

Language course - chapter 1

The prerequisite for a flying start: (i) A good pronunciation, (ii) a good pronunciation, and not least (iii) a good pronunciation

- **Motivation and real communication** are no doubt the most essential acquisition factors of all. An acceptable pronunciation is a must for real communication and real communication is a must for motivation. That is the reason for the categorical heading.

First step

I presuppose that you by now master the Greenlandic sounds and that you have - at least theoretically - some kind of understanding for the prosodic elements of spoken Greenlandic. Should you feel the slightest uneasy about specific sounds and combinations of sounds you have to keep on practicing. It is good training for you to make a habit of reproducing all kind of Greenlandic you come across and it is useful to sing Greenlandic songs since the melody will support your pronunciation considerably. In this phase it doesn't really matter whether you understand what you are saying or not. Note the word 'reproduce'. Do not try to produce Greenlandic words and sentences yourself in these initial stages of the acquisition process. You will no doubt produce harmful mistakes which are highly harmful because you will remember your own wrong wordings and later on have a painful time unlearning the mistakes. So the heading for all learning in the initial stages is: Production bad, reproduction good!

Words and morphemes

Learn the following words, morphemes, and endings by heart. Remember that first step ALWAYS must be reproductive, not productive. Accordingly, you must learn the words in the direction from Greenlandic to English and do remember to pronounce the words aloud

<i>aamma</i>	also
<i>akisooq</i>	expensive
<i>ateq</i>	a name
<i>ateqar-</i>	to have a name, to be called
<i>illu</i>	a house
<i>ilinniartip-</i>	to teach someone
<i>kalaaleq - *kalaa(l)liq</i>	a Greenlander
<i>kalaallisut</i>	in Greenlandic
<i>najugaq - *najug(k)aq</i>	a dwelling
<i>najugaqar-</i>	to live
<i>nuliaq</i>	a wife
<i>qallunaaq</i>	a Dane
<i>suli-</i>	to work
<i>taanna</i>	he/ she/ it (earlier mentioned)
<i>uanga</i>	I

Derivational morphemes

In the lists of derivational morphemes and endings hereunder 'N' and 'Vb' means 'noun' and 'verb'

N+MIU	an N-"dweller"
N-QAR	to have N
Vb-SSA	to Vb-e future
N-U	to be N

Inflectional morphemes

N{+ga}	my N
N{±mi}	'in/ on N' (locative case)
N{±mik}	'with N' (instrumental case)
Vb{+vassi}	indicative 1.singular-2.plural 'I -> you'
Vb{+vuŋa}	indicative 1.singular 'I'
Vb{+vuq}	indicative 3.singular 'he/ she/ it'

Clitics

+LI	but
+LU	and

Listen - understand - repeat

Here comes the first 'listen-understand-repeat' text. In the text book you will find lots of them. Use the texts according to the heading and try as hard as you can NOT to read it but listen to it again and again until you fully grasp it through your ears. Proceed like this:

1. Listen carefully and make sure you understand all the words.
2. Write them on paper.
3. Check with the text book that your transcript is correct.
4. Make sure that you fully understand not only the single words but also how they are made.
5. Run the text again and repeat it sentence by sentence.

Hej, uanga Per Langgârdimik ateqarpunga. Kalaallisut ilinniartissavassi.

Uanga Esbjergimiuuvunga. Finlandimi najugaqarpunga Nuummili sulivunga.

Aamma nuliara qallunaajuvoq. Taanna Gentoftemiuvoq.

Hej, uanga Tikamik ateqarpunga. Kalaaliuvunga. Aamma uanga kalaallisut ilinniartissavassi.

Nuummiuvunga Nuummilu najugaqarpunga.

A bit of theory

The plus sign before derivational morphemes as in +MIU and inflectional morphemes as in {+vuq} means that the morphemes are **additive**. They are simply added to the preceding part of the word. The minus sign as in -SSA and -QAR means that the morphemes are **truncative**. Such morphemes delete a preceding consonant whenever applicable. That is why *Qaqortoq*+MIU turns into *Qaqortormiu* whereas *Qaqortoq*-U{+vuq} turns *Qaqortuuvuq*.

± tells us that things are a bit more complicated as with {±mi}. In this case it is not the inflectional morphemes that decides the behaviour but the type of stem before that decides whether the consonant will be deleted or not.

The first sound rules

Greenlandic is a polysynthetic language. This means that lots of morphemes add together to form new and rather long words all the time and that such piecing together of words can and will happen several times in almost every single word you come across in real communication. Because of this behaviour it is absolutely mandatory for you to learn to cope with the sound changes that take place where the morphemes are added to the stem. Without it you will never learn this language. Trust me! The sound rules are nothing but the very DNA of the Greenlandic language.

You will already here in the introductory chapter need to conquer 4 sound rules to understand the processes at work in the little piece of text and in the exercises.

V ⇒ open / __ [qr]: This rule states that any vowel will be lowered before /q/ or /r/. In this position any /a/ will be pronounced like /a/ in 'hard' (as opposed to /a/ in 'hat'), /i/ will become an [ɛ]-sound that is written with the letter *e* (no exact match in English but somewhere in the area of 'herd' as opposed to 'hear'), and /u/ will become an [ɔ]-sound written with the letter *o* (almost like English 'awesome'):

/suli+vuŋa/ ⇒ *sulivunga* 'I work' vs. /suli+vuq/ ⇒ *sulivoq* 'he works'

/atiq-U+vuq/ ⇒ *atiuvoq* 'it is a name' vs. /atiq-QAR+vuq/ ⇒ *ateqarpoq* 'he is called'

C₁C₂ ⇒ C₂C₂: The rule says that there is total regressive consonant assimilation in Greenlandic. This means that whenever two consonants meet they will without any exception come out as the latter two times.

/Nuuk+mi/ ⇒ *Nuummi* 'in Nuuk'

/Upirnavik+MIU/ ⇒ *Upernavimmiu* 'a citizen of Upernavik'

Note - note - note - and do not get confused! This is true also with /r/ being the first member of a consonant cluster even though it is not reflected in orthography.

Because we need a way to signal the low vowel quality in front of the /r/ it is not possible to reflect the assimilation in writing in such cases. Take the place name *Narsaq* as an example: Because of the /r/ the /a/ must be open - 'hard' not 'hat' - but when one pronounces the word the assimilation rule of course works normally: /r/ is assimilated to the following /s/ and the word accordingly pronounced [nas.saq]. Had we reflected the assimilation in writing the word would end up wrongly as *Nassaq* pronounced [nas.saq] which means 'a broken off part of something'

qg and rg ⇒ r: Whenever /q/ or /r/ is followed by /g/ the two consonants fuse into a single /r/:

/nuliaq+ga/ ⇒ *nuliara* 'my wife'

[vlgr] ⇒ unvoiced whenever long: The last of the sound rules you need today states that whenever /v/, /l/, /g/, and /r/ double they also become voiceless. That is the reason why *rr becomes *qq*, that *gg becomes *kk*, that *ll* and *rl* is pronounced [tʃ], and that /rv/ and /vv/ becomes *rp* and *pp*.¹

/suli+vuq/ ⇒ *sulivoq* 'he works'

/atiqar+vuq/ ⇒ *ateqarpoq* 'he is called'

/ilinniartip+vassi/ ⇒ *ilinniartippassi* 'I shall teach you'

The first endings

{+vuŋa} and {+vuq} are grammatical endings telling us that the words are intransitive verbs in the indicative mood with 1. person respectively 3. person subject. That is 'I Vb' and 'he/ she/ it Vb-s'

{+vassi} tells us that the word is a transitive verb with a 1. person singular

¹ There is more to it than this simple rule. We will return to it later.

subject and a second person plural object is a transitive verb. That is 'I Vb you'.

{+ga} is a possessive ending meaning 'my N'.

{±mi} is the locative case ending for a noun that is non-inflected otherwise. It means 'in N' or 'on N'

illum ('in a house'), *kalaallimi* ('at a Greenlander'), *najukkami* ('in a home'), *Nuummumi* ('at a citizen of Nuuk')

{±mik} is the instrumental case ending. Instrumental case often corresponds to English prepositions type 'with N' but quite often it rather serves a purely grammatical function as is the case in today's text.

The tricky instrumental case

When instrumental case is used to express 'with N' or 'by means of N' it is easy to understand. But when used in contexts like *Perimik ateqarpunga* 'My name is Per' it might be a little hard to understand what it is doing there. Here is an explanation. It is unfortunately a little abstract but you'd better pay attention to it since you will have to understand one of the most crucial characteristics of the language to understand this simple phrase:

Because we have a number of derivational morphemes like N-QAR that so to say "wrap up" the noun inside a verb the language needs to develop means to add adjective-like information to the noun incorporated inside the verb. *ateq-QAR+vunga* is one and only one verb that literally means I-have-name. In this case I needed to add the piece of information that the *ateq* in question is 'Per'. It is instrumental case that tells us that *Per* is connected to the incorporated noun 'Per' and not to the verb "to-name-have". Hence we must say *Perimik ateqarpunga*.

Here is another example: 'A house' is *illu* and 'expensive' is *akisooq*. 'I have a house' is accordingly *illoqarpunga*. If I need to say that I have an expensive house I need to make *akisooq* point at the embedded/ incorporated as it is the house's price I need to say something about. We do so by means of {±mik} so 'I have an expensive house' is *Akisuumik illoqarpunga*.

Reading instructions

It is a well-known fact that acquiring Greenlandic words is quite a challenge. They do not resemble anything we know already and many pieces of information are buried inside abstract codes like hyphens, part-of-speech codes, or pluses and minuses as in the word *ilinniartip-*.

It is very hard to learn words this way.

On the other hand do we know for a fact that lots of learners who tried to cut corners and avoid the abstractions by learning surface wordforms like *ilinniartippaa*² 'she teaches him' run into serious problems letting go of the surface form and return to the stem whenever they need further derivational morphemes or other endings. Which they do all the time in a polysynthetic language. Such learners never make it to a point where Greenlandic L2 can be used for something useful.

On this voyage between Scylla and Charybdis we have decided that the learning of "dead" words that blocks word formation beyond the very first lessons is a bigger menace than the tough job to learn to accept all the

² Traditionally transitive verbs are listed with a 3. person singular subject and a 3. person singular object. Accordingly *ilinniartippaa* means 'he/ she teaches him/ her'

abstractions.

To help you we include a short manual for the work with the thousands of words you very soon will be able to combine out of a few stems plus a number of derivational morphemes plus a set of endings plus a few clitics.

Step 1: Work your way through the lists of new words and morphemes starting from the Greenlandic words in order that you will recognize them when you listen to today's text. It is OK for you to keep the lists of new words open during step 2.

Step 2: Work your way through the text and the theory chapters.

Step 3: Now you are ready to start learning the words using the manual hereunder

Step 4 (after hours of step 3 training): Work your way through the exercises. Remember all the time that good learning comes through the ears. Written words are nothing but an abstract reflexion of the spoken words and should be considered so. Use the written material only as an emergency exit whenever you get entirely lost.

Step 5: Close the word lists and listen to the text again. Repeat it aloud sentence by sentence aloud. It should be easy for you by now.

Learning words - a mandatory manual

You have to learn words concomitant with the training of the 9 general sound rules out of which you already have seen 4. There are namely almost no words in Greenlandic that will recur in the exact shape it had when you saw it first time. Words change all the time. In order to acquire Greenlandic you therefore need to learn to recognize known stems and morphemes in an infinite number of unknown combinations. Not until then can you state that you have learned a new word.

Let us start from the beginning:

aamma means 'also'. It is neither a noun (N) nor a verb (Vb) so none of today's derivational morphemes can be added to *aamma*. But the two clitics can

/aamma+LU/ \Rightarrow /aammalu/: *aammalu* means 'and also'

/aamma+LI/ \Rightarrow /aammali/: *aammali* means 'but also'

Now repeat all three words *aamma*, *aammalu* and *aammali* as well as their Danish meanings so many times that you can pronounce them fluently and have a clear understanding of their meaning.

Now you are ready for word number 2:

akisooq is 'expensive'. Like *aamma* it is neither a noun³ nor a verb so none of the derivational morphemes can be used. But the clitics can so let's do it

/akisuuq+LU/ \Rightarrow /akisuuqlu/: *akisoorlu* means 'and expensive'

/akisuuq+LI/ \Rightarrow /akisuuqli/: *akisoorli* means 'but expensive'

Repeat the three words till they come naturally and then you are ready for the next word

ateq means 'a name'. It is a noun that will accept all material that can be added to N's. In today's lesson such are the endings N{+ga}, N{±mi}, and

³ It is not entirely true: *akisooq* is actually a noun but it belongs to a class of nouns that resemble English adjectives rather much and in a number of respects deviate from other nouns.

N{±mik}

/atiq+ga/ ⇒ /atira/: *atera* 'my name'

/atiq+mi/ ⇒ /atiqmi/: *atermi* 'in the name'

/atiq+mik/ ⇒ /atiqmik/: *atermik* 'with name'

And of course the clitics can be added to all the words we just created:

/atiq+ga+lu/ ⇒ /atiralu/: *ateralu* 'and my name'

/atiq+ga+li/ ⇒ /atirali/: *aterali* 'but my name'

/atiq+mi+lu/ ⇒ /atiqmilu/: *atermilu* 'and in the name'

/atiq+mi+li/ ⇒ /atiqmili/: *atermili* 'but in the name'

/atiq+mik+lu/ ⇒ /atiqmiklu/: *atermillu* 'and with name'

/atiq+mik+li/ ⇒ /atiqmikli/: *atermilli* 'but with name'

But you are far from through for you also need to consider the three derivational morphemes that go with nouns, N+MIU, N-QAR-, and N-U-. The first form a new noun with a new meaning whereas the latter two form verbs that need verbal ending. In today's lesson we saw two such verbal ending namely Vb{+vuṇa} and Vb{+vuq}.

/atiq+MIU/ ⇒ /atiqmiu/: *atermiu* 'what resides in the name'

/atiq+MIU-mi/ ⇒ /atiqmiumi/: *atermiumi* 'in what resides in the name'

/atiq+MIU-mik/ ⇒ /atiqmiumik/: *atermiumik* 'with what resides in the name'

/atiq-QAR+vuṇa/ ⇒ /atiqarvuṇa/: *ateqarpunga* 'I have a name'

/atiq-QAR+vuq/ ⇒ /atiqarvuq/: *ateqarpoq* 'he has a name'

/atiq-U+vuṇa/ ⇒ /atiuvuṇa/: *atiuvunga* 'I am a name'⁴

/atiq-U+vuq/ ⇒ /atiuvuq/: *atiuvoq* 'it is a name'

Again, we could add clitics as well (*ateq-QAR+vuṇa+LU* ⇒ /atiqarvuṇalu/: *ateqarpungalu*).

We have thus generated 30 words that all begin with *ateq*. And that is far from the whole story for the derivational morphemes combine rather freely with each other. For instance did *ateq-QAR-* form a verb. We therefore can add morphemes that go with verbs to our newly created word to produce new words like /atiq-QAR-SSA+vuq/ ⇒ /atiqassavuq/: *ateqassavoq* 'he will be called' and one could add N-QAR and N-U to the new nouns we generated with N+MIU and combine it with the verb elaborating morphemes to generate words like /atiq+MIU-U-SSA+vuq/ ⇒ /atiqmiiussavuq/: *atermiiussavoq* 'it will be something immanent in the name'.

And we can of course put +LU and +LI after each and everyone of the words generated above.

The bottom line: You will in no time be able to generate hundreds of words out of a very limited number of elements added to any given stem. After a few dozens of such word formations with for instance the noun *ateq* you will have acquired it but it is most unlikely that you will acquire it before doing so. You must learn to grasp it in its many varying shapes.

Another important observation: Right now you are most likely highly impressed by this linguistic flexibility but at the same time close to

⁴ Ok, I admit it - it is a weird meaning, but wouldn't it be possible in a dream or a childrens' cartoon???

desperation considering the enormous amount of time you have used on one single item. How will you ever learn a language with such a strange behaviour. Do not panic! You use at the moment lots of mental energy on the sound rules. There are only 9 of them. After a few weeks you will know them by heart and soon realize that you progress many times faster than you do at the moment.

One final example. In the list of new words we had *ilinniartip*- 'to teach somebody'. It is a verb like the other ones but still in a class of its own since it is a transitive verb. This means that it only can be used with an object.

Until now you have seen only one ending of that kind, namely Vb{+vassi} ('I indicative you'). Use it on the word in the list and in all the words you can generate. In today's lesson we saw only one verb elaborating derivational morpheme namely Vb-SSA:

/ilinniartip+vassi/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartippassi/: *ilinniartippassi* 'I teach you'

/ilinniartip-SSA+vassi/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartissavassi/: *ilinniartissavassi* 'I will teach you'

/ilinniartip+vassi+lu/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartippassilu/: *ilinniartippassilu* 'and I teach you'

/ilinniartip+vassi+li/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartippassili/: *ilinniartippassili* 'but I teach you'

/ilinniartip-SSA+vassi+lu/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartissavassilu/: *ilinniartissavassilu* 'and I will teach you'

/ilinniartip-SSA+vassi+li/ \Rightarrow /ilinniartissavassili/: *ilinniartissavassili* 'but I will teach you'

A minor detail

In Greenlandic a maximum of two identical vowels can occur next to each other. So when for instance N-U is added to a stem that already contain a long vowel as in *qallunaaq-U*{+vuq}, it should turn **qallunaaavoq* with three a's because any vowel following an /a/ turns /a/ itself. This conflicts with the two vowel rule. That is why we add a little epenthetic /j/ to keep vowels apart. It does not mean anything. Hence the surface word form *qallunaaquvoq*.

Next step

You will find a rather large number of exercises on the DVD both traditional pattern practice drills that should be gone through primarily using the audio files. Do not resort to the written text until needed - that is, until you are hopelessly lost.

You will furthermore find three drills based on language technology. They should be worked through on the computer. They are created randomly so it is not possible to include a key, but you will find that the combination of mouse sensitive glossing to English plus the build-in option to ask for running machine analysis give you a very safe response to correctness and will help you far in debugging the mistakes you make.

The drills will generate hundreds and hundreds of word forms. Take the opportunity to work several hours with it. It will give you a very fast tour into the world of polysynthesis and you will soon realize that the sound rules that at first seemed an impossible task in reality was really possible.

Then you will be in a position to start learning Greenlandic for real!

Good luck