

THE LEXICAL PHONOLOGY OF SEKANI

Sharon Hargus

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THE LEXICAL PHONOLOGY
OF SEKANI



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SHARON HARGUS

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The Lexical Phonology of Sekani

Sharon Hargus



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Preface to the Garland edition

I have made some revisions to my 1985 dissertation for this edition.

The abstract analysis proposed in the original Chapter 8 (The Strict Cycle Condition) has not stood the test of time. A reanalysis of the data presented in this chapter can be found in Hargus (to appear (a)). In addition, some of the data from Ch. 8 now appears in Chapter 1 (Sekani).

I have reorganized Chapter 2 (Lexical Phonology) in an attempt to present a better overview of the evidence for the theory. I have paid particular attention to the rather abstract theory of morphology which is assumed by most adherents of the theory.

In other chapters, I have kept changes to a minimum, only deleting or altering analyses which I no longer believe to be correct.

I would like to acknowledge here my deep appreciation for the friendship and support of my colleagues at the University of Washington: Mike Brame, Heles Contreras, Joe Emonds, Ellen Kaisse, Fritz Newmeyer, Sol Saporta, and Alice ter Meulen.



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List of Maps

Finlay-Parsnip Drainage Basin*.....2
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Northern Athabaskan Languages**.....4

* Guy Lanoue generously allowed me to reproduce these two maps from his dissertation (Lanoue 1983).

** This map was provided to me by Jim Kari.

List of Abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
4	fourth person
adv	adverbial prefix
ar	areal prefix
asp	aspectual affix
C	customary/habitual mode
clf	classifier prefix
cnj	conjugation prefix
con	conclusive aspect
cont	continuative aspect
d/du	dual
ddim	double diminutive suffix
dem	demonstrative
der	derivational prefix
dim	diminutive suffix
dst	distributive
epen	epenthetic segments
excl	exclusive
Fut	future mode
hum	human
Imp	imperfective mode
incp	inceptive prefix
loc	locative
mom	momentaneous aspect
N	noun
neg	negative affix
nom	nominalizing suffix
O	object prefix
Op	optative mode
P	postposition
p/pl	plural
per	perambulative aspect
Pf	perfective mode
Prg	progressive aspect
psd	possessed noun suffix
Psr	possessive prefix
Q	interrogative morpheme

recp	reciprocal prefix
refl	reflexive prefix
rev	reversative prefix
S	subject prefix
s/sg	singular
stm	stem-final suffix
term	terminative aspect prefix
thm	thematic (lexically specified) prefix
typ	prototypical suffix
unsp	unspecified
V	verb
vb	verbalizing suffix
voc	vocative

Acknowledgments

Many people, all indispensable in unique ways, have helped this dissertation come into existence.

The Sekani data contained in this dissertation was collected during fieldwork in McLeod Lake, B.C., from June 1982-May 1983, October 1983, and May 1984. In 1982 the McLeod Lake Indian Band generously granted me permission to study their language. For their continuing friendship, hospitality, and enthusiasm for their language, I thank Patricia and Harry Chingee, Victor and Beverly Chingee, Sam Chingee Sr., Sam Chingee Jr., Alec Chingee Sr., Gilbert Chingee, Margaret Fisher, Peter Solonas, and Josephine and Max Tylee. For their help in the translation of such crucial forms as 'we [du] habitually vomit separately,' I single out Josie Tylee, Sam Chingee Sr., and especially Peter Solonas for help above and beyond the call of duty.

Dave and Kay Wilkinson of Ft. St. James, B.C., helped me get started on my fieldwork when I first arrived in B.C., making available to me copies of their published and unpublished materials on Sekani and Carrier. Their help smoothed the way in many respects. Gerry and Sandy Cross performed the invaluable service of keeping my car running. Greg and Linda Allen and Gerry and Joan Sheanh helped me reorient myself from the land of all-night supermarkets to a rural lifestyle and real winters.

*

It would be easy for me to list the parts of my dissertation that various committee members agree or disagree with. None of my committee members is responsible for failing to bring me to my senses with regard to specific analyses. However, I gratefully acknowledge their efforts to do so: Bill Bright, Bruce Hayes, Paul Kroskrity, Pam Munro, Keren Rice, Alan Timberlake. The name of Donca Steriade would have appeared on my signature page, but for

the requirement of the UCLA Linguistics Department that all committee members be present at the defense. The reader will be grateful for Donca's generous help in weeding out preposterous earlier analyses. Other UCLA people who have contributed to this dissertation in one way or another are: Steve Anderson, George Bedell, Scott Busby, Mike Hammond, Dan Kempler, Ian Maddieson, Laurie Tuller.

I thank the Athabaskan linguistic community for their helpful comments on my earlier analyses of Sekani: Jim Collins, Ed Cook, Victor Golla, Jim Kari, Mike Krauss, Jeff Leer, Keren Rice, John Ritter, Leslie Saxon, Gill Story, Chad Thompson.

I thank Leanne Hinton and the members of the UC Berkeley Linguistics Department for welcoming me to the Survey room. (I lived in Berkeley while writing this dissertation.)

I owe a special debt to Keren Rice. A future historian might be able to reconstruct from our several hundred pages of correspondence the development of the more coherent analyses of Sekani reflected in this dissertation. Moreover, Keren's Slave grammar has helped me understand the structure of Athabaskan languages as no other other piece of writing on Athabaskan has. If other linguists find this dissertation useful and interesting, it is largely because of Keren's prior research on Athabaskan.

I am indebted to Bruce Hayes for his constant encouragement and interest, his help in improving specific analyses, and his careful, thorough reading of this dissertation. Many improvements in my presentation of analyses and general exposition have come about largely because of Bruce.

Finally, I thank Scott for being around whenever I needed moral support.

*

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Museum, Victoria; the National Museum of Man, Ottawa; the Arctic Institute of North America; the UCLA Graduate Division; the Jacobs fund of the Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, WA; the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Prince George, B.C.



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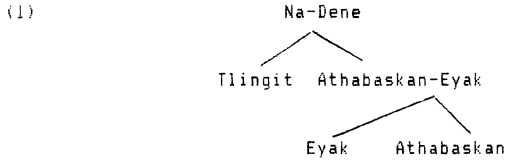
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Chapter One

Sekani

1. Introduction

Sekani is an Athabaskan language. Together with Eyak, the Athabaskan languages form one branch of the Na-Dene family of languages (Krauss and Golla 1981):



Some linguists include Haida in the Na-Dene family, but this is not generally accepted by Na-Dene scholars. See Levine (1979) and Greenberg (1987) for discussion of this controversy.

Sekani is spoken in the northern central interior of British Columbia, Canada. The territory of the Sekani-speaking peoples includes what were originally the Finlay and Parsnip River drainages of the Rocky Mountain Trench.¹ See Maps 1 and 2.²

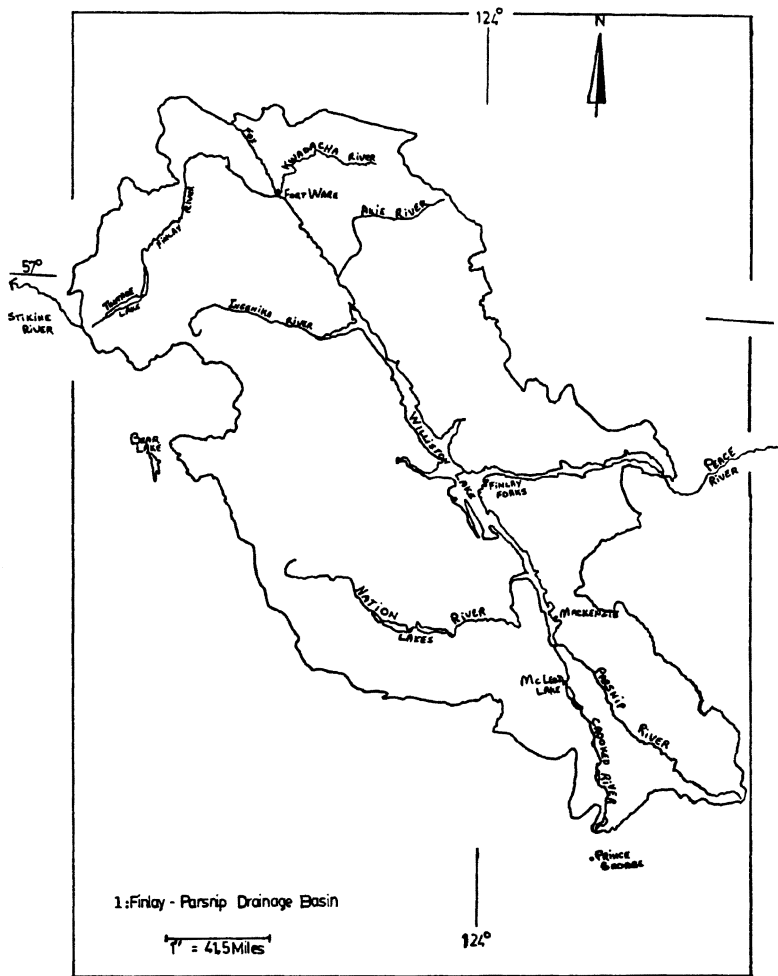
Sekani is spoken in three communities: Ft. Ware, Ingenika, and McLeod Lake. Some lexical and phonological differences between Sekani dialects are discussed in Hargus (1985, in preparation).

2. The position of Sekani within Athabaskan

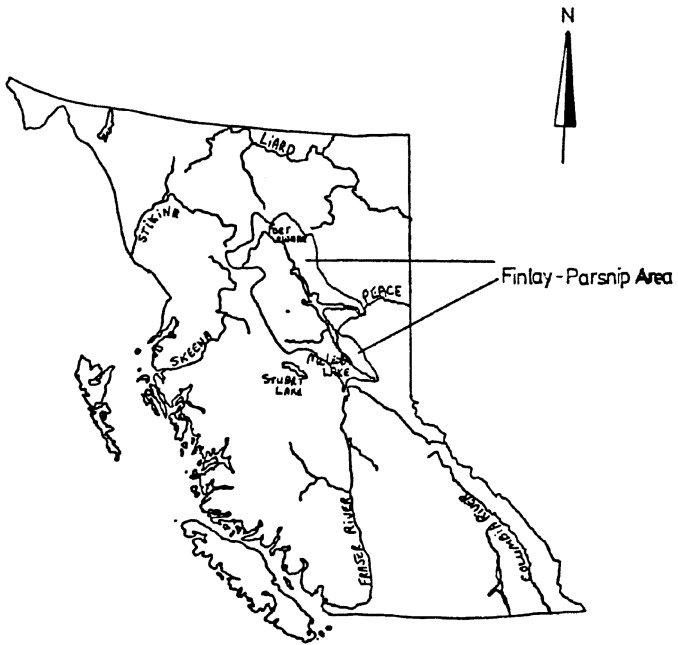
Map 3 shows the location of Sekani with respect to neighboring Athabaskan languages.³

There is abundant linguistic and historical evidence that Sekani is most closely related to Beaver within the Athabaskan family.

The impression of McLeod Lake Sekani speakers is that Beaver people speak 'our language' or 'the same language', whereas equally nearby Carrier is not



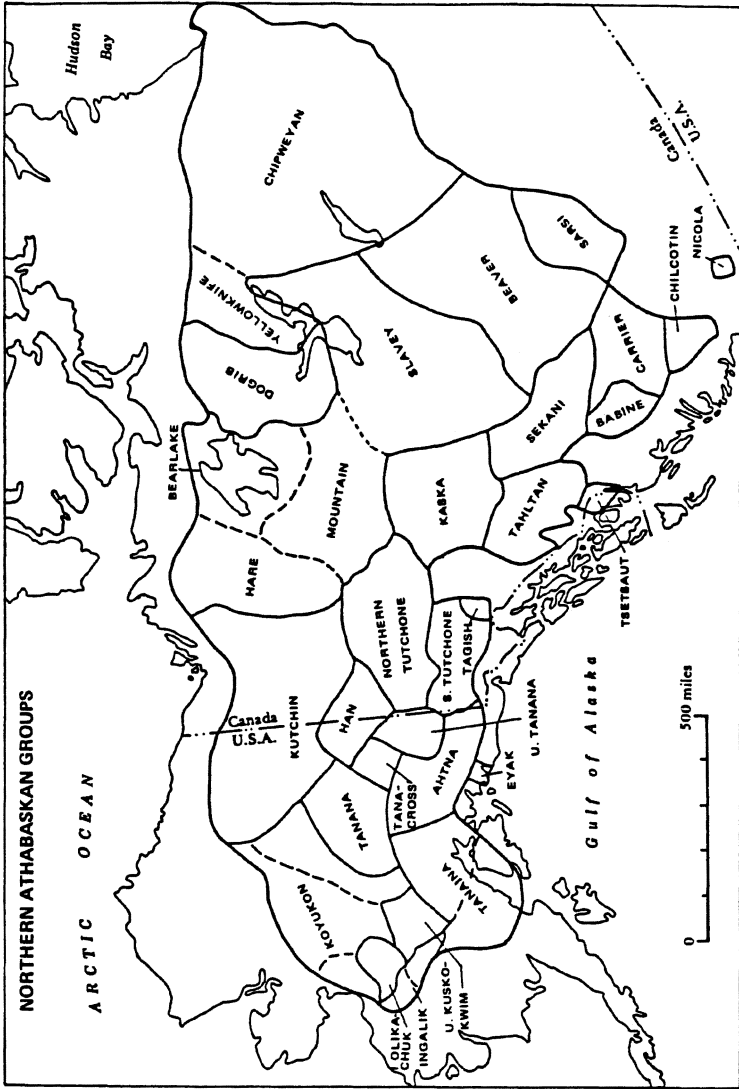
Map 1. (Lanoue 1983)



1" = 150 Miles

4: British Columbia

Map 2. (Lanoue 1983)



Map 3.

at all mutually intelligible. Research by Story (1979) and Randoja (to appear) on the Doig River and Halfway dialects of Beaver indicate that a close linguistic connection exists between Sekani and Beaver.

Harmon (1957:130, 256) suggested that the Sekanis 'are a small part of a tribe who, but a few years since, came from the east side of the Rocky Mountains...The people who are now called Si-can-nies, I suspect at no distant period, belonged to the tribe called Beaver Indians.'⁴ Records from the period of the earliest white-Sekani contacts indicate that Sekani people were forced west of the Rocky Mountains by Beaver and Cree Indians, who obtained firearms before the Sekanis did.

Although it is clear that Sekani and Beaver form a subgrouping within Athabaskan, it is less clear which other languages are closely related to Sekani-Beaver. Jenness (1937) suggested that Sekani belongs to the 'Beaver-Sarcee-Sekani branch' of the Athabaskan family. According to Denniston (1981:433), 'northern Sekani could be called Kaska'. Such statements are, of course, conjectural. As mentioned above, Sekani dialectology is poorly understood. I hope that one contribution of this dissertation will be to provide the beginnings of a better understanding of how McLeod Lake Sekani is related to other Athabaskan languages.

3. Previous studies of Sekani

Very little linguistic research on Sekani has been done, despite the relative geographic accessibility of at least the McLeod Lake community.

A list of manuscripts which contain Sekani vocabulary can be found in Parr (1974) and in Helm and Kurtz (1984). Most of these manuscripts date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some anthropological studies of the Sekanis contain lists of Sekani kinship terms; e.g., Jenness (1937), Honigman (1954), and Lanoue (1983).

In 1939, Robert Young and J.P. Harrington collected data from a Sekani woman, Makrit Dominique, at Ft. St. James, B.C. Since Dominique spoke only Central Carrier and Sekani, the interview was conducted in Central Carrier through an individual who was bilingual in Central Carrier and English. The resulting word list, Young (1939), has been regarded by most Athabaskan linguists as the most accurate source of Sekani data. However, perhaps as a result of the trilingual elicitation session, a few of the lexical items on this list more closely resemble Central Carrier than they do current McLeod Lake Sekani.⁵ The forms in (2) are representative. (The orthographic representations from which the phonetic forms in (2) have been interpreted are given below the bracketed representation. Note that [ʏ] represents a nasal vowel.)

(2)	Hargus fieldnotes	Young (1939)	Carrier Linguistic Committee (1974)
'star'	[sə̀n]	[sʊ̀m] sUm	[sə̀m] sum
'one (person)'	[ʔə̀y̯i]	[ʔi̯y̯ʊ̀n] ʔi̯y̯ʊ̀n	[ʔi̯y̯ə̀n] ilhoghun

Despite its superiority over previous materials, this list may have resulted in the incorrect attribution to Sekani of certain Central Carrier characteristics. For example, Thompson (1978) lists the human singular relative clause/ nominalizing suffix in Sekani as -Un, rather than -i (cf. Young's ʔi̯y̯ʊ̀n 'one (person)'). Similarly, Krauss and Leer (1981:67) group Sekani with Babine and Central Carrier as showing a rare reflex of Proto-Athabaskan *m as [m] in 'star'.

In the early 1960s, David and Kay Wilkinson of the Summer Institute of Linguistics did field research on Sekani in McLeod Lake and Ft. Ware. Their work resulted in an unpublished phonemic analysis (Wilkinson and Wilkinson 1965) of the McLeod Lake dialect. A practical orthography and reader

(Wilkinson and Wilkinson 1969a) and a book of bible stories (Wilkinson and Wilkinson 1969b) were developed for the Ft. Ware dialect. Despite this valuable research, however, certain aspects of Sekani have remained a mystery to the Athabaskan linguistic community. For example, Krauss and Golla (1981:72) have noted that the development of the PA vowels in Sekani is unclear, 'due to fragmentary data'.

4. The present study

The fieldwork on which the present study of Sekani is based was conducted at McLeod Lake during 1982-84. Although I refer throughout this dissertation to 'the Sekani language', it should be understood that my remarks are claimed to be true only of the language which is spoken in McLeod Lake.

At McLeod Lake there are about fourteen fluent native speakers of Sekani, ranging in age from approximately 45 to 75 years of age. (Many younger Sekani people understand spoken Sekani but do not speak it fluently.) In this study I worked with eleven of the fourteen speakers at one time or other. However, more frequently I worked with one of three particular speakers. (See Acknowledgements.)

Most of the data in this study are forms which were elicited through translation of English to Sekani. All forms have been checked with more than one speaker.

5. Surface and underlying segments

A phonetic inventory of the consonantal segments of Sekani is given in (3):

(3) Consonants

	lab	alv	alv	alv	pal	vel	lab- glot
				(lat)			vel
stops:							
voiceless unaspl	p _h	t _h	ts _h	tʃ _h	tʃ _h ^ʷ	k _h	k _w _h
voiceless aspl	p	t	ts	tʃ	tʃ ^ʷ	k	k _w
ejective		t'	ts'	tʃ'	tʃ' ^ʷ	k'	k' _w
fricatives:							
voiceless			s	ʃ	ç	x	ʷ
voiced			z	ʎ	ɣ	ɣ	ʷ
sonorants:	m	n					ʷ
						ʔ	h

[ç] and [ɣ] are true palatals, whereas [tʃ^ʷ tʃ_h^ʷ tʃ'^ʷ] are palato-alveolar. [p^h] is a rare segment, found only in loan words.

The segment [ɬ] is not a fricative, phonetically, as is [ʃ]. However, the fact that [ɬ] alternates with [ʃ], just as [s] and [z], [ç] and [ɣ], etc. do, indicates that [ɬ] is to be regarded as a fricative phonologically. See Continuant Voicing (Ch. 4, 4.3); Voicing Assimilation (Ch. 3, 3.2.1).

The segments [w̥ w̄] lack an audible velar component. However, quite apart from pattern congruity, there are reasons for regarding these segments as labio-velar, rather than labial, segments. Several rules of the phonology (w Vocalization and Diphthongization, discussed in Ch. 3, and Nasal Assimilation, discussed in Hargus (to appear (a))) treat these segments as underlyingly labio-velar.

An inventory of the vowels is given in (4):

(4)	oral:		nasal:
	i	u	ĩ
	e	ə	ẽ
	a		ã

[ã] is an abstraction away from the phones [I ə ^ i]. There is conditioned and sometimes free variation between these phones (see Hargus (to appear (b))).

All Sekani vowels are pronounced on one of two pitches:

(5) Tones

high: / low: \

There are several differences between the underlying and surface inventories of segments and tones, as will become clear in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. For now, I will simply list what I believe to be the inventory of underlying segments:

(6) Underlying segments

consonants:

p ^h	t ^h	ts ^h	tʃ ^h	tʃ ^h	k ^h	
p	t	ts	tʃ	tʃ	k	(kw ^h)
	t'	ts'	tʃ'	tʃ'	k'	
		s	ʃ	ç	x	
		z	l	y	ʎ	
m	n					?
						h

vowels:

i		u	(ɥ)
e	a	o	
	a		

5.1 Orthographic conventions

For typographical convenience, I will represent some of the segments of Sekani in a slightly modified way in the remainder of this dissertation.

Orthographic representations of the tones and vowel sequences are given in (7):

- (7) V = high tone vowel
- V = low tone vowel
- VV = vowel sequence
- VV = rising tone vowel sequence
- VV = falling tone vowel sequence

The orthographic representations of the consonants are given in (8):

(8)	b	d	dz	dl	j	g	gw
	p	t	ts	tl	ch	k	kw
		t'	ts'	tl'	ch'	k'	kw'
			s	ʃ	yh	x	wh
			z	l	y	gh	w
	m	n					ʔ
							h

As is customary in practical orthographies of Athabaskan languages, I have represented the voiceless unaspirated stops with the usual phonetic symbols for voiced stops, and the voiceless aspirated stops with the symbols for voiceless unaspirated stops. Syllable-finally, there is no three-way contrast between voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, and ejective stops and affricates, as there is syllable-initially. Instead, only phonetically voiceless unaspirated stops and affricates ([t ts tʃ tʃ k]) occur. Accordingly, I use the voiceless unaspirated phonetic symbols for the syllable-final stops and affricates: t ts tl ch k.⁶ This is summarized in (9):

(9)	phonetic	orthographic
syllable-initially	t ^h	d
	t	t
syllable-finally	t	t

Differences in syllabification result in purely orthographic alterations such as those in (9) and (10):

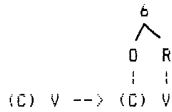
- | | | |
|-------|-------------------|--------------|
| (9a) | bat ₁ | mittens |
| (9b) | sə.bà.deʔ | 'my mittens' |
| (10a) | chok ₁ | 'frog' |
| (10b) | cho.gà.zi | 'small frog' |

Some background information about syllable structure in Sekani may prove useful in subsequent chapters. Aside from a few loan words, neither onsets nor rhymes of phonetic syllables may contain consonant clusters. I assume

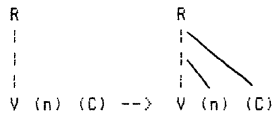
that underlying representations are devoid of syllable structure and that this is assigned by rule. Following Steriade (1982), I suggest that the syllable structure is assigned by the (universal) core syllable rule in (11a) and by the (Sekani-particular) coda rule in (11b):

(11) Syllabification rules

(a) Core syllable rule:



(b) Coda rule:



Underlyingly, Sekani rhymes may contain two post-vocalic segments, with the constraint that the first of these must be a nasal. On the surface, this nasal segment appears as nasalization of the preceding vowel (sometimes with accompanying changes in vowel quality as well) (see 5.3 below).

5.2 Labio-velars

The inventory of phonetic segments in Sekani given in (3) includes five labio-velar consonants, each of which is exemplified below:

- (12) [səgwət] 'my knee'
- (13) [dəkwəs] 'he, she coughs'
- (14) [k'wəs] 'cloud'
- (15) [nàwət] 'he, she walks fast'
- (16) [whəs] 'rose, thorn'

Labio-velars have a highly restricted distribution. They do not occur syllable-finally, unlike velars and other complex segments, such as

affricates, and they do not occur before the vowels [o u]. Labio-velars which occur before the vowels [i e a] are rare. In fact, most labio-velars occur before the vowel [ə]. Significantly, there is a corresponding gap in the distribution of velar consonants: velar consonants which precede the vowel [o] are very rare.

Alternations between velar + [o] and labio-velar + [ə] provide further evidence of a synchronic relation between [o] and [wə]. There are two contexts in which [o] occurs after a velar. (1) Velar + [o] (rather than [wə]) occurs when the segment following [o] is [ʃ], as seen in (16):

(17) /got-ʃ/ -[goʃ] 'crawl' Prog

(18) /got-ts/ -[gwəts] 'crawl' C

(2) Velar + [o] (rather than [wə]) occurs when [o] is nasal, as in (19):

(19) /gho-n-tsəgh/ [ghoʃtsəgh] 'you (sg) cry' Op

(20) /gho-tsəgh/ [wətsəgh] 'he, she cries' Op

I suggest that labio-velar segments followed by [ə] be derived from sequences of velar + /o/ by the rule of Diphthongization, stated informally in (21):

(21) o --> wə / velar ___ (C)

where C ≠ ʃ and [o] is [-nasal]

There are two slightly troublesome aspects to this analysis. First, the stem -[gəʃ] 'arm' must be marked as an exception to Diphthongization, since it contains a sequence of velar + [o] in which [o] is oral and not followed by [ʃ]. Secondly, the prefix [whə]- (first person plural object and possessor) fails to obey the blocking condition on Diphthongization:

(22) /who-nka-yə-nə-n-zən/ [whəʃkayənʒən] 'he, she wants us'

Given the rule in (21), the form *[whəʃkayənʒən] is expected. The behavior of this form indicates that the output of Diphthongization must be lexicalized in

at least this prefix.

5.3 Nasal vowels

Nearly all nasal vowels can be derived from syllable-final /Vn/ sequences by the rule of Nasalization, informally stated in (23):

(23) Vn --> Ṽ / ___ (C)] syll

Nasal vowels and [Vn] sequences are basically in complementary distribution.

For example, word-finally, generally only nasal vowels occur:

(24) [nqzɛ̃] 'skunk'

(25) [-tʃɥ̃] 'grandmother'

(26) [tlĩ] 'dog'

(27) [dətq̃] 'thick'

Nasalization regularly applies to stem-final sequences of /in en un on/. The nasal vowel [ɛ̃] is quite rare: the sequence /an/ does not occur in non-derived forms, and in derived forms, this sequence undergoes a rule of a Raising (Ch. 3, 5.2), surfacing as [q̃]. (See Hargus (to appear (a)) for more information.) Nasalization systematically fails to apply to word-final /ən/:

(28) [tən] 'ice'

(29) [sən] 'star'

The failure of Nasalization to apply to word-final /ən/ is due to the fact that word-final [ə] does not occur in an open syllable. Some instances of surface [in] occur:

(30) [dɛchin] 'stick, wooden'

(31) [yhin] 'song'

However, in these forms, the sequence [in] is phonetically [In], and is derived from /ən/. (/ə/ in a closed syllable surfaces as [I] following a palatal consonant.) There are a few stems with surface [on], which must simply be marked as exceptions to Nasalization:

(32) [-ton] 'hold [0]'

(33) [jon] 'up here'

Finally, there are at least two stems that I am aware of that must contain underlying nasal vowels:

(34) /ʔəsk'qe/ [ʔəsk'qe?] 'roe'

(35) -/chqè/ [-chqè?] 'son'

Because these stems contain prevocalic, nonalternating [ʏ], I assume that the underlying representations are as given above, rather than /ʔəsk'ùné/ and -/chuné/.

In addition to accounting for the near complementary distribution of [Vn] and [ʏ], alternations between [Vn] and [ʏ] provide further evidence for the rule of Nasalization, as will be seen throughout this dissertation.

6. Distinctive features

I provide a distinctive feature analysis of the (non-complex) segments of Sekani in (36) and (37). I have omitted the affricates, ejectives and labio-velars from the table of consonants, and the nasal vowels from the table of vowels, because they are best regarded as combinations of feature matrices.⁷

(36) Distinctive features of the vowels

	i	e	a	o	u	ə
high	+	-	-	-	+	-
back	-	-	+	+	+	+
round	-	-	-	+	+	-
low	-	-	+	-	-	-