Esselen Noun Thematic Suffixes

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The Esselen language isolate has been the subject of four grammatical syntheses (Kroeber 1904, Harrington 1913, Beeler 1978, Shaul 1981). Each of these treatments has pointed out that a fair number of noun suffixes may be segmented from the attested nouns. (1) Of these suffixes, only two out of more than ten have a definite semantic characterization. However, if the noun suffixes are grouped according to phonological shape, and the groups sorted according to various features (size, sex, shape, set-type, animacy), it may be suggested that the groups have some semantic motivation based on animacy features. It is thus plausible that the Esselen noun suffixes, which do not appear to mark case in any of the surviving textlets, constituted a set of thematic or class suffixes.

The suffixes to be discussed are listed below in groups which are based on the initial consonant of each group. The formula for these suffixes is as follows: thematic consonant + (a) + (-s or -x).

-\(s\), -\(sa\), -\(sax\)
-\(\alpha\), -\(\alpha a\), -\(\alpha ax\)
-\(l\), -\(la\), -\(lax\)
-\(t\), -\(ta\)
-\(n\), -\(n\alpha\)

-\(sis\)
-\(\pi\alpha\)

The suffix -\(s\), which may apply to all the classes treated below, or the suffix -\(x\) may follow the regular formation.

(1) Kroeber (1904:63-64) lists -\(nex\), -\(s\), -\(la\), -\(sa\) and -\(\alpha a\). Harrington (1913:[5]-[6]) gives -\(m\), -\(ma\), -\(s\), -\(sa\), -\(\alpha\), -\(\alpha i\), -\(\alpha a\) and -\(\pi\alpha\) as noun suffixes. Beeler (1978:28-29) segments -\(s\), -\(nis\), -\(\pi\alpha\), -\(\pi\alpha i\), -\(\pi\alpha\alpha\), -\(\pi\alpha x\), -\(\pi\alpha k\), -\(\pi\alpha s\), -\(\pi\alpha i\), -\(l\alpha\), -\(\pi\alpha x\) and -\(\pi\alpha x\). He also lists a -\(k\), which is probably a predicating device related to the stative marker -\(k(i)\).
Both suffixes appear to semantically neutral. As Feeler (1978:28) pointed out, the suffix -pša is appended to a number of faunal terms. The suffix -pči is an agentive. The suffix -kis is apparent from only one example (Henshaw 1-si'-kis - [isi'-kis]), and will not be dealt with here.

The suffix -sis is probably a diminutive. (2)

Hen. [h派人-si] 'hip/buttock'
Pin. [wóla-sa] 'girl' (vs. Hen. [solétá]

Hen. [exe-pand-sis] 'boy' (male-child-diminutive)
Hen. [lālihé-si] 'old man'
Ar. Suta-sis Sutasis, Arroyo's Esselen consultant

It should also be noted that there may be no noun suffix on a stem (-Ø suffix).

Justification for setting up noun classes of some kind is based on two facts: (a) noun stems may fluctuate between two different classes, and (b) the meaning of a noun stem may change depending on which suffix is used with it. In the sets below, the same noun stems given have different suffixes, but the same meaning.

Hen. [xọgi-s] 'nose'
Pin. [xọge-nax] 'nose'

Hen. [amu-tas] 'star'
LaP. [amu-las] 'star'

Hen. [asà-nax] 'water'
Hen. [asà-nas] 'water'

Hen. [xeke-s] 'mountain lion'
Pin. [xeke-s-ipša] 'mountain lion'

(2) Feeler (1977) surveys the sources for Esselen. The sources quoted here are abbreviated as follows: Ar. = Arroyo de la Cuesta, Hen. = Henshaw, and Pin. = Pinart. The sources of Esselen data are found in Feeler (1978), Kroeber (1908), Heizer (1952, 1955) with some additional material in Harrington (ca. 1935) and transcripts and/or facsimiles of two text fragments in Harrington (1913) and Howard (1979). The forms are cited in Americanist conventions, interpreted phonetically. An extended discussion of Esselen phonology may be found in Shaul (1982a). The areal significance of the Esselen thematic suffixes proposed here may be found in Shaul (1982b).
In the following pairs, the suffix apparently determines the meaning of the resulting word, although the meanings of the two forms are related.

Hen., Ar.  [meði]  'grandfather'
Pin.  [meði-x]  'aunt'

Hen.  [meðka-s]  'coyote'
Pin.  [meðka-sVx]  'badger'

Pin.  [exe-sVx]  'grandfather' (vs. exe-noh 'man')

In the examples above, the differences could be dialectal. It must be noted that the examples come from different periods (early vs. late) and that some (the Arroyo de la Cuesta material) if from the eastern portion of the Esselen country, while the other material is from the western part. The examples do make it clear, however, that the noun suffixes could be functional in at least some cases.

A survey was made of the data available on Esselen nouns attested in order to delineate plausible semantic groupings that matched the groupings suggested by phonological shape of suffix. The results appear in Table I. Several interesting patterns emerge. The endings -sA and -YA are almost exclusively used with faunal terms. The putative diminutive may be applied only to terms for people and to body part terms. The suffix -nVx is exclusively inanimate, as is the -t grouping. The endings -s and -o occur with all the sampling groups. In all, only some of the groupings based on phonological shape of suffix have a semantic characterization that suggests they constitute a semantic unit or domain. Yet the groupings that do have semantic character are easily discernable.

By going from the general suffixes (-s and -Ø) to more suffixes more specific in reference, it is possible to construct a semology of Esselen noun suffixes. This is given in Table II. No organization based on sex, alienability, size or topology seems as readily apparent as one based on animacy (human, animate, inanimate).

The proposed schema may be summarized as follows. There are two general classes, zero and -s. The marker -s seems optional under some conditions and is sometimes the second member of a compound class suffix, as is -x. A [+ human] class may be distinguished by the use of the diminutive (?) suffix -si(s). The -t grouping of -sa, -Ya, and -pYa form a [+ animate] group. An exclusively [- animate] group is made up of the -t grouping and those items marked by -nVx. The -n and -l groupings are semantically ambiguous, as are the suffixes -sVx, -1Vx, and -x.
An interesting illustration of the proposed system is to be found in Esselen kinship terminology (see Table III). Nuclear family terms are in the zero class, for the most part, although 'daughter' may contain the diminutive or general class marker -s. Biological kin terms above the generation of ego may have belonged to the -x class. Affinal kin appear to have been marked by -s.

Although it may be suggested that Esselen had a noun class system based on animacy, it seems that the system was eroded at the time of contact, with some classes remaining semantically motivated. Fluctuation of morphemes between two classes with meaning differences also suggests that the system had some semantic value. (3)

(3) A number of other classes may be distinguished. For example, an old diminutive in -ci (palatalized in Esselen to -di) which is found all over the western portion of North America is found in some of the kin terms, and a few other terms ('meat', 'abalone', corpus). Another possible class ending is the suffix -wa, found in 'crayfish', 'salmon', 'swordfish' and possibly 'face'.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ATTRACTS</th>
<th>NATL. PHEN.</th>
<th>GEOGRAPHY</th>
<th>PLANA</th>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>KINSHIP</th>
<th>BODY PARTS</th>
<th>NUMERALS</th>
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TABLE I
Esselen Noun Classes
TABLE II  Esselen Noun Class Semology

NOUN CLASSES

UNMARKED
-∅
-ś

MARKED

HUMAN
-śi(s)

NON-HUMAN
-ś series (minus -nVx)
-śi series

-n

ANIMATE
-śa

INANIMATE
-ṭ

-śa ~ -Ś(a)
-nVx
### TABLE III  ESSELEN KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>English Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[meči]</td>
<td>grandfather₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[exe-sVx]</td>
<td>grandfather₂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[iapi[?]]</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[meči-x]</td>
<td>aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[tsa]</td>
<td>uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ahay]</td>
<td>father₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ma'ā]</td>
<td>father₂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[atsia]</td>
<td>mother₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[če'e]</td>
<td>mother₂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i'ītsa]</td>
<td>EGO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ĉi]</td>
<td>older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[exé-pana]</td>
<td>younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ta-pana]</td>
<td>brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[pasa]</td>
<td>sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[šilma]</td>
<td>2. boy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[šolētsa(s)]</td>
<td>2. girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[šilma]</td>
<td>son</td>
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<tr>
<td>[tutsú:]</td>
<td>niece</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Affinal kin:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>English Equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[laša'u]</td>
<td>father-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[isīkIs]</td>
<td>mother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-iwis]</td>
<td>1. brother-in-law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[-iwis]</td>
<td>2. friend₂</td>
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</table>


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PREFACE

Unfortunately, everyone who presented a paper at the 1982 Conference on Far Western American Indian Languages was not able to prepare a final version for inclusion in this volume. All the papers in this volume were presented in an earlier version at the 1982 workshop. The papers are arranged in the order they appeared on the program.

The participants of the conference gratefully acknowledge all the work done by Professor William Shipley and his students, which made the conference run so smoothly and enjoyably. We also wish to thank the Center for Syntactic Research at the University of California, Santa Cruz, for the support of the conference, without which the conference would not have been possible.

Copies of the 1977, 1978, 1980, and 1981 workshop proceedings are still available from the Department of Linguistics, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901. The volumes of the 1975 and 1976 workshops, which appeared in the SIU-C series, University Museum Studies, and of the 1979 workshop, which appeared in the OPOC series, are now out of print, but copies may be obtained in microfiche or hard bound volumes from the ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, Center for Applied Linguistics, 3250 Prospect St., N.W., Washington, DC 20007.

The 1983 Hokin Languages Workshop will meet at The University of California, San Diego, June 16-18, 1983.

James E. Redden, Editor
Carbondale, July 1983