

Per Langgård:

Greenlandic for foreigners. Module 1

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A personal preface

I have made this DVD because I believe that the existing primers and courses do not deliver. Foreigners do not speak Greenlandic anywhere near real communication let alone fluently.

I believe it could be different. Greenlandic is a modern, vital language with lots of speakers and a comparatively wide selection of good dictionaries and grammar books. It simply cannot be true that the results are as meagre as they are.

It is true that Greenlandic is very different from all other languages but the fact is that typological differences add much less to the problems than the gigantic web of prejudices and negative attitudes that inevitably will destroy all good attempts.

We cannot teach us around negative attitudes but we can make such attitudinal explicit. The less than half-way understood "truth" and the misunderstandings can, on the other hand, be cured by explicit language-internal explanations and reference to what the learner knows the most, namely his own mother tongue.

Nevertheless, explicit language description has not been in high esteem in the Greenlandic L2 classroom for many years. Didactics have been heavily influenced by English L2 didactics so that focus in teaching has been on practical communication.

At first glance the idea is captivating but something is very wrong as next to noone achieves anywhere near real communication in spite of massive public and personal investments.

I am not the least in doubt that one very central element of the explanation is right at hand: Greenlandic is not English and it has never been tested in the first place whether methodology can be transferred from the English L2 classroom to the Greenlandic L2 classroom.

As you very soon will learn, I am certain that it cannot. Real communication in Greenlandic differs dramatically from real communication in English. To communicate in English L2 "all" you need to learn is a lexicon of a few thousand frequent words and idioms and start using them. Polysynthetic Greenlandic does not work that way because the Greenlandic word is a highly unstable entity that all the time will take new meanings by adding morphemes and change function by adding different endings in incomprehensible combinations. The consequence is that it is most unlikely to come across the words and idioms painstakingly acquired in the classroom in real life. What the good student repeatedly experiences are confusing encounters with words that somehow resemble known words but are incomprehensible because of new or skipped or altered bits of language in seemingly unpredictable ways.

But Greenlandic IS systematic. Just that it difficult to spot the system without a helping hand.

That is why students need concise explanations and lots of them. When they get it they are able to cope with the new challenges even questions that are a bit complicated. Good explanations do not steal away motivation, they create motivation and with that the prime parameter for L2 acquisition.

About methodology

This primer is not very methodical but two theories of acquisition play important roles¹

One is termed *The Input Hypothesis*. It says that the less a learner produces himself the fewer mistakes he will internalise. Instead of producing L2 he should instead be exposed to as much authentic but *com-*

¹ Both coined by the rather controversial but also very influential psycholinguist, Stephen Krashen.

*prehensible input*² as possible. According to the theory the passively acquired input will eventually activate once the acquired data have been sufficiently organized inside the learner's head for him to start exploiting all the "free education" that everyday communication offers.

The organization, though, creates a bigger problem in the initial stages of learning Greenlandic than in learning more related L2. It is simply more difficult to get going. The basic problem for Greenlandic L2 is accordingly rather one of getting going than one of actually learning the language.

We do not know in detail how to handle this challenge but it seems safe to accept the fact that some kind of conscious learning plays a role. This is where the other theory comes in. It is called *The Monitor* and states that one needs some kind of controlling device to break the code in the input one is exposed to in everyday life and to check one's own production. *The Monitor* is thus a sort of grammar book in a somehow expanded shape.

A word about the level of abstractions in this system: It is under all circumstances a rather abstract activity to pass the threshold of a language as different as is Greenlandic. It will be abstract independent of what method is used and independent of whether one regards oneself a good or poor learner in the theoretical aspects or whether one feels auditive or visual learning to be one's strong side. There simply is no way around the abstractions. Among the thousands of learners I have met over the years I never met one single *good language learner* who did not base major parts of the initial learning on some sort of grammatical thinking.

Therefore you will find pretty many abstract thoughts

² This - and not anything like an exhibitionistic tendency - is the reason why you will hear about our personal life stories and families in the texts to follow. What you will hear is correct information. I could not go that close on anyone else's privacy. Accordingly we write about ourselves.

on this DVD.

And then again - the concept of abstraction is different to different people. Here is one example: In the first edition of *Greenlandic for Foreigners* I used the character ŋ in derivational morphemes with an ŋ-sound as in *anaananngussasoq* ('that she will become a mother'), that analyses as /anaana-ŋŋUR-SSA+Tuq/. That was a bit too abstract for a number of students so I changed the notation of ŋŋUR to NNGUR more or less in accordance with orthography and also in accordance with formalism in the language technology program which in these years is being developed at Oqaasertassuaq since we expect the language technology to come to play a very important role also in Greenlandic L2 in the years to come.

To me NNGUR is far more abstract than ŋŋUR. The morpheme consists however it is put on paper of two identical velar nasals for which we do not have a single grapheme in Danish or Greenlandic. So in order to understand NNGUR one must first recognize the first N not to be an N rather an NG followed by another NG. Further one must recognize NG to be only one sound. After so much fuzz we end up understanding that the morpheme really is - ŋŋUR (sic!). In my opinion this whole row of thoughts needed is much more abstract than a few unaccustomed characters!

But if such compromises make life a tiny bit easier for the students I gladly accept them. It is not the DVD's purpose to advocate a certain formalism rather to get students going with Greenlandic as fast as possible.

The DVD is intended for self study. Therefore you will find many self controlling and self explaining exercises in it. They are the heart of the system and should be used again and again. But if you are lucky enough to have a teacher and a peer group it will facilitate learning a lot. The truth that *It is not good that the man should be alone* also holds true in the second language

work room. A peer group is an important motivational factor and peer group talk will increase the limited amount of *comprehensible input* you will hear in the initial stages of your learning.

Thanks

Should some of the exercises remind you about Keld Thor Pedersen's pioneer work *Grønlandsk for begynder* (MfG 1973) or Eila Hämäläinen's *Suomen harjoitusia* (5. ed. Helsinki 1989), you are most likely right. I have learnt much from such books. Should you in this connexion wonder why a brand new system like *Greenlandic for Foreigners* in part resorts to the long outdated audio-lingual approach I would like to say that I do not try to maintain that you learn Greenlandic from such exercises **alone**. But they will help you by offering you a chance to monitored practice whenever it suits you and providing you with lots of *comprehensible input* you otherwise would not have had access to.

I owe many people a debt of gratitude for their help with the book on which the present DVD is based. First and foremost my good friend, Per Rosing. Without his help many of the ideas that still are basic to the present work would never have been thought in the first place when *Grønlandsk for voksne* was published in 1997.

Last year two great students from Ilisimatusarfik's institute of language, literature and media joined the work. Tikaajaat Kristiansen and Niviaq Holm both delivered valuable independent input to the second edition of *Grønlandsk for voksne*.

I am also very grateful to the two classes in TELE who had the mixed blessing of being guinea-pigs while the system was created and tested. They were dragged through lots of inconsistencies and errors in the hand-outs but they generally accepted their fate thus providing me with lots of motivation to go on.

Producing the DVD itself has been a breath-taking experience because of two most unusual professionals. One is light setter and photographer Sami Kuokkanen who shot and edited the streams on the DVD. Sami also designed the cover as well as the print on the DVD itself.

The other is Tino Didriksen. Tino is simply the most brilliant programmer I've ever met (and I met many outstanding of the kind in my time!). He is an artist in the field in a league of his own. I am proud to have had the honour to work with him.

Also lots of thanks to Nuuk TV. It was a big surprise when they on their own initiative offered to sponsor the initial take on the DVD. I am of course happy for the sponsorship in itself but even happier for the recognition of the project implied by the sponsorship. As a matter of facts did the offer reach me in the middle of a "black hole" when I was on the edge of giving up the whole project because of time and money consumption that was just about to exceed my capacity.

But more than anyone else I owe my little son, Nuka Björn, lots of thanks and an excuse. The work with the DVD was carried out after normal office hours in the evenings and week-ends and it is funded by our private money. The DVD has thus taken lots of his father and limited the family's economic freedom very much for a rather long time. But in spite of his only 10 years of age he has been very understanding and helpful. He really is a little big man!

Per Langgård

Attention! The "mistakes" in the exercises are deliberate

Greenlandic for Foreigners draw on authentic Greenlandic with one tiny exception. Most Greenlanders will note it and will most likely try to correct it and you. The problem is seen in a few endings preceded by the derivational morpheme Vb-SSA which alters the endings slightly.

I shall, though, urge you to persevere in errors and keep on producing the said endings without the correct sound change.

The altered forms are namely found in only 5 endings out of the about 400 that can be attached after Vb-SSA. Please, observe that the exception rule accordingly does NOT work in the other 395 instances. In all these cases endings work absolutely normally.

It is a very bad idea to wet one's pants to keep warm in the Arctic but that is exactly what you will do if you do not take my advice here. It would have been easy as anything to teach you the exception right of way but I know from experience that it will block your acquisition of Vb-SSA which is absolutely indispensable with a frequency of almost 2% of all running Greenlandic words. If you acquire the 5 exceptions now you will get a hard time later not abusing them with the 395 unexceptional wordforms.

It is simply short-sighted and pedagogically unqualified to teach you a detail that doesn't even tamper recall at the price of an extremely important piece of knowledge.

You just keep on saying Vb-ssavunga and Vb-ssavoq. It is Greenlandic and you will be understood. It only sounds childish but that is a small price to pay for not tampering the morpheme.

And you will under all circumstances eventually start using the correct forms automatically once you are

ready to break the code in the every day language you will be surrounded by when you are in Greenland

Key to the exercises after the second lecture

One or two consonants?

amiisa - am mip - ammut - aperaa - appat - aput - aqagu -
aqqa - aqqalu - aqqi - aquut - aqqut - asu - assut - asuli -
ilissi - illit - illu - illukkut - illukut - ilumut - ilummut -
ima - imeq - immami - immaqa - immiini - imaani - inimut
- inneq - iput - ippoq - ipput - isi - issip

-r- or no -r-?

arnap - arnaq - an neq - arnat - arla - alla - paartoq -
paattuut - paatit - aarluk - aalluppaa - saarleq - saallugu
- sarpik - saperama - tarnup - tarneq - tanneq - ernini

t or tt or ts?

ateq - atillu - atsa - attat - atit - atsivaa - atugai -
attorpaa - ataani - oqaatsit - oqaatigaa

Key to exercise 1.4 and 3.1 plus a translation for your information

Write down the words in exercise 1.4.:

tamannalu - soorlu - tassaavoq - siulittaasuata -
taamatut - kisianni - Naalakkersuisut - tamaasa -
taamaattumik - allanut - alla - arlallit - ima - nammineq -
Nuuk - pisortaq - aatsaat - kalaallisut - tamakkerlugu -
ukiut - aammalu - pissutit - manna - ukioq - tamatuma -
innuttaasut - marluk - annertuumik - taanna - kisianni -
pillugit - saniatigut - nunaata - immikkut - imaluunniit -
oqaluttuarpoq - ukiuni - meeqqat - kiisalu - Danmarkimi
- taama - taamaattumik - kingorna - akornanni -
atatillugu - tamarmik - ilaatigut - Inatsisartut - Nuuk -
inuit - Nunatsinni - Nuummi - nutserisoq - suli - tamanna
- nunaanni - qanoq - allattoq - pillugu - oqarpoq -

Hyphenate the text on the screen

Ti-kap ti-kil-lu-aq-qu-sis-su-taa paa-sil-lu-gu na-lu-naa-ru-ti-gi-gak-ku ka-laa-li-un-ngu-at-si-ar-pu-tit, qal-lu-naat ka-laal-li-sut o-qal-lo-ri-vis-sut a-mer-lan-nge-qi-sut i-la-gin-ngik-kuk-kit. I-lin-ni-u-tin-ngu-aq man-na ka-laal-li-sut i-lin-ni-a-ler-laa-nut sa-naa-ju-voq. Ka-laal-li-sut i-lit-tut o-qa-lus-sin-naa-reer-sut pis-sar-sif-fi-gi-val-laar-na-vi-an-ngi-laar. Pro-gram qi-maan-nar-sin-naa-vat a-taa-ni kar-seeq-qa-mi o-qaa-seq 'baaj' al-lak-kuk-ku. Pik-ko-ris-sar-neq man-na mar-si-laar-ni-ar-lu-gu ma-lin-naaf-fi-ge-ru-suk-kuk-ku kar-seeq-qa-mi al-laan-nas-saa-tit 'i-nger-laq-qil-la-nga'. Qu-ja-naq so-qu-ti-gin-nil-lu-tit i-lin-ni-u-si-ar-put a-lak-ka-rak-ku.

You pressed the <I understand> button so you are most likely a Greenlander if you do not happen to be among the very few Danes with Greenlandic performance at this very advanced level. Our little primer is made for beginners. Students at your level will hardly acquaint much from it. You exit the program by giving the word 'baaj' in the communication box below. Should you want to check out the course just write 'ingerlaqqillanga' instead. Thank you for visiting our system.

Key to the exercise after the fourth lecture and a translation

Qujanaq kalaallisut oqaatsivut soqutigigakkit ilinniaru-sullugillu. Kalaalerpassuit qallunaartatta kalaallisut ilinniarnissaat pingaartittagaat iluatsitsisimasullu alutori-sarlugit.

Kalaallisut ilinniarnissavit ingerlanerani ajornartorsiutegartarnissat ilimanarluinnarpoq kalaallisulli taaguineq nalunanneqaaq aallaqqaataaniit ilitersorneqarlua-raanni.

Ilinniutinnguaq manna peqqissaartumik naammassiguk-ku kalaallisut taaguillaqqissaatit taamatullu kalaallisut ilinniaqqinnissannut patajaatsumik tunngaveqarlutit.

Sulilluarina!

Thank you for your interest in our Greenlandic language and for wanting to learn to speak it. Many Greenlanders attach much importance to our Danish countrymen's attempts to learn Greenlandic and the ones who succeed are greatly respected.

You will no doubt run into a number of problems learning the language but pronunciation is absolutely free of problems if you get a proper guidance. Working your way thoroughly through this little primer will provide you with a very good pronunciation which later on will serve you as a solid foundation for your further studies.

Enjoy your work!

Key to the structure drills after the fifth lecture

Observe a language specific problem

Derivational morphemes are always added to base forms without grammatical endings. Necessary grammatical endings will then in turn be added to the end of the newly created words. This prerequisite causes a number of seemingly weird constructions with words without useable singular. Here is first an example based on an English word:

scissors = *scissor + plural. Imagine it not being English but polysynthetic Greenlandic. In Greenlandic lots of English adjectives are not words but derivational morphemes as N+SUAQ meaning 'a big N'. Now according to the demand for base forms you would NOT be able to produce *big scissors* like this

WRONG: *scissors+SUAQ*. You will need to go

RIGHT: *scissor+SUAQ+plural

Here is a Greenlandic example. The place name *Aasiaat* literally means 'spiders'. 'a spider' as a common noun is *aasiak* in Greenlandic whereas *Aasiak does not exist as

a proper noun. This leaves us with exactly the problem illustrated above with *scissors*. We may not add anything to existing endings so in order to add further derivation we need first to get rid of the endings. So to put N+MIU on *Aasiaat* we need the byway via non existing *Aasiak giving us *Aasiak+MIU -> *Aasiammiu* 'an inhabitant of Aasiaat'

Use N+MIU and get acquainted to the sound changes

Observe in the present and in the next exercise that the seven place names marked with asterisk are unusable as such. They are constructed singular of nouns that can only be used in the plural.

<i>Nanortalik</i>	<i>Nanortalimmiu</i>
<i>Narsaq</i>	<i>Narsarmiu</i>
<i>Qaqortoq</i>	<i>Qaqortormiu</i>
* <i>Ivittooq</i>	<i>Ivittoormiu</i>
* <i>Paamioq</i>	<i>Paamiormiu</i>
<i>Nuuk</i>	<i>Nuummiu</i>
<i>Maniitsoq</i>	<i>Maniitsormiu</i>
* <i>Sisimioq</i>	<i>Sisimiormiu</i>
<i>Kangaatsiaq</i>	<i>Kangaatsiarmiu</i>
* <i>Aasiak</i>	<i>Aasiammiu</i>
* <i>Qasigiannguaq</i>	<i>Qasigiannguarmiu</i>
* <i>Iluliaq</i>	<i>Iluliarmiu</i>
<i>Qeqertarsuaq</i>	<i>Qeqertarsuarmiu</i>
<i>Uummannaq</i>	<i>Uummannarmiu</i>
<i>Upernavik</i>	<i>Upernavimmiu</i>
<i>Avanersuaq</i>	<i>Avanersuarmiu</i>
<i>Tasiilaq</i>	<i>Tasiilarmiu</i>
* <i>Illoqqortoormioq</i>	<i>Illoqqortoormiormiu</i>

Use N+MIU-U{+vunga} and get acquainted to the sound changes and the long words

Nanortalik	Nanortalimmiuuvunga
Narsaq	Narsarmiuuvunga
Qaqortoq	Qaqortormiuuvunga
*Ivittoq	Ivittoormiuuvunga
*Paamioq	Paamiormiuuvunga
Nuuk	Nuummiuuvunga
Maniitsoq	Maniitsormiuuvunga
*Sisimioq	Sisimiormiuuvunga
Kangaatsiaq	Kangaatsiarmiuuvunga
*Aasiak	Aasiammiuuvunga
*Qasigiannguaq	Qasigiannguarmiuuvunga
*Iluliaq	Iluliarmiuuvunga
Qeqertarsuaq	Qeqertarsuarmiuuvunga
Uummannaq	Uummannarmiuuvunga
Upernavik	Upernavimmiuuvunga
Avanersuaq	Avanersuarmiuuvunga
Tasiilaq	Tasiilarmiuuvunga
*Illoqqortoormioq	Illoqqortoormiormiuuvunga

Use N{-mi} and get acquainted to the sound changes

Narsaq	Narsami
Qaqortoq	Qaqortumi
Maniitsoq	Maniitsumi
Kangaatsiaq	Kangaatsiami
Uummannaq	Uummannami
Tasiilaq	Tasiilami

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