sa	-s, -ca (-sa)	-s, -sa, -ca
-l, -la, -lax	-l, -la	-L, -lax
-n, -nax	-n (Nahuatl)	-n, -nax
-p-sa	-PI, pi	-p
-t, ta	-t, -ta	-t, -t, -ta

"f}. ~ contact of more interest prehistorically is with the Uto-Aztecan system which functioned as a noun class marking device that was probably based on animacy categories. -for Uto-Aztecan, see Langacker (1978) and Steele (1979) for Salinan, see Mason (1918).

Other grammatical markers connect Esselen with Yuman, Uto-Aztecan and/or Chumashan.

	Esselen	<u>U-A</u>	Yuman	Chumashan
stative marker	-k(i)	-lei		
comitative- instrumental	-ma	-m		
locative	-no		-no/-mo	
continuative	-nu	-nu		
indefinitive	m(i)-	IDL-		
hortative- imperative	cili -			-IDL cili

For abbreviations, please refer to the caption of Figure 3. These traits connect Esselen with other speech communities, especially Uto-Aztecan, which was not in historical contact with Esselen. A summary of all relevant grammatical data (Figure 3) suggests that the Esselen speech community had prehistoric contact with Uto-Aztecan, Yuman and Chumashan. Both Yuman and Chumashan are members of the Hokan grouping (as is Esselen), and the similarities could be due to retention from a common ancestor. Uto-Aztecan, however, is not Hokan in affinity, and contact between Uto-Aztecan and Esselen could only be due to diffusion. See Fowler (1983) for a discussion of Uto-Aztecan homeland hypothesis, and Hale and Harris (1979) for a discussion of linguistic prehistory of Uto-Aztecan. Note that the -no/-mo locative occurs in Southern Cochimi, a language related to the Yuman group.

It is noteworthy that other central coast languages of California (Salinan, Chumashan) may also have been in contact with Uto-Aztecan in the past. Klar (1977:64-5), in a seminal work on central California prehistory, used lexical data to show contact between Chumashan and Uto-Aztecan. Further, Obispeno Chumash, the only Chumashan language not in contact with Uto-Aztecan during the historic period, has more loan words from Uto-Aztecan that it does not share with any other Chumashan language. Turner (1983:17), also using lexical data, demonstrated "ancient and long-term contact" between Salinan and Uto-Aztecan.

It is thus possible to posit a model of central California prehistory with Esselen, Salinan, and Chumashan located inland, possibly towards the Central Valley, the nearest point of contact between their historic territory (central coast) and the likely northern homeland of the Uto-Aztecan family (Death Valley to the southern portion of the Central Valley). There are not only Esselen: Uto-Aztecan grammatical comparisons in support of this model, but lexical ones as well (Figure 4). Further research on onomastics [the distribution of terms for a given referent in the languages of a given area; for example, the words for 'COYOTE' mapped

for a given culture, reanalysis to detect borrowing] in California will ultimately help to verify/text the reconstruction of linguistic areas not historically attested (such as the one proposed here), as well as highlight possible prehistoric migration patterns and aid in reconstructing the prehistory of ethnic groups in California.

DISCUSSION

The linguistic model of Esselen prehistory sketched above (largely from grammatical traits) suggests the following chronology and/or dimensions for the maximal extent of the Esselen speech community prehistorically.

1. Membership in Hokan, probably in the Central Valley.
2. Esselen may have extended to the north of the historic Esselen stronghold.
3. Esselen seems to have had contact with languages to the south and inland of its historic location.

The inference is that Esselen was located farther inland, probably in the Central Valley, and to the north of its attested location. In this section, I will suggest possible correlations of this model with archaeologically derived models.

The least plausible kind of such correlation that may be made involves remote time depths. While it is true that linguistic data may be used to infer past ethnicity, there is a practical limit on such inference. Language change generally obscures genetic connections between members of a language family beyond a depth of about 4000 years; this rule of thumb, is based on such obvious cases as Indo-European, Semitic, and Sino-Tibetan, all of which have documented histories as language families (cf. Haas 1969). Reliance on linguistic groupings whose status as language families is still highly controversial among linguists that would have existed as families at remote time depths (cf. Taylor's 1961 acceptance of Hokan and Penutian as language families) by archaeologists will not yield secure results. It is necessary to work with shallow time depths (say around 2000 years). In what follows, I will not discuss the Hokan hypothesis, but rather will focus on how the model of Esselen prehistory derived from linguistic data may be correlated with one derived from archaeological data. Note, however, that Hokan and Penutian are used by archaeologists in California to refer to distinctive archaeological culture types, each with its peculiar physical type and constellation of artifacts and traits. I use the archaeological senses of these two terms; see Breschini (1983) for further discussion of such archaeological usage.

It was suggested above that Esselen was spoken north of its historic location, that it interacted as a speech community with Ohlonean speech communities, and that it was replaced by Ohlonean speech throughout much of its original northerly territory.

In the territory concerned (San Francisco Bay southward to the Monterey area), then, one would expect sites transitional between Hokan-type cultures (which would be in the earlier strata) and Penutian-type cultures, and indeed there are such sites (Breschini 1980, 1983). At the University Village site (Gerow and Force 1968) near Palo Alto, a lower vaulted population that practiced a general foraging strategy was replaced by a larger, higher vaulted people with a specialized hunting tradition. There is some indication of mixing between these two cultures at an intermediate time depth. It should be pointed out that southern (Monterey) Ohlonean basketry was influenced by the distinctive Esselen twined type, while the basketry of historic groups belonging to the Penutian linguistic hypothesis has coiling techniques. It is also notable that Esselen-like words (for example, *ama* 'eat' and *pawis* 'arrow') are found as far north as San Francisco.

Further research that may shed light on the importance and nature of this transition includes: (a) a seriation of the known Esselen archaeological remains to provide a chronology which may be compared to materials from transitional sites, (b) careful study of Esselen linguistic domains [groups of semantically related words, such as kin, flora and fauna] that may shed light on Esselen culture history (cf. Beeler 1980, for numerals), and (c) use of the highly idiosyncratic style of Esselen basketry (Larry Dawson, Lowie Museum of Anthropology, p.c.) as an ethnic marker that can be applied to the archaeological record.

The inference that Esselen and Salinan were once adjacent to Chumashan and UtoAztecan in the southern portion of the Central Valley remains to be tested archaeologically. Testing this hypothesis may be possible linguistically through the study of vocabulary domains and archaeologically by the use of a constellation of traits associated with Esselen ethnicity, particularly the basketry.

Interaction between the Esselen and their historic neighbors is an area that could also be investigated to rule out traits due to recent diffusion as being indicators of contact at a more remote time depth. Models of demography (Randy Millikan, U.S. Forest Service, has developed a model, as has Brandhoff-Kerr 1982), land use, and settlement patterns of Esselen type may be tested by: (a) surface survey of the Esselen territory with or without excavation, (b) the extent that Esselen vocabulary for given domains matches historical or possible prehistoric neighbors, and (c) ethnohistoric research centering around the three missions where Esselen speakers were located (Carmel, Soledad, San Antonio de Padua), but from an Esselen point of view. No mission research project has been developed exclusively to Esselen ethnohistory.

FIGURE 1. A HOKAN SAMPLER

	<u>bone</u>	<u>drink</u>	<u>eat</u>
Shasta	ale	-IS:-	-a?uc'i-
Karok	?ipih	?is	?azv
Chirnariko			-ama-
Yana	ixdal? -	si:	ma-
*Pomoan	*ihya(:)	*hO?q'o (k)	*qawa-
Esselen	iya	ese,	etseam(a)
Salinan	7 axa:k	-esewe7	klam
*Yuman	*-aq, *ak	-*isi-	*ma:
	<u>fire</u>		<u>water</u>
Shasta	-a:x	7 a :wa 'wood'	? atsa
Karok	7 a:h(a)	7i:v	7e:s
Chirimaleo	hau 'tinder'	a:wa	?a:qa
Yana	7 au-	waWI	xa-
*Pomoan	*7ohxo-	*ahka	*?ahqha
Esselen	a-nax	iwa-	ase-nax
*Yuman	*7-?aw	*ava, *awa	*?-xa

Transcription follows standard Americanist usage. An asterisk (*) indicates a reconstructed or proto form.

FIGURE 2. REFERENTS OF ESSELEN:OHLONEAN SHARED FAUNAL TERMS

In (4)	<u>Birds(6)</u>	<u>Mammals(8)</u>	<u>Marine(?)</u>	<u>Reptiles(4)</u> :
ants	crow	deer	pelican	llzard 1
fly	hawk	coyotP.	salmon	lizard 2
grasshopper	hummingbird	dog	sardine	rattlesnake
mosquito	linnet	mountain lion	sea otter	salamander
	owl	cottontail	shark	
	barn owl	raccoon	swordfish	
		wildcat	whale	
		wolf		

FIGURE 3. SHARED GRAMMATICAL TRAITS

Sets with 3 + Members

Factors

Es, 0, UA, Ch	3,4,5 1,2
Es, 0, UA, Yu	7, 12
Es, 0, UA	13,14 6,17
Es, Ch, UA	
Es, UA, Yu	

Sets .with 2 Members

Factors

Es,O	1, 3 8,
Es, C~	15
Es, UA	11,16
Es, Yu	9,10

Factors:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. consonant types | 10. <u>-n V</u> locative |
| 2. consonant series | 11. similar noun class markers 12. |
| 3. vowel types | basic subject marking tactics 13. |
| 4. syllable shape | <u>mm</u> - indefmite |
| 5. penultimate stress | 14. object marker-~-verb |
| 6. SOY word order | 15. <u>cili</u> hortative/imperative |
| 7. similar noun syntagma 8. | 16. <u>-n V</u> continuative |
| <u>possessor-is-noun</u> | 17. similar stative syntagma |
| 9. -ill | |
| comitative/instrumental | |

Abbreviations include: Ch Chumashan, Es Esselen, 0 Ohlonean, Yu Yuman, UA UtoAztecan.

Note that traits (1) and (3) are equivocal; please refer to Shaul (1982a) for a fuller discussion.

UQ.,\C; ~ - y pc;	~11a	""tSIkU/"SIku (<i>lj</i> : Mn, Cr, Hch, Nah)
cold	S UuU- k	*si(p) (94a: pan-UA)
come	'iyu	*yi (97: Tep, Tr, Hch, Nah) *tu(hu)
night/dark	tuma-	(45a: pan-UA)
die	moho-	*mukV (128: pan-UA)
foot	kele	ki(ki) (89: Mn, Hp, 10, Cr, pg, ki-)
		*piti 'heavy' (223: Tb, Sr, Hp, Yq-My, Tep, Tr, Cr, Hch, Nah) *hakV 'who' (pan-UA)
large	putu	*hikai 'that one' (Tep)
that one	hVni-ki	Th. mu:sah-t
demonstradve	hegei	*tsoak (114: Tep, Hch, Nah;
hole	Imusa	Hp tsa'a-)
cry	sawa	*yampa 'edible roots' (Num)
edible seeds	Iyempa-s	*mu (179: Num, Hp, Tep, Nah) *miyi
fly gopher	IIIIII11- rux	(202: northern VA) *tuku(313: 10,
owl	mexe	Hp,Pg,CD
dog/badger	tuku	Th. -m :a:ska-, Ls -me :ska
gull	macka	Th. sa :2 ay-Ia 'white heron'
dog	sawa-ran	*tsu (137: Tep, Tarachidc,
	(h):2 ucu	Cr, Hch)

Nwnber and Abbreviaddon

Numbers and abbreviations indicate cognate set numbers in Miller (1967). The abbreviations give the distribudon within Uto-Aztecan. Abbreviaddon include Cr. Cora, Hch Huichol, Hp Hopi, Ls Luiseno, Mn Mono, My Mayo, Mah, Nahuatl (an), Num Nomic, Pg Papago, 10 Tubatalabal, Tep Tepiman subfamily, Tr Tarahumara, UA Uto-Aztecan, and Yq Yaqui. Some data has been added that is not in Miller (1967).

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