

Strengthening the Bench: Improving Existing Language Skills in Nunatsiavut¹

Alana Johns and Marina Sherkina-Lieber, University of Toronto

1. Inuttitut in Nunatsiavut

The people of Nunatsiavut are the Labrador Inuit who consist of Inuit and people descending from Kallunângajuit/Settlers, descendants of English immigrants (mostly male) who through marriage with Inuit established parallel communities alongside the Inuit.² The Inuit are from various areas in the region, which include currently settled communities in Nunatsiavut and also northern communities which were required to resettle by the provincial government. The identity issues within the overall group in Nunatsiavut are difficult for outsiders to understand, but use of the language is a clear marker of knowledge and commitment to Inuit culture and conventions of interaction.

In the 2006 Census, Statistics Canada reports that of the Nunatsiavut people 15 and older in 2006 who identified as Inuit, 85% reported being able to speak or understand their Aboriginal language. Of this group, 49% reported being able to speak with effort a few words and 49% reported being able to speak very well or relatively well. The number of those who speak only a little with effort is very high in contrast with Inuit Nunangat/Nunaa (the Inuit area in Canada), where only 14% of the entire group reported being able to speak only a few words. At the same time, 76% of those who identified as Inuit in Nunatsiavut reported that they considered the “importance to keep, learn or re-learn an Aboriginal language” as very important and 16% considered it somewhat important.³

Current statistics on the status of Aboriginal languages in Canada cannot be entirely relied upon to give a precise picture, as we remain unsure about respondents’ reporting on use of the language, and do not know how many members of the people of Nunatsiavut identified as Inuit in the Census. These figures, however, are in line with impressions given on numerous visits to Nunatsiavut which indicate that a) the ability to speak the language is restricted to mostly Inuit who are 40 or older, b) there are many people who speak a little or who understand quite well but do not speak, and c) there are many people who do not understand Inuttitut or speak it, with the exception of a few words which have been borrowed into English, and d) that there is overall, but

¹ Thanks to Derek Denis and Alex D’Arcy for advice on equipment for the transcription workshop.

² See Sammons 1985 Chapter IV for a description of a different history of White/Inuit cohabitation in Kangiqliniq (Rankin Inlet).

³ On issues in Inuit identity, see Ben-Dor (1966) and Dorais and Sammons (2002).

not entirely, a sense of general identity with and support for the language. Without doubt, Nunatsiavut is one of the areas of Inuit Nunangat which is showing language loss. For this reason, there have been and are many ongoing efforts by the people of Nunatsiavut to reverse the ongoing language shift.

Labrador Inuit have over the years been very active in producing language materials. Jeddore (1976) was one of the first dictionaries produced entirely by Inuit. This was followed by the more recent dictionary Andersen, Kalleo and Watts (2007). That same year the Rosetta Stone Inuttit language learning software was released. Literature recently produced in the language includes Murphy et al. (2007), a children's naming book and Unikkâlautta!, the product of a storytelling festival. A major goal underway over the last few years is the development of an adult second language curriculum for second language learners through the Torngâsok Cultural Centre (see Gatbonton, et al. 2010), and this has already produced a pilot version. The Inuttit language curriculum in the public schools grows more sophisticated every year, and there is an annual Speak-Off competition with prizes for all Nunatsiavut communities, highlighting the best young Inuttit speakers. One of the most promising initiatives was the Inuaggualuit Language Nest in Hopedale, which has struggled with licensing regulations and financial hurdles.

Andersen (2009) is a detailed study of language use within Nain, Nunatsiavut. Results of this study showed that many people have a higher ability in understanding Inuttit than speaking it. Andersen notes that Mazurkewich (1991) reported that children responded in English to both English and Inuttit interviewers during studies on language use in 1989. This issue was also mentioned in Johns and Mazurkewich (2001).

We believe that a new thrust is needed for those who have already acquired significant Inuttit language skills but, for some reason, are not developing them. In this paper we will address two issues within this complex situation. One is the issue of receptive bilinguals (RBs), people who have an ability to understand Inuttit but do not speak it. The other issue we will address is the need for more literature in Inuttit. Both of these topics are highly relevant to the current language situation in Nunatsiavut and both have relevance for linguistic research as well. There is no single solution to reversing language shift and our goal is simply to continue the investigation and discussion of some of the factors that are involved.

2. Receptive Bilinguals: What they know and do not know about Inuttit

Sherkina-Lieber (2011) did a study in Nain in which the nature of receptive bilinguals' knowledge of Inuttitut was assessed. Since receptive bilinguals typically do not produce utterances, their knowledge has to be examined mainly through comprehension tests. Labrador RBs fall within the larger class of heritage speakers - people who were exposed to the target language during childhood, but ended up not fluent in it (Valdes, 2000). This is a relatively new area in acquisition (see Benmamoun, Montrul & Polinsky, 2010 for a review) and is an important area for endangered indigenous languages worldwide. The RBs in Sherkina-Lieber's study included 17 high comprehension proficiency RBs (hence HRBs), who understood most of what they heard in Inuttitut, and three low comprehension proficiency RBs (LRBs), who understood about one-quarter. They participated in a series of language tests, and their answers were compared to that of eight fluent Inuttitut-English bilinguals. While the HRB group was a continuum of Inuttitut proficiency, certain common trends were found.

2.1. Lexical knowledge

Comprehension is impossible without word knowledge. Johns & Mazurkewich (2001) report that RBs in Inuttitut language classes knew many roots. RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) were given a word translation task as a test of their receptive vocabulary. They were asked to translate 100 basic, frequently used Inuttitut nouns and verbs into English. Words that were borrowed from English (e.g. *sikitu* 'skidoo') or into English (e.g. *Kajak* 'kayak') were avoided. HRBs were able to translate, on average, 85% of these words. Even LRBs could translate almost half of the words (45%). When RBs gave an incorrect translation, the most common type of error was substituting a word with a similar meaning, such as 'spring' instead of 'summer' for *aujak*, or 'listening' instead of 'singing/praying' for *tutsiajuk*. This suggests partial knowledge of word meaning in some cases. However, overall, this task showed that RBs indeed know quite a number of words.

Interestingly, some RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) reported that for some words that they know in Inuttitut, they do not know their English equivalents. Such words are names for some local animals and plants. This is consistent with Mazurkewich's (1991) observation that residents of Nain sometimes use Inuttitut names for animals and plants when speaking English. During our visits to Nunatsiavut, we also observed that Nain residents - even non-speakers - regularly use

certain Inuttitut words in English speech. In addition to words for animals and plants, such words include names of traditional Inuit foods (*pitsik* 'dried salmon', *nikku* 'dried meat', *panitsiak* 'bannock'), other words for traditional concepts (*Kamutik* 'Inuit sled'), and even common phrases such as *namut* 'where-to' (as in 'where are you going').

2.2. Grammatical knowledge

When RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) were asked to reflect on why they did not speak Inuttitut, the most frequently named reason was difficulties with putting words together in a sentence, that is, grammar. One RB put it this way: “I know a lot of words, and I know a lot of what people are saying, but it's the little twists, little ends and beginnings. . . . I always get those wrong”, apparently, talking about functional morphemes, such as case or agreement markers. Johns & Mazurkewich (2001) also noted that RBs in Inuttitut language classes were ahead of the class in the beginning because of their lexical knowledge, but fell behind when grammar instruction started.⁴ This is typical of heritage speakers in general. Heritage speakers, even those who actually speak the heritage language, typically do not fully acquire grammatical knowledge, and even lose parts of that knowledge acquired at an earlier age (Benmamoun et al. 2010). This has been observed in heritage speakers' speech production (as errors) and comprehension (as misunderstanding or ignoring some bits of information).

Sherkina-Lieber (2011) tested RBs' grammatical knowledge in two tasks: morpheme comprehension and grammaticality judgments. In the morpheme comprehension task, the participants listened to audio-recorded sentences in Inuttitut, and then had to answer comprehension questions in English. The sentences and the questions were constructed so that if the participant does not understand the target functional morpheme, he or she cannot answer. For example, in (1), the contrast between past tenses and the near future tense is tested. If the listener does not know the near future suffix *-niaC-*,⁵ he or she would not know if the fishing event already happened in the past, or will happen in the future.

(1) iKalu-luvini-Ka-vuk kom-mi. Johnny iKalu-nnia-gia-**niat**-tuk.

4 Toni White (personal communication) says that in the pilot studies of the new curriculum, a task-based method of language teaching, some of the RBs are speaking more readily and are helping the other students.

5 We use the symbol C here to indicate that this postbase ends in a non-specified consonant. Unlike other dialects, most postbases in Labrador Inuttitut end in vowels, with the exception of tense/aspect ones. For example, the postbase *tuq* 'consume' in Baffin has the form *tu* in the Labrador dialect (e.g. *tetuvunga* 'I am drinking tea')

char-a.lot.of-have-indic.3sg river-loc Johnny char-hunt-go.to-nfut-part.3sg

'There is a lot of char in this river. Johnny will go fishing for char.'

Question: Did Johnny already go fishing, or will he go fishing soon?

Correct answer: He will go fishing soon

Some RBs gave as many correct answers as fluent bilinguals, and some gave only a few. On average, HRBs showed comprehension of most of the morphemes tested, and had the same number of correct answers as fluent bilinguals, but LRBs showed no understanding of any of these morphemes. HRBs understood subject-verb agreement in the indicative and participial moods, that is, they could answer who performed the action described in a sentence. They also showed understanding of Inuttitut lexical aspect, namely, that a verb without aspectual or tense suffixes will denote either a single event that is happening at the moment of speech, or, in the case of punctual verbs like 'fall' or 'arrive', an event that has just happened. In addition to that, they knew the two aspectual suffixes tested: pluractional/habitual *Katta* (meaning that the event occurs many times) and ingressive *liC* (which emphasizes the beginning of an event and makes punctual verbs progressive).

The only category on which HRBs did worse than fluent speakers was tense-internal distinctions⁶. In Inuttitut, tense has remoteness degrees (see Hayashi 2011 for a detailed examination of this topic in a Baffin dialect). Different suffixes are used, for example, for the same-day future (*-niaC-*) and for the distant future which takes place tomorrow or later (*-laaC-*). The same contrast exists in the past tenses. While almost all HRBs were able to distinguish whether an event happened in the past or in the future, most could not distinguish between the same-day/distant future or same-day/distant past. In fact, many seemed not even aware that a remoteness distinction could be encoded within the verb complex. When they were asked a question like "Did Mary pick berries today or on some other day?" they were puzzled, and typically said "It already happened, but she [the speaker who read the sentence] didn't say when". Thus, most HRBs have only partial knowledge of Inuttitut tense morphemes: they know whether a given tense suffix denotes past or future, but do not know the difference between same-day and remote tenses.

In the grammaticality judgment task⁷, the participants listened to pairs of sentences that

6 For more details on RBs' comprehension of tense morphemes, see Sherkina-Lieber (2011).

7 For more details, see Sherkina-Lieber, Pérez-Leroux, & Johns (2011)

differed either in one morpheme or in the order of morphemes/words and judged which sentence in the pair, if any, was bad. In most pairs, one of the sentences was ungrammatical, containing one of the following errors: missing case marker, incorrect case marker, incorrect agreement marker, or one of two morpheme order violation errors (ordering of tense and agreement+mood, and ordering of tense and negation). In (2), an example of such a pair is shown, with an incorrect number agreement between the subject and the verb in the ungrammatical sentence in (2b).

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|----------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| (2) | a. | <i>Grammatical</i> | b. | <i>Ungrammatical</i> |
| | | Sugusik sini- ju k. | | *Sugusik sini- ju it. |
| | | child sleep-part.3sg | | child sleep-part.3pl. |
| | | 'The/a child is sleeping' | | *'The/a child are sleeping' |

Most HRBs provided between 70% and 100% correct answers (average 73%). LRBs' results show no grammatical knowledge except the ordering of the final inflectional material (mood and agreement) within the word. This was the only ungrammaticality that was almost always detected by all participant groups. The agreement+mood morpheme is an obligatory morpheme that has to appear word-finally on every Inuttitut verb, and it was noticeable when it was not in the correct position even for the lowest proficiency RBs.⁸ On the other hand, a missing case marker on object nouns of antipassive verbs was much harder for HRBs to detect: only the strongest HRBs could do it more or less reliably. The other types of ungrammatical sentences were detected by HRBs roughly in 3 out of 4 cases. This suggests a certain knowledge of grammar, which is insecure, sometimes resulting in fluent-speaker-like judgments, sometimes not.

These grammar tests show that overall RBs have some grammatical knowledge of Inuttitut, but that it is distinct from the grammatical knowledge of fluent speakers. Some grammatical features are missing, such as remoteness degrees in the tense system. Knowledge of others is incomplete in a different way: RBs know the general category (e.g. they know that a noun must have case, a verb must agree, etc.) but have difficulties understanding and producing the specific morpheme appropriate to express that category in each case.

RBs' partial knowledge of grammar also is one of the main reasons, if not the main reason, for extremely low speaking ability and the tendency to avoid speaking. Heritage speakers' speech is characterized by grammatical errors, and also very slow speech rate and long pauses:

⁸ This is not a trivial piece of knowledge. Someone who does not know Inuttitut would not recognize this type of error.

they need more time to find the right words and to create phrases and sentences (Benmamoun et al. 2010). The same features were demonstrated by Inuttitut RBs in a short production task, where RBs described pictures (Sherkina-Lieber, 2011). Given what we know about RBs' grammar, we can see that these characteristics of their speech are due, to a large extent, to difficulties finding the required functional morphemes.

2.3. Phonological knowledge

Though RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) were not specifically tested on phonological knowledge, something can be inferred from the study results. In the elicited imitation task, where participants were asked to repeat long words (that equal to sentences in their English translation), most receptive bilinguals were able to repeat correctly at least one word, and usually at least the beginning (the root) of most other words. (They did not repeat suffixes correctly because of their difficulties with grammar). In line with this, during interviews, no RBs except one (who acquired Inuttitut as a teenager) mentioned difficult sounds in Inuttitut as a reason for avoiding speaking. Typically, Inuttitut was RBs' first language (either the only one or simultaneously with English), acquired in early childhood, when phonological acquisition is most successful. Another piece of evidence supporting the presence of phonological knowledge is that RBs can be trained to write down spoken Inuttitut, as it was demonstrated during a recent transcribing workshop in Labrador (see below). Given all this, perception and pronunciation of Inuttitut sounds is likely not an issue for RBs.

3. How Inuit become RB

Interviews with the participants in the study in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) show that almost all RBs started learning Inuttitut as young children, either as the only first language, or at the same time with English. Five HRBs reported that they could speak Inuttitut as young children, and did not speak English until they started school at the age of five. The rest stated that they always had only receptive competence. Thus there are two paths leading to the state of receptive bilingualism: not acquiring speaking skills, or acquiring and losing them subsequently. The former is a special case of incomplete acquisition, the latter - attrition. Both these phenomena

result from insufficient use of the heritage language, and occur all over the world where a minority language is dominated by the majority one, as in the case of many indigenous and immigrant languages. Incomplete language acquisition accompanied by attrition results in a restricted vocabulary and an incomplete grammar.

In the case of Labrador RBs, the history of the communities is also relevant. The shift to English in Labrador Inuit communities was at its peak during 1950s-60s (Johns & Mazurkewich 2001). One of the most important factors is the language of instruction at schools: prior to 1950s,⁹ Inuit children were educated in Inuttitut, while in the 50s and 60s, Inuttitut was essentially absent from the curriculum, and its use was discouraged; it returned to schools in the 1970s as a subject (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001). Teaching Inuttitut at school a few hours a week in those days, which consisted primarily of vocabulary learning, without much support outside school, did not increase the number of fluent speakers. An immersion program from kindergarten to Grade 3 appeared in 1987, but none of the participants in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) attended it. As a reflection of these changes, Inuit born before 1950s are typically fluent in Inuttitut, and those born in the 1970s or later typically have low, if any, proficiency in Inuttitut. Those born in the 1950s or 60s can be fluent, RBs, or non-speakers (Andersen, 2009; Sherkina-Lieber, 2001).

In a bilingual situation, for a young child, the most important source of language learning is family. The following picture-emerges from the interviews. Starting from the 1950s, many bilingual parents chose to speak English or mainly English to their children, apparently in order to help them to adjust to the world ruled by English, not realizing that it would prevent the children from full acquisition of Inuttitut. These children still heard family members speaking Inuttitut to each other, which helped them develop receptive competence, but without sufficient practice in speaking Inuttitut, they were not able to develop speaking skills. Children who had at least one monolingual Inuttitut-speaking parent were more likely to become speakers, but their speaking skills could have undergone attrition after increased exposure to English at school and decreased exposure to Inuttitut. This situation is termed “subtractive bilingualism” (Lambert 1975) and described as it takes place in other Inuit communities (Wright, Taylor & Macarthur 2000). This is not an inevitable scenario: its opposite, additive bilingualism, is also possible,

9 Newfoundland and Labrador joined Canada in 1949 which resulted in English assuming a dominant role in the schools (see Andersen 2009, 31).

when a child is sufficiently exposed to both languages in a supportive environment, and therefore learns both.

The situation for young Inuit who did not develop fluency in Inuttitut was in earlier times aggravated by the negative reaction of fluent speakers to grammatical errors and non-fluent Inuttitut in general, for example, laughing. Apparently, older fluent speakers expected young people to be fluent too, overlooking the fact that the young people grew up in a different linguistic environment. Some RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) reported that in recent times, the fluent speakers have become more encouraging and supportive and this has helped. The earlier situation, however, was a vicious circle: RBs avoided speaking Inuttitut because they were not good speakers, and their speaking skills became even worse because they avoided speaking Inuttitut. For some of them, fear of making a mistake and being ridiculed still keeps them from trying to speak.

4. What can be done to help RBs become fluent

Certainly, the answer seems obvious: to help RBs become fluent, they need to be taught Inuttitut. However, Inuttitut RBs are heritage speakers, and there are certain features and certain challenges specific to teaching a heritage language. Unlike second language learners, heritage speakers come to classroom with at least some pre-existing knowledge of the heritage language acquired in the early childhood, which is supposed to put them at an advantage compared to novice learners. Methods typically used for teaching second or foreign language are not always effective when teaching heritage speakers, because heritage speakers and second language learners have different needs (Kagan and Dillon 2001). Explicit grammar instruction is particularly problematic: learning grammar in class and doing exercises based on explicit language knowledge is even more difficult for heritage speakers than for second language speakers (Bowles, 2011). Heritage speakers started learning Inuttitut in a different way from second language learners - as children, through interaction with people. Methods that try to recreate, to some extent, this mode of learning - such as immersion camps and task-based learning, already in use in Nunatsiavut - are therefore expected to be effective for heritage speakers at various levels of proficiency. The teachers need to be trained in heritage language teaching, and keep up with latest research, as it is a new and rapidly developing field.

But what if someone wants to learn and cannot attend classes? A motivated and determined individual can find ways to become a fluent speaker even despite any obstacles. RBs can learn from elders or any fluent speakers in the community, in the style of the Master-Apprentice Program (Hinton, 2001). Some RBs in Sherkina-Lieber (2011) actually reported making efforts to learn more from fluent speakers. This can be as simple as trying to speak Inuttitut whenever they can, in the way they can, despite the fear of making a mistake. Other options are using the Rosetta Stone software for learning Inuttitut, and using Inuttitut on the Internet. However, using Inuttitut around town is very important even for those who learn it in class, through Rosetta Stone, Internet or any other way.

One of the important factors in language maintenance and (re)learning is speakers/learners attitude to this language - which is mostly positive in Nunatsiavut. However, good attitudes do not always result in action - learning Inuttitut, on the RBs' side, and providing a supportive environment, on the fluent speakers' side. The issue of fluent speakers' attitudes is especially important. RBs in Sherkina-Lieber's (2011) study stated that they would like to see more support and encouragement from fluent speakers, and no negative reaction to errors. They would like to have conversational partners who are ready to listen and talk to them in Inuttitut, help them find the right way of expressing their thought, and possibly correct their errors in a non-embarrassing way.

5. What can RBs do to help preserve Inuttitut

First, RBs can learn Inuttitut, and possibly become fluent speakers who can use the language, pass it to the younger generations, and participate in language revitalization activities. While there definitely are challenges, heritage speakers' knowledge “puts them years ahead of anyone studying the language from scratch” (Benmamoun et al. 2010).

But can RBs contribute to language revitalization efforts with the knowledge that they have? It depends on the type of work and the knowledge required for it. For example, RBs' vocabulary knowledge can be harnessed to help create materials for teaching Inuttitut words. Their phonological knowledge coupled with their knowledge of vocabulary and basic grammar enables them, with training, to write down spoken Inuttitut, that is, transcribe conversations and stories of elders from audio-recordings. Some Labrador heritage speakers participated in a

transcribing workshop alongside fluent speakers, as discussed in the next section.

6. On the Use of Written Inuttitut

There is lack of useful Inuttitut written materials in most, if not all, Canadian dialects. The majority of written material appears to consist of translated materials from English, a large amount of it government or commercial/industrial documents, which are not appealing to most readers of any age in any language. There are few materials in Direct Inuttitut, a term coined by Dicker, Dunbar and Johns (2009) to refer to written materials which are either a) composed directly in Inuttitut or b) transcribed oral Inuttitut. Translated material usually has a strong English flavour as the translator often, in an effort to be true to the original, will translate every single concept in the order they are presented in English, even if those concepts and that order would not normally be found in Inuttitut. This is a widespread problem across northern Canada, where a great deal of news, etc. is sourced from English.¹⁰ Yet Intermediate Inuttitut learners and RBs can improve their language through access to interesting and complex Direct Inuttitut. Literature has long served to strengthen first, as well as second language learners' vocabulary, grammar and expressiveness. The Nunavut Bilingual Education Society is addressing some of these issues through the encouragement of story publishing in Inuktitut and the Nunavut Government has an annual competition for literary Inuktitut called *Titiraliritti!* with numerous prizes.

6.1 Transcribing Workshop

In order to promote the production of more Direct Inuttitut materials, Alana Johns organized a three-day transcribing workshop in December 2011 with the cooperation of Torngâsok Cultural Centre in Nain, Labrador. The workshop consisted of five trainees, two instructors (Sybella Tuglavina and Alice Pilgrim), an elder (Mary Dicker) a linguist (Alana Johns), and a Torngâsok language specialist (Rita Andersen). Both instructors were fluent Inuttitut language professionals and experienced in transcription. The trainees ranged in abilities from fluent speakers to heritage speakers. Torngâsok hoped that the training would help augment the small number of people in

¹⁰ A speaker from Baffin reported that they prefer to read news in English for this reason.

the community with the experience and confidence to do transcribing.

The participants and instructors were all paid for their time. The first part of the workshop consisted of making sure that everyone was using the same writing system and identifying tricky issues. Not all participants were familiar with the Labrador Inuit Standardized Writing System,¹¹ especially older participants who has not been taught that orthography. This portion of the workshop was very important in bringing the group together as a team. The instructors explained not only the writing issues but also the nature of transcribing, namely, that it was important to transcribe exactly what the person said and that it could be modified later if needed. We had a previous recording of an elder speaking which participants practiced transcribing.

The afternoon section of the first day continued discussion of what transcription is, why we should do more of it and an overview of the process. Since transcription is based on audio, we discussed how one would go about getting an audio file and we discussed the recording equipment generally. Johns left a Roland CD 2-e recorder with the Torngâsok Cultural Centre and showed the group how to use it. The value of this machine is that it produces good quality sound (.wav files) and can burn CDs of the sound files directly without a computer. The participants had brought in recorders from home which consisted of mini digital recorders and an iPad, some borrowed from relatives. Johns also introduced three iPod Touches (4th generation), along with iTunes gift cards, leaving two of the ipod touches behind for community recording. The iPod Touches were loaded with two applications to aid recording and transcription. One was *iProRecorder* which is being used by sociolinguist Alex D'Arcy of the University of Victoria to make recordings in the field. Another useful app was *iHearit*, designed for musicians to record and transcribe music. We needed something that would enable the transcribers to (re)play portions of the audio file, and at times slow down the sound without distorting it. The iPod Touches are almost mini-computers on their own and we were trying to use them instead of computers, which require set up, maintenance, etc. Many people still either do not have a computer or do not have access to internet.¹² Overall, different people were comfortable with

11 This revised orthography emerged from within the school board in the 1980's. The main features are â for /aa/, e for /ii/, o for /uu/ and K for /q/.

12 There is a serious lack of wifi or internet access in Nain, which threatens to create two levels of education based on income. Those who can afford internet in the home have access to a world of information that has replaced encyclopedias, etc. versus those who don't. The community hall has wifi in principle but we found it too weak to get a signal on the ipods. In 2012 the Government of Canada ended its Community Access Program (CAP),

different equipment. The size of screen on the iPod Touch was a little hard for some eyes so it might be better to use iPads in the future. Finally we discussed working with elders, a topic with which the participants were already fairly familiar, however it brought this issue to the forefront.

The second day an elder Mary Dicker of Nain visited the group and told us a couple of interesting stories about earlier life. Everyone was eager to try their various pieces of equipment and the recording went successfully. Then the transcribing began and almost all the participants were deeply engaged immediately, with others quickly catching up. We noted that some of the younger participants appeared to enjoy the process and we surmise that this type of activity could be used to help people speak more. The instructors reviewed the transcriptions and gave feedback. One of the instructors says that the transcriptions of the younger participants were good, except that they were often not accurate on the endings, i.e. the agreement+mood complex at the rightmost of the verb mentioned in section 2.2. The transcription practice continued through the afternoon of the second day. The third day we reviewed the success of the workshop. Everyone thought it was useful but too short. It seems clear that a larger project should be undertaken. We discussed the need for more materials of this sort and also the need for preserving/archiving both the audio and written form for the future.

7. Conclusion

We have highlighted two of the major challenges for Inuttitut language revitalization: the issue of heritage speakers, including receptive bilinguals, and the lack of Direct Inuttitut materials. They both relate to the need for those who have some knowledge of Inuttitut to move to a higher stage of language production. There are many learning experiences that can lead to improved language proficiency. With determination and support heritage speakers could join the group of fluent speakers.

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