

# THE INUIT LANGUAGE FOR QALLUNAAT TEACHERS


## LA LANGUE INUITE POUR LES ENSEIGNANTS QALLUNAAT



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### SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

- The Sounds of Inuktitut
- Inuit Language
  - The Grammar of Inuktitut
  - Bilingualism
- Use of language, including teaching and learning
- Written language




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### THE INUIT LANGUAGE



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### THE SOUNDS OF INUKTITUT




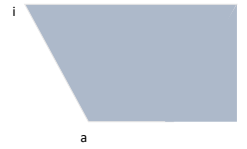

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### VOWELS IN INUKTITUT

a/aa: tongue low; lips just apart.

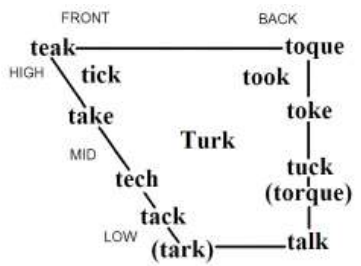
i/ii: tongue high in front of mouth; lips spread

u/uu : tongue high in back of mouth; lips rounded






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### VOWELS IN ENGLISH



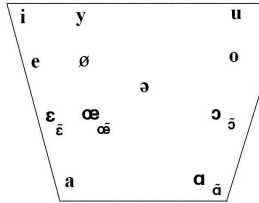
CANADIAN ENGLISH VOWELS



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## VOYELLES EN FRANÇAIS

i	image, lit, île
y	utile, sûr, gageure
e	clé, clef, manger, nez
ɛ	et, haie, près, être, j'étais
ɛ̃	main, examen, faim, brin, sein
ø	feu, bleue
œ	peur, seul
œ̃	un, brun
a	bras, femme, patte
ə	petit, je le sais
u	houx, bout
o	gros, haut, heaume, tôt
ɔ	grosse, hotte, homme
ɔ̃	bon, honte
ɑ	pâte, râle
ɑ̃	banc, tente



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## SHARED SOUNDS: INUKTITUT AND ENGLISH

Sounds shared in Inuktitut and English	Sounds not shared
/p, t, k, v, s, y, m, n, ng, l, /	Inuktitut only /q, r, g/
	English only /b, d, f, z, th, sh, zh, ch, j- dge, r, w, h, g (go etc) /

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## SONS PARTAGÉS : INUKTITUT ET FRANÇAIS

Sons partagés en Inuktitut et en français	Sons non partagés
/p, t, k, v, s, y, m, n, ng, l, r/	Inuktitut seulement /q, « g » /
	Français seulement /b, d, f, z, ch, j (ji), w, g (ga) /

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## WORD/SYLLABLE CONSTRAINTS

Inuktitut has strict rules about which sounds can be used where:

- Only vowels (a, i, u) and the consonants /p, t, k, q, s, m, n/ can start a word
- Only vowels and the consonants /p, t, q, k/ can end a word.
- The consonants /g, v, y, ng, r, l, / can only be used in the middle of words
- Consonants are never grouped together at the beginning or end of words. (e.g. bl, sp, ts)

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Inuit students learning English/French may have challenges hearing the difference in words that contain non-Inuktitut vowels and consonants or that break Inuktitut word/syllable rules.

Common confusions are:

- p vs b
- t vs d
- s vs z
- f vs v

English

- sh vs s vs ch
- z vs zh vs dge

Français

- ch et s
- z et g (gi)
- gn et n

- Clusters: bl, pl, br, pr, sp, st, ps, str, etc etc
- Final sounds

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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Inuit students learning English/French may have challenges producing non-Inuktitut vowels and consonants.

Bilingual children may use a sound from one language in another language. This might be because their first language doesn't have that sound. This is normal.

e.g. **three** -> /tri/ **Four**-> /vour/

p. ex. **feu**-> /veux/ **bruit** -> /bui/

e.g. Qallunaaq talking Inuktitut **qimmiq** -> /kimmik/

Inuit names that were originally based on Qallunaaq names show this pattern.

e.g. **Elizabeth** -> Ilisapi, **Matthieu**-> masiu

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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH AND FRENCH

### Word Order:

English and French: Subject-Verb-Object e.g. Joanie eats fish; Joanie mange le poisson

Inuktitut: Subject-Object-Verb e.g. Joanie fish eats

### Subject of sentence

English and French: Subject of a sentence is required, except for commands. e.g. I eat; je mange

Inuktitut: Subject is incorporated (at the end). E.g. nirijunga NOT uvunga nirijunga



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

### Verbs

1

nirijuuq

2

nirijuuk

3+

nirijut



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

"have" concepts are expressed using affixes.

e.g. -**qaq**-  
uluqaqtunga ulu + qaq + tunga I have an ulu

e.g. -**lik**  
piarialik= piaraq + lik s/he has a child



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

Yes/No Questions are made by using different affixes, not by adding extra words such as "do, can, may", "est-ce que", or inverting the subject and verb.

e.g. **Nirijuuq**. He is eating. Il mange

**niriva?** Is he eating? Est-ce-qu'il mange? Mange-t-il?

uluqaqqit = ulu + qaq + qit? Do you have an ulu?



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

### Pronouns

English and French: difference made between male and female (and neuter) he/she/it, il/elle

Inuktitut: same form used for both he, she, it



Nirijuuq.



Nirijuuq.



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

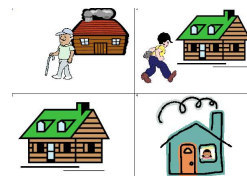
### Prepositions

Concepts such as "to, in, from, through" are expressed through affixes.

-**mit** e.g. illumi, from the house

-**mut** e.g. illumut, to the house

-**mi** e.g. Illumi in the house



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

### Articles

English and French: use small words such as 'a' 'the' 'un/une/le/la/les' to introduce nouns  
Inuktitut: no articles used.

### Gender of nouns

French: nouns are masculin or féminin.  
Inuktitut: nouns have no gender



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

### Negatives

English and French: use extra words such as "not", ne/pas,  
Inuktitut: uses affixes.

The affixes **-nngit-**

e.g. taqajunga- I am tired

taqanngittunga = **taqa** + **nngit** + **tunga** I am not tired



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## DIFFERENCES WITH ENGLISH-FRENCH

Conjunctions- words that join words and sentences such and/while/as/because, are typically expressed as affixes.

- Pisulauqtunga nirisunga. *I walked as I ate.*
- Atuarsisunga sinisinalaurtungu *While I was reading, I fell asleep.*
- Anisijugut taqagatta *We are leaving because we are tired*



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## BILINGUALISM IN NUNAVIK



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## BILINGUALISM

Jim Cummins suggests two stages:

- 1. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills** - ---talking to friends, to family, to people in grocery stores - language used in everyday life. May take 1-2 years to learn.



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## SEQUENTIAL BILINGUALISM

### 2. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Classroom language is the skill needed to understand teacher's instructions, to read text books and to learn terms and concepts. This level of bilingualism is needed to cope with the academic demands in school and may take between 5-7 years to learn.



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## BILINGUALISM IN NUNAVIK

Research in schools in Nunavik by Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, McGill and Laval University into the effects of education in English and French on Inuit students

Children in an Arctic community were tested in English, French and Inuktitut at the beginning and end of each of the first 3 school years.

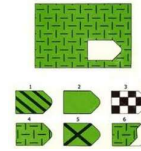
At the time, students in this community had the choice of schooling in Inuktitut, French or English from Kindergarten on.



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## RESULTS: NON-VERBAL INTELLIGENCE

Inuit children's scores were higher than the U.S. norms and comparable with data for Qallunaat children in southern Quebec.



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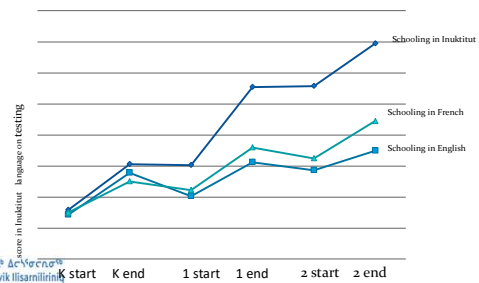
## RESULTS: LANGUAGE SKILLS

- Conversational language:
  - Inuit children improved in their conversational skills in Inuktitut and the second language no matter which language they were educated in.
- Academic language:
  - Only Inuit children educated in Inuktitut had strong academic language skills at the end of Grade 2.
  - Those educated in English and French did not have strong enough Inuktitut to allow them to use it for academic work. They had some academic language skills in English/French but the level was much weaker than those educated in Inuktitut.



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## ACADEMIC LANGUAGE SKILLS



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## RESULTS: SELF-ESTEEM/IDENTITY

- Inuit children educated in Inuktitut showed
- a substantial increase in their personal self-esteem, while those educated in a 2nd language did not.
  - a positive regard for Inuit, whereas English or French instruction was associated with preference for the qaluunaat children



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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Value Inuktitut in your classroom and in the community
- Learn Inuktitut yourself
- Participate in community activities
- Be aware of the second language level of your students and what teaching techniques work best at that level
- Read up about teaching English/French language learners



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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Slow down your speaking rate
- Use short, simple sentences
- Use simplified vocabulary
- Avoid idioms and figurative language.
- Use visual cues; gestures, demonstrations, pictures, written words, charts
- Use choices to help with answering



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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Every class is a language class

- Teach oral language explicitly
  - Nouns
  - Verbs
- Abstract concepts – Gym class perfect for teaching these
  - Adjectives- tall, short,
  - Prepositions- in front, behind, between, beside, among
- Academic words such as “analyze, compare, notice, however, while, instead” that often get forgotten
- Foster oral language in the class
  - Use poems, chants, raps, songs
  - Ask open ended questions
  - Use small group discussions.



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## USE OF LANGUAGE



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## NON-VERBAL ASPECTS

- Yes/no
- Eye Contact
- Timing in conversations/Pause time
- Greetings including handshakes



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## BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

A few examples from Van Kleeck (2006); Crago

Euro-Canadian values and beliefs	Traditional Inuit perspectives
Talkativeness valued	Silence seen as a mark of intelligence, respect, agreement and understanding
Children’s displays of knowledge is encouraged (e.g. what’s this?; “show me the red one”)	Displays of knowledge “e.g. show me your nose etc” rare.
Questioning and initiating conversation by children valued	Asking questions actively discouraged
One to one between child/adult interactions common	Children should not participate in adult conversations; they should just enjoy childhood
Politeness routines (please, thank you) are important	No word for “please” in Inuktitut. No need to say “thank you” for small things.

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## CULTURE CLASH

Inuk: “ these Qaluunaat teachers never seem to learn that well-raised Inuit children should not talk in class. They should be learning by looking and listening.”

Qalluunaq teacher: “The kids are coming right along in most schools. They are starting to speak up now. They are less shy. It’s great.”

### Parent-teacher interview

Qalluunaq teacher: “your son is talking well in class. He is speaking up a lot”

Inuk parent: “I’m sorry.”



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## CULTURE CLASH

### A student observation:

Martha Crago (a Qaluunaaq SLP and academic)'s opinion :  
"very bright and very verbal boy".

Inuit Special education counsellor and teacher's opinion:  
"Do you think he might have a learning problem? Some of these children who do not have such high intelligence have trouble stopping themselves. They don't know when to stop talking"



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## BELIEFS ABOUT LEARNING/TEACHING

A few examples, in part from Van Kleeck (2006), Eriks-Brophy and Crago: 1993, 1997

Euro-Canadian values and beliefs	Traditional Inuit Perspectives
Learning by listening to instruction	Learning by watching and observing.
Copying from others is cheating	Watching and copying from peers/adults is a good way to learn.
Making mistakes is alright and is part of learning	Should wait to do activities until you are competent and confident.
Individuality and individualism highly valued : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hands up routines and calling on individual students</li> <li>Evaluation of individual students' responses as correct/incorrect</li> </ul>	The group and group goals/cohesion are highly valued: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No hands up routine and instead call on class to answer together</li> <li>Avoided directly evaluating student responses as correct/incorrect: no negative evaluations; "encouraging talk" rather than overt praise.</li> </ul>

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## INUIT LEARNING AND TEACHING:

Betsy Annahatak, an Inuk educator from Kangirsuk, Nunavik reflected in her Master's thesis.

- "Inuit who observe and listen well make fewer mistakes than those who are less attentive".
- Inuit parents and elders use an indirect style of teaching. They guide and coach people to maturity, asking them to think about the longterm rather than bossing or ordering them in short-term.
- Learners are given autonomy: allowed to learn what they want, when they want and are ready.



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## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- Be aware of your own cultural baggage and expectations, including ideas about communication, teaching and learning
- Be willing to learn and accept that other cultures have different world views and different approaches.
- Watch, observe and learn from Inuit teachers and staff. Make relationships with Inuit who can help guide you.



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## WRITTEN LANGUAGE



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## INKTITUT AND ENGLISH/FRENCH WRITTEN LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

### Written Inuktitut is

- written at the Syllabic level using Syllabics
- Entirely regular and phonetic

### Written English/French is

- written at Sound level using Letters
- Contain multiple exceptions and irregular forms.

ᓄᓕᓂᓂ	seal	phoque
ᓄᓂᓂᓂ	polar bear	ours polaire



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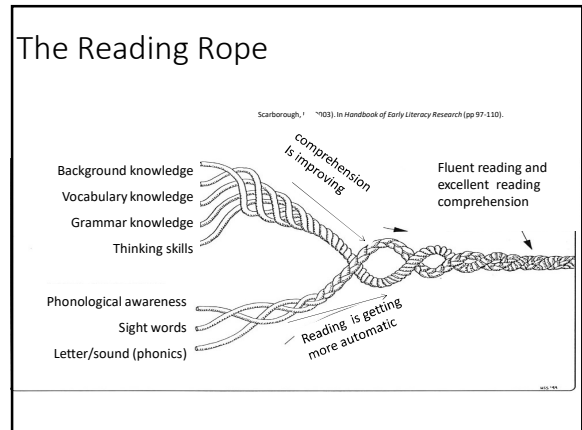


▽	ai	△	i	▷	u	◁	a
∇	pai	△	pi	>	pu	<	pa
U	tai	∩	ti	⌋	tu	⌈	ta
9	kai	ρ	ki	∂	ku	∂	ka
7	gai	∩	gi	∂	gu	∂	ga
7	mai	∩	mi	∂	mu	∂	ma
∩	nai	∩	ni	∩	nu	∩	na
∩	sai	∩	si	∩	su	∩	sa
∩	lai	∩	li	∩	lu	∩	la
4	yai	∩	yi	∩	yu	∩	ya
∇	vai	△	vi	>	vu	<	va
∩	rai	∩	ri	∩	ru	∩	ra
9	qai	ρ	qi	∂	qu	∂	qa
7	ngai	∩	ngi	∂	ngu	∂	nga

**Consonant**  
P shape =/k/  
L shape =/m/

**Vowel**  
↓ direction =/ai/  
↑ direction =/i/  
→ direction =/u/  
← direction =/a/

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## READING ROPE: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Inuit students learning in English/French come from a different literacy background:

- Second Language oral language skills (vocabulary, grammar, background knowledge)
- Few children's books in Inuktitut (background knowledge)
- Reading in Inuktitut emphasizes sight word strategy
- Inuktitut in syllabics vs English/French in letters
- Phonological Awareness experience-
  - No rhyming, little alliteration in Inuktitut.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Siasi Clunas, Mary Cain, Rosie Etok, Eva Inukpuk, Daisy Tukkiapiik, Soré Moller, Betsy Annahatak, Lena Ipeelee, Meeka Kakudluk, and the many Inuit who have helped learn more about the Inuit language and culture.

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## GOOD SOURCES AND RESOURCES ABOUT INUKTITUT

- Louis-Jacques Dorais (2010) The Language of the Inuit: McGill-Queen's Press
- [www.tusaalanga.ca](http://www.tusaalanga.ca): well-thought lessons in Inuktitut; different dialects available.
- Mick Mallon and Alexina Kublu: Introductory Inuktitut, Intermediate Inuktitut etc

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