

Bilingualism and Diglossia in the Canadian Eastern Arctic

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ABSTRACT. In the Eastern Arctic the Inuktitut language is as strong as it has ever been in terms of public recognition. But there are some reasons for concern: code-switching, subtractive bilingualism, etc. This article addresses this apparent contradiction by explaining the current language situation as a linguistic conflict. The social history of the Arctic has induced a basic inequality between English, the dominant speech form, and Inuktitut. This situation, called diglossia, entails a gradual loss of the native language among the younger generations. The study of a sample of Inuit students shows that Inuktitut is still the preferred language for addressing one's parents, but it is much less so, especially in the Baffin region, with siblings and friends. It is argued that only a change in the social and political conditions of the Inuit could reverse this trend.

Key words: Inuktitut, language (Inuit), bilingualism, diglossia, Eastern Arctic

RÉSUMÉ: Dans l'Arctique de l'est, la langue des Inuit est plus forte qu'elle ne l'a jamais été, en ce qui concerne sa reconnaissance publique. Mais on a des raisons d'être inquiet: changement de code, bilinguisme soustractif, etc. Cet article essaie de comprendre cette contradiction apparente en expliquant la présente situation en termes de conflit linguistique. L'histoire sociale de l'Arctique a provoqué une inégalité foncière entre l'anglais, langue dominante, et l'inuktitut. Cette situation, appelée diglossie, entraîne une perte graduelle de la langue autochtone chez les jeunes générations. L'étude d'un échantillon d'étudiants inuit montre que si l'inuktitut est toujours la langue préférée quand on s'adresse à ses parents, il n'en est pas de même, en particulier dans la région de Baffin, avec ses frères et ses amis. Il est suggéré que seul un changement des conditions socio-politiques des Inuit pourrait renverser la vapeur.

Mots clés: inuktitut, langue (inuit), bilinguisme, diglossie, Arctique de l'est

INTRODUCTION

Students and observers of the recent social, cultural and linguistic developments among the Canadian Inuit cannot but realize that in the Eastern Arctic the native language, Inuktitut, seems to be facing a somewhat contradictory situation. On the one hand, in terms of public recognition it is as strong as it has ever been. According to the federal census of 1981, 74% of the 25 390 Canadian Inuit have Inuktitut as their mother tongue (i.e., the first language they learned and still understand) and 67% of them use it daily as their customary home language. Thus, 90% of those who still understand their first language also speak it regularly. In the Eastern Arctic, the mother tongue percentages are much higher: 82% in Keewatin, 92% in the Baffin region and 97% in arctic Quebec. Only Labrador, with some 44% of Inuit individuals having Inuktitut as their mother tongue, constitutes an exception.

Inuktitut is taught in most arctic schools. In a majority of them, it constitutes the sole teaching medium in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2. It is heard daily on radio, for up to six or seven hours, on some community stations. The Inuit Broadcasting Corporation (IBC) and Taqramiut Nipingat Inc. produce five and a half weekly hours of television programming in the native language. About three dozen bilingual Inuktitut-English periodicals, ranging from glossy magazines to locally typed and xeroxed newsletters, are regularly published in the Canadian Arctic. In fact, since the early '70s, Inuktitut has gained a quasi-official status in the North (Dorais, in press) and it is generally considered by most Inuit leaders and associations as a very important factor and symbol of aboriginal identity. Evidence of this status lies in the fact that every year, hundreds — if not thousands — of pages of administrative, technical and political information are routinely translated into Inuktitut. Moreover, Inuktitut-English simultaneous translation services are available to the members of the Northwest Territories

Legislative Assembly, as well as to the Inuit delegates to various federal, territorial or Quebec provincial committees and commissions.

On the other hand, however, there is reason to believe that the language situation is not as rosy as it may first appear. In the Eastern Arctic, a majority of the Inuit under 40 years of age are now bilingual, a very positive factor, objectively speaking, as these individuals are able to use two different linguistic codes. But when taking a closer look at how such bilingualism works, one is struck by the fact that very often the knowledge of English seems to displace, or even replace, that of the first language, rather than simply complement it. This is what linguists call subtractive bilingualism.

Any language-conscious visitor to Inuit communities may observe daily instances of this kind of bilingualism: code-switching (use of both languages within a single sentence), English conversations between Inuktitut speakers, and systematic use of English when addressing one's own children. This last type of linguistic behaviour — which seems to gain ground among young parents — is particularly inimical to Inuktitut. It risks producing a generation of unilingual English speakers or, at best, of passive bilinguals, who understand Inuktitut but do not speak it. This is exactly what happened in the Western Arctic during the 1940s and '50s. The bilingual parents of the present generation of adults completely ceased teaching Inuktitut to their children, with the result that nowadays in communities such as Tuktoyaktuk, Inuvik or Aklavik nobody under 35-40 years old speaks Inuktitut (Osgood, 1983).

There are some other reasons for concern. We have seen, for instance, that written materials in Inuktitut are relatively abundant. But, on the one hand, most of these materials consist of translations of technical and administrative reports, whose interest for the average reader is very doubtful. On the other hand, as shown in a survey of students published in 1981 by the *Igalaaq* newspaper (quoted in Prattis and Chartrand, 1984:Fig. 4), 70% of the sampled Northwest Ter-

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ritories young Inuit and 85% of those living in Labrador (but only 35% of the Quebec residents) state that they read English better than Inuktitut. Moreover, still higher percentages (82, 95 and 45% respectively) say that they prefer English texts rather than material written in the aboriginal language. This preference may have something to do with the scarcity of original literature in the native speech form.

As concerns electronic media, while radio makes extensive use of Inuktitut, television, as already mentioned, offers no more than 5½ weekly hours in this language, compared to 10-15 daily hours of English (and sometimes French) programming on three or four different channels. In a survey completed in 1980 among the Iqaluit high school students, no respondents quoted any Inuktitut title when asked about their favourite programs. On the contrary, they said that the least interesting broadcastings were talk shows and public affairs programs, the two categories to which most Inuktitut television productions belong (Coldevin and Wilson, 1983).

So, the linguistic situation in the Canadian Eastern Arctic is somewhat confusing. General public recognition of Inuktitut as a quasi-official language coexists with a seemingly disruptive type of bilingualism, one that could be detrimental to the native language in the near future. A few scholars have already begun to assess this problem. The most searching analysis has been presented by Prattis and Chartrand (1984), who state that if Inuktitut is to be preserved at all, it must become part of an overall scheme for developing bilingualism and biculturalism at the village level. The use of the native language must be encouraged in all aspects of community life, and not only in school, as the role of bilingualism in the maintenance of ethnic identity is a systemic issue.

In her study of language use in Rankin Inlet (Keewatin), Sammons (1985) shows that neither English nor Inuktitut appears as the dominant language, because each has its own valued functions. According to her observations, which seem more intuitive than quantified, the children speak as much Inuktitut among themselves as with their elders, which means that there is no age-induced difference in language use within the community. Her data and conclusions do not always coincide with what has been found in other Eastern Arctic settlements. They will therefore be discussed more thoroughly later on in the course of this paper.

As far as school is concerned, Mackay (1986) has shown that in Igloolik, despite the use of English as early as the fourth grade, the junior high school students still demonstrate a deficient knowledge of this language. As a result, the subject matter teachers feel obliged to minimize their demands on students in order to encourage them to participate more readily in class. But actually, such a course of action may hinder the linguistic growth of the students and permanently limit their academic progress. Thus, it would appear that this variety of English-medium education, characterized by a reduction of the linguistic/cognitive demands made on students, while inevitably limiting the teaching of Inuktitut, may also fail to give the young bilinguals a sufficient knowledge of the non-aboriginal language.

In fact, as demonstrated by Stairs (1988) in arctic Quebec, proficiency in written Inuktitut seems to be on a par with proficiency in written English. Moreover, the students' academic success in both languages appears to be a com-

munity affair. In some villages, when tested on their written skills all students are rated high in Inuktitut and English, while in other places most of them are rated low. The reasons for such differences are not yet clear. Stairs points to the presence in the high-rated schools of particularly competent Inuit teachers in the early grades. A good start in Inuktitut would apparently consolidate the first language of most students and, at the same time, facilitate the later study of English. One suspects, however, that this is just part of the truth. Other factors such as the size of the community, its relation to the land and its overall confidence in its own values and way of life should probably be examined if one wants to assess the strength of Inuktitut in a particular village. In Stairs's study, the communities with the highest rates of proficiency in written Inuktitut and English are small villages whose economy is essentially based on hunting and gathering activities.

All these studies offer interesting glimpses of the current linguistic situation in the Canadian Eastern Arctic. What they are lacking, however, is an encompassing theoretical framework that would explain the use of Inuktitut and English (or French in arctic Quebec) in the context of the general social relations now dominant in the Arctic. Even Prattis and Chartrand (1984), despite their successful attempt at systemic analysis, do not go much beyond a purely functional explanation of the language situation. For instance, they do not take into full account the basic economic and political inequalities between the Inuit and the southern Canadian ruling establishment, even if a global understanding of linguistic relations in the Arctic cannot escape the influence such inequalities may have on language use.

Certainly, the elaboration of an encompassing socio-linguistic theoretical framework is a long-term task that cannot be fully completed within the limits of this article. What I shall do here is to briefly outline what such a framework could be and, on the basis of recently gathered data on Inuit bilingualism, show how it relates to language use as observed in the Canadian Eastern Arctic.

THE CONCEPT OF DIGLOSSIA

The basic concept that will be used for understanding the language situation among the contemporary Inuit is that of diglossia. In its original formulation by the American linguist Charles Ferguson, diglossia was defined as a situation where:

In addition to the primary dialect or language . . . there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature . . . which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. [Ferguson, 1959:336.]

Ferguson's definition was interesting as it stressed both the complementarity and inequality of the available speech forms (one language has a high status, the other a low one). Even if it was mainly descriptive (he did not explain how and why diglossia came into being), it had the merit of stressing the social nature of the situation described: what was important with diglossia was not the contact of two different linguistic structures, but the fact that these structures played unequal roles in the overall communication process.

After Ferguson, the concept was used by various other linguists, including Fishman, who insisted on the basic difference between diglossia and bilingualism:

Bilingualism is essentially a characterization of individual linguistic versatility whereas diglossia is a characterization of the societal allocation of functions to different varieties of languages. [Fishman, 1970:87.]

These linguists also stressed the fact that it was not important if the two speech forms present in a diglossic situation were varieties of the same language (French and Haitian Creole, for instance), as Ferguson had proposed, or completely different tongues. In any case, what mattered was the unequal use of languages in various contexts.

But such an approach was still more descriptive than really analytical, as it did not yet try to explain what produced diglossic situations. Moreover, the distinction was not clear between diglossia (where a dominant language is imposed upon a whole community) and functional, or compound, bilingualism (when speakers use different languages for different functions). It was only in the mid-seventies and early eighties that a few socio-linguists, mainly French (cf. Calvet, 1974; Jardel, 1979; Bourdieu, 1982), began to draw a relation between diglossia and the notion of linguistic conflict in order to give more theoretical sharpness to the former concept. For them, most diglossic situations, despite their apparent stability, were symptoms of far-reaching latent linguistic conflicts between various social classes or ethnic groups. Such conflicts, broadly defined as processes whereby a dominant language tends to replace a dominated one, were seen as one specific field of application of the overall social struggle between unequal groups or nations. They appeared particularly in the case of colonial situations.

Calvet (1974), for instance, distinguishes three phases in what he calls glottophagy, i.e., the replacement of an aboriginal speech form by a colonial — generally European — language: 1) The servants of the early colonial elite become bilingual, while the rest of the population remains unilingual. 2) In order to insure its economic and political control, the colonial power introduces an administrative and ideological superstructure consisting of a judiciary and bureaucratic apparatus, schools, churches and a new way of life; in such superstructural institutions and habits, the colonizer's language dominates; bilingualism is on the increase, first among the native elite (the former servants), and then within the basic population; linguistic differentiation between town and country also appears; the status of the colonial language becomes higher, while that of the vernacular continues to decrease. 3) Finally, the aboriginal language is completely replaced by the colonial language or is, at best, creolized, i.e., totally mixed with the dominant speech form, so that it becomes unrecognizable and is spoken, but not written, by only a small group of people.

According to Calvet's description, linguistic conflict and, more specifically, diglossia (the situation found in phase 2) are both elements of an overall process of colonial domination. Their main effects, bilingualism, creolization and language loss, are ultimately due to social and economic factors rather than to purely linguistic causes.

Processes similar to the one described by Calvet (on the basis of African examples) have been reported elsewhere: in the French West Indies (Jardel, 1979), Vietnam (Dorais, 1979)

and Hawaii (Dorais, 1983), for instance. Diglossia may stem from internal colonialism (the domination of an aboriginal, or other, dependent population by an economic and/or political majority, within the nation's boundaries), as in the cases of France's Occitanie (Lafont, 1971), of French Louisiana (Dorais, 1980) or of the Mexican Indians (Arellano, 1982).

The question, then, that obviously arises is: Can the concept of diglossia in its latest version (i.e., as a symptom of linguistic conflict) be of use in explaining the current linguistic situation among the Inuit? In a previous paper, I have already answered that it can:

Each of these languages has its specific functions and value. The "higher" functions (upper education, government, well-paying work, literature) are performed in the dominant language: English or French. They are the most valued, Inuktitut and other native languages are used only for "lower" tasks: private conversations, non-specialized jobs and, sometimes, to help young children during their first years at school. Inuktitut may have some official status, but it is generally more symbolic than real. . . . In a situation like this one, the dominated native language tends to disappear along with the growth of formal education, increasing integration into the mainstream society and the economic upraising of its speakers. [Dorais, 1981:306.]

It could be added that some seemingly "high" tasks of Inuktitut, such as its use in the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, are more symbolic than really functional — most assembly members could do well without it. In the political hierarchy, it is only at the lower levels (community councils and municipal administrations) that the language is really useful. It should also be stressed that clear-cut differences in language use, as envisioned by Ferguson in his initial definition of diglossia, very rarely occur. For instance, the fact that English is the dominant language does not prevent it from being used by many Inuit for everyday conversations, as its progressive penetration of all spheres of communication constitutes one manifestation of its dominance.

Indeed, in some areas of the Arctic, a language conflict similar to Calvet's description has already been waged — and seemingly lost. In the Mackenzie delta and coast, for instance, the first Inuit to be introduced to English, between 1850 and 1920, were local men hired by the white fur traders, whaling captains, missionaries and policemen. At the beginning of the present century, only these native servants were somewhat bilingual, the majority of the population still remaining Inuvialuit unilinguals. But with the tremendous growth of trapping after World War I, the white authorities (the internal colonial power, one might say) deemed it advisable to create an administrative and institutional superstructure in the area to regulate its development. Missionary hospitals and English-speaking schools were thus opened, and the presence of the police was reinforced. Linguistically speaking, this entailed a diglossic situation, where, first, the biggest communities (Aklavik and Tuktoyaktuk, the "towns") and, then, the smaller settlements (such as Paulatuk) and trapping camps (the "country") gradually became bilingual, with less and less importance accorded the native tongue. After a generation, by 1950, all Inuit parents were exclusively teaching English to their children. The results are clear today: among the Inuvialuit, only 25% of the population still speak fluently the Uummarmiut (Delta) dialect,

and 16% the Siglit (Mackenzie coast) speech form (Dorais, in press). None of these speakers is under 40 years of age.

The situation is similar in most parts of Alaska: North Slope, Seward Peninsula, the Aleutians, Kodiak Island and Prince William Sound, where the Iñupiat, Yup'ik and Aleut languages are now spoken by a small minority of people. Greenland, however, seems to offer a counter-example. Despite 260 years of Danish presence, Greenlandic Inuktitut is still widely spoken by almost everybody. This is probably due to the geographical isolation of the country and to the fact that its economic productivity was perceived by the colonizers as linked to the preservation of a semi-traditional way of life. Such a situation was best ensured by providing the Greenlanders with Western-style literacy and education in the aboriginal language rather than Danish.

A similar thing happened in northern Labrador, where at the end of the 18th century the Moravian missionaries *cum* traders established native Inuit communities where school was taught in Inuktitut. But the later influx of white settlers and the confederation with Canada in 1949 (on this date the Moravian schools were replaced overnight by unilingual English establishments) were detrimental to the native language, to the point that by 1981 it remained the mother tongue of only 44% of Labrador's Inuit population.

DIGLOSSIA IN THE EASTERN ARCTIC

There remain three areas in the Canadian Eastern Arctic where, as already seen, Inuktitut is still very strong (with over 80% of speakers) and seemingly thriving. These are Keewatin, the Baffin region and arctic Quebec, plus the central arctic communities of Pelly Bay, Gjoa Haven and Spence Bay (where the Natsilik dialect is spoken). It is worth investigating whether the concepts of diglossia and linguistic conflict also apply in these instances.

When examining the history of these areas, one is struck by the fact that their social and economic development has been much more recent than in the Western Arctic, Alaska, Greenland or Labrador. Despite the early presence of fur traders and missionaries (since the 1870s in Quebec, the 1900s on southern Baffin Island, the 1910s in Keewatin and the 1920s elsewhere), by World War II most Eastern Arctic Inuit were still leading a semi-nomadic life, based on hunting and trapping. The only administrative superstructure was provided by the few RCMP officers who, since the beginning of the century, had established half a dozen detachments in the area. The linguistic situation corresponded more or less to Calvet's phase 1, with a very few bilingual natives, mostly hired by the traders or policemen as helpers or interpreters. In fact, it was rather the "colonizers," especially the missionaries and traders, who spoke Inuktitut or some sort of English-Inuktitut pidgin.

Thus, despite their economic (through trading) and ideological (because of Christianization) forced involvement with the Western world, the Eastern Arctic Inuit of the early '40s were still leading a semi-traditional life, one where egalitarian social relations and aboriginal values still played a prominent role. The war and its aftermath, however, changed it all. As the strategic and economic importance of the northeastern regions now became evident, it was felt by the Canadian government and some private developers that Canada's North

had to become an integral part of the country and that its citizens had to be given the opportunity to join the mainstream Canadian society.

In order to accomplish this, between 1945 and 1960 the federal government set up a complete superstructure of social and administrative institutions: schools, nursing stations, welfare offices and development offices. The results did not take much time to be felt. By the early '60s, 95% of all Canadian Inuit were living in established communities, where permanent structures had replaced snowhouses and tents. Each of these settlements possessed its own school, attended by almost all school-age children.

As English was the sole language of education, health and administration, bilingualism progressed rapidly. In 1981, after 20 years of full exposure to Canadian society, 19% of the Eastern Arctic Inuit spoke only English and more than 60% of the rest were bilingual (Dorais, in press). As we have seen, such bilingualism was in many ways of a subtractive kind.

But by the '70s and '80s, the world — and Canada — had changed, and the type of open linguistic conflict observed in other colonial situations was no longer acceptable, at least in Western nations. Because of the development of human and minority rights, ethnocide, or the destruction of a people's culture and language, was now considered highly undesirable by a good part of the media and public opinion. Therefore, in the early '70s, when the newly emerged Inuit leaders began claiming territorial, political and cultural rights, their demands were deemed worth discussing by the Canadian government, as well as by the province of Quebec. This rapidly led to formal agreements (such as the James Bay Agreement in 1975) and, more generally, to the development of academic and cultural programs and institutions that encouraged the survival of Inuktitut. This explains why, since the beginning of the '80s, the Inuktitut language is widely heard and read in the media, enjoys a quasi-official status and is taught in most arctic schools (even in the Mackenzie area, where it is taught as a second language to English unilingual Inuit children).

Does this mean that, in the Eastern Arctic at least, the diglossic situation now in place has been stabilized and that, because of the contemporary prestige of Inuktitut as a symbol of aboriginal identity, the process of language loss has come to a halt? Some observers seem to think so. In her thesis quoted earlier, Sammons (1985) states that in the Keewatin community of Rankin Inlet, because of ethnic segregation during the 1960s, the native elite, even when speaking English, was unable to assimilate to the white community. When segregation ceased in the '70s, at a moment when liberal values were triumphing, the Inuit leaders did not feel the necessity to assimilate. This would explain why, despite the continual increase in the number of bilingual and English unilingual Inuit speakers, Inuktitut would not be menaced, as its prestige would prevent it from being considered as a low-status language confined to devalued functions.

Sammons's assertions may be perceived as true if one looks at the situation from a purely local point of view. But it should not be forgotten that if a deeper understanding of linguistic relations is to be reached, they have to be viewed in a macro-social context by analyzing diglossia as one manifestation of an overall process of inequality and dependence. In this sense, Pratis and Chartrand's (1984:46-47) "blueprint of the

minimum requirements for an effective bilingualism/biculturalism policy [in the Arctic]" goes much farther than Sammons's thesis does, as it suggests reinforcing the language and culture of the Inuit at both the macro- (government policies) and micro- (community life) levels, while recommending the decentralization of northern administration, in order to give local communities more autonomy in the fields of education, the media, language and culture.

In fact, the nexus of the problem lies in the dependent situation of the contemporary Inuit. As most authors admit (cf. Brody, 1975; Paine, 1977; Simard, 1979; Chartrand, 1986), despite tremendous progress since the '50s and '60s, the real economic and political power remains in the hands of the leading southern Canadian interests. The final decisions concerning the development of the Canadian Arctic are always taken in Ottawa, Yellowknife or Quebec, rather than at the local or regional levels. One may thus still speak of a situation of internal colonialism, even if the Inuit have gained some real cultural and administrative rights, contributing to the preservation of their basic identity (cf. Dorais, 1988).

But this identity is sometimes in conflict with the image many southerners have of the Inuit. While most arctic natives think of themselves as belonging to a full-fledged Inuit nation (or, for some, to a multiethnic northern society) within Canada's boundaries, Canadian public opinion rather sees them as constituting an ethnic minority, possessing some cultural rights but certainly not entitled to gain complete control over the economic and political development of its local territory. The issue is far from being settled, however, and the current land claims, constitutional negotiations and discussions on a regional government may redefine the position of the Inuit within Canadian society. (For more details on these political issues, cf. Duffy, 1988.)

In such a context, diglossia and language conflict still exist. In the absence, for the time being at least, of any real local autonomy, of any enterprises and institutions defined along an Inuit cultural model, the only way open to progress is to become involved with a labour market and a bureaucracy shaped on their southern Canadian equivalents. And the only means to achieve that is to absorb as much southern (i.e., English) language and culture as possible. This is an easy task. Despite its shortcomings (cf. Mackay, 1986) and despite the fact that Inuktitut is taught in the first three or four grades, northern education is still massively English-speaking (French-speaking in some Quebec classes), and it still follows a southern Canadian model. And if this is not enough, English-speaking television, with its highly attractive content, is always there to provide what would not have been learned in school.

But how should we explain, then, the great prestige accorded Inuktitut by both Inuit and non-Inuit? In order to understand this, we must establish a distinction between the linguistic performance of the Inuit speakers and the image they, and others, have of their language. As already mentioned, in many instances English is perceived as the most useful and interesting language, because, given the current situation of dependence, it offers the only key to professional and social success beyond the limits of one's own local community. Consequently, it is readily learned and used by the younger Inuit, and as we shall see in the next section, it seems to be progressively replacing Inuktitut as the main means of communication in the Arctic. The linguistic performance

of these young Inuit is thus characterized by code-switching, preference for English and some instances of creolization. As shown by Brody (1975), most Eastern Arctic contemporary Inuit judge their Inuktitut as far inferior to that of their parents and grandparents, the *Inummariit*, or "real people."

But despite this sometimes poor performance in the mother tongue, and despite the fact that English has become ubiquitous in the North, Inuktitut still retains much prestige as an ideological object, an image, a symbol of Inuit identity. Even if in actual conversations many people use more English than Inuktitut or switch constantly from one language to the other, the native speech form is considered an important value that should be preserved through education, the media and official recognition.

Such an attitude is perfectly understandable and justifiable on the part of the Inuit, who are now struggling for their rights. But it should not conceal the fact that, objectively speaking, language conflict still exists, and that because of the overwhelming economic and political power of English in the North, English is dominant, even if Inuktitut has a high ideological value.

On the part of the federal, territorial and Quebec provincial governments, the encouragement given to the native speech form (it is taught in public schools and many official documents are translated into it) has the advantage of hiding the linguistic conflict behind a mask of tolerance. It also tends to displace the Inuit's struggle for aboriginal rights into a purely cultural field, thus avoiding more problematic economic, territorial and political claims. Such an attitude contributes to fostering the current situation of dependence.

Bilingual education is a particularly interesting manifestation of the real nature of the diglossic situation in the Eastern Arctic. True enough, linguistic minorities have always considered such education as a great asset for the advancement of their rights. But by itself, it cannot thwart the ongoing process of language replacement, nor can it stop the decline in linguistic performance in the ancestral speech form, except, maybe, in small, well-integrated communities (cf. Stairs, 1988). On the contrary, it can accelerate language loss. In many American schools, bilingual vernacular-English programs such as those that now exist in the Eastern Arctic are used, with much success it seems, for facilitating the gradual replacement of the pupil's first language (whether it be Navajo, Spanish, Vietnamese or something else) by English. For the Inuit, the only way to reverse the trend would be to get as much unilingual Inuktitut education as possible, and this at all levels — high school and college included — with English and French being taught as second languages. But to obtain that, the native public opinion and pressure groups need to be confident in their own language and culture — and bargaining power — which can only stem from a real measure of political and economic autonomy and from a ground-level control of their own institutions.

In this sense, diglossia exists in the Canadian Eastern Arctic, but in a more subtle way than has been observed in other types of colonial situations. Behind a facade of linguistic rights and language-preserving institutions, and because the northern territories are controlled by an overwhelming demographic and social majority of non-Inuit, English remains *the* dominant language in the North. This predominance is amplified by the fact that the northern natives speak a multiplicity of languages and dialects, rather

than a unique, common speech form. For this reason, if nothing changes, the final emergence of English in a generation or two as the sole means of expression of the Inuit may be unavoidable. As we shall now see, such a trend is already manifesting itself in the type of bilingualism observed in some Eastern Arctic communities.

INUIT BILINGUALISM

One of the first systematic studies of Inuktitut/English (or Inuktitut/French) bilingualism was conducted among the students of five Eastern Arctic communities by Dirmid R.F. Collis (cf. Dorais and Collis, 1987) in 1985. The communities under study were Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher Bay), Igloolik and Lake Harbour, in the Baffin region of the Northwest Territories, and Povungnituk and Ivujivik, in northwestern arctic Quebec. The size and activities of the chosen communities aimed at giving a representative sample: small settlements (200-300 people) primarily devoted to hunting and stone carving (Lake Harbour, Ivujivik); middle-sized villages (800-1000 people) where hunting and carving activities are mixed with wage earning (Igloolik, Povungnituk); and a large (3500 people), ethnically mixed community of wage earners (Iqaluit).

All villages included in the sample have schools where Inuktitut is taught from kindergarten to grades 2 (arctic Quebec) or 3 (Baffin region). This situation has existed for 10-15 years, depending on the locality, a fact that explains that, except for some older individuals (those aged 16 years and over), all students included in the sample first learned to write and read in the native speech form, in the syllabic and Roman scripts. As far as non-aboriginal languages are concerned, English is compulsory in the Northwest Territories, while in most arctic Quebec schools, the students may choose between English and French.

The research methodology, based on a classical lexicometric technique (cf. Mackey, 1970), consisted of visiting the classrooms in each of the five chosen communities in order to ask the students aged 9-18 years old to complete two different questionnaires. In the first one, they were asked to write down as many words as possible in Inuktitut and in their other language about each of 15 different topics, ranging from animal names to words pertaining to water, snow and ice. They were also asked to write a sentence or two about each topic, to permit the researchers to investigate their grammatical competence. This first questionnaire,

which will not be dealt with here, was aimed at measuring the relative importance of the available vocabulary in each of the languages known by the students (written, rather than oral, tests being used for practical purposes). It disclosed, among other results, some instances of creolization, or language mix.

The respondents also filled out a socio-linguistic questionnaire to describe their linguistic behaviour, i.e., the language(s) they used or heard in various circumstances. The most revealing language situations, those selected for examination in the present article, were conversations with parents, siblings and friends; radio listening; television watching; and informative (as opposed to academic or religious) reading. Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample for each of the five communities. It should be noted that, with the exception of Igloolik, the number of male (M) respondents exceeds that of female (F). However, as the language use patterns have proved to be almost exactly similar for both genders, this situation should not have much impact on the overall results of the analysis.

Most respondents come from families where the parents speak Inuktitut between themselves and to their children. The few cases of English unilingualism relate to mixed (Inuit/non-Inuit) couples. Table 2 shows that the dominance of Inuktitut among the parents is higher in the arctic Quebec communities than in the Northwest Territories. The proportions of parents who always speak Inuktitut at home are as follows: Povungnituk, 79.6%; Ivujivik, 92.3%; Lake Harbour, 43.3%; Igloolik, 49.0%; and Iqaluit, 64.0%.

The proportion of Inuktitut unilingual parents is higher in Iqaluit than in either Igloolik or Lake Harbour. However, when those who speak mostly Inuktitut at home (i.e., who also use some English from time to time) are added to the unilinguals, Iqaluit then becomes the location where the use of Inuktitut as the sole or principal home language of the parents is at its lowest: Povungnituk, 97.9%; Ivujivik, 92.3%; Lake Harbour, 80.0%; Igloolik, 86.2%; and Iqaluit, 73.4%.

But even in Iqaluit, Inuktitut still is by far the preferred language of the parents. This trend is confirmed by languages the children use in addressing their father and mother. The overall percentages of respondents who always use Inuktitut on such occasions, or do it most of the time, are similar to those appearing above, except for Lake Harbour, where the proportion is higher: Povungnituk, 96.8%; Ivujivik,

TABLE 1. Total sample by age and sex (number of respondents)

Age	Povungnituk			Ivujivik			Lake Harbour			Igloolik			Iqaluit		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
18	4	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
17	2	3	5	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	3
16	4	0	4	2	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	2	5	2	7
15	3	5	8	1	0	1	5	1	6	1	1	2	0	0	0
14	3	2	5	5	1	6	3	3	6	4	1	5	0	0	0
13	14	5	19	3	2	5	3	0	3	6	1	7	3	2	5
12	9	4	13	1	1	2	3	1	4	5	6	11	8	6	14
11	14	12	26	4	1	5	4	0	4	3	11	14	9	7	16
10	5	6	11	2	1	3	3	2	5	4	3	7	6	7	13
9	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	6	4	10
T	58	40	98	19	7	26	22	8	30	25	26	51	39	31	70

TABLE 2. Languages usually spoken at home by the parents (numbers of student respondents)

	Lake				TOTAL
	Povungnituk	Ivujivik	Harbour	Igloolik	
Inuktitut only	78	24	13	25	41
Mostly Inuktitut	18	0	11	19	6
Inuktitut and English	0	1	5	1	7
Inuktitut and French	0	1	0	0	0
Mostly English	0	0	0	4	6
English only	2	0	1	2	4
TOTAL	98	26	30	51	64

88.5%; Lake Harbour, 86.6%; Igloolik, 86.2%; and Iqaluit, 72.7%.

But there is a difference. Whereas among the parents the percentage of individuals who speak *only* Inuktitut at home is very high, the situation is not the same among the children. In their case, a large proportion of respondents use some English when addressing their parents. In Lake Harbour, this proportion is even higher than that of the exclusive users of Inuktitut (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Languages spoken to one's parents (percentage of respondents)

	Always Inuktitut	Mostly Inuktitut	English/Inuktitut
Povungnituk	83.6	13.2	3.2
Ivujivik	73.1	15.4	11.5
Lake Harbour	36.6	50.0	13.4
Igloolik	58.8	27.4	13.8
Iqaluit	39.4	33.3	27.3

With the exception of Ivujivik, the use of Inuktitut as the sole or principal means of expression becomes significantly lower as the preferred language of respondents for addressing their siblings. Among brothers and sisters, the second language — English or, in six cases, French — gains much more importance, especially in the sampled Baffin communities. The percentages of respondents who always speak Inuktitut or do it most of the time with their siblings are as follows: Povungnituk, 88.6%; Ivujivik, 89.1%; Lake Harbour, 56.5%; Igloolik, 77.1%; and Iqaluit, 53.5%.

In the Baffin communities English is still more widely used by respondents when speaking to their Inuit friends, while in arctic Quebec Inuktitut remains by far the leading language. The percentages of respondents who speak only or mostly Inuktitut when being with friends are: Povungnituk, 87.5%; Ivujivik, 96.1%; Lake Harbour, 31.0%; Igloolik, 60.8%; and Iqaluit, 27.4%.

In all three Baffin communities, the proportion of respondents who speak mostly English with their friends is higher in the upper age categories. The influence of Inuktitut schooling among younger students is probably felt here. It should also be noticed that in Lake Harbour the percentage of respondents who speak only or mostly English to their friends is much smaller (6.9%) than it is in Iqaluit (29.0%) or Igloolik (31.3%). This means that despite the relative importance of English, 94% of the Lake Harbour

respondents speak Inuktitut at least 50% of the time with friends, while in Iqaluit and Igloolik the percentages are 71% and 89.5% respectively.

When it comes to radio listening, Inuktitut maintains its importance, because, as we have seen, most northern community radio stations broadcast in Inuktitut as well as English or French. But here again, a striking difference exists between the arctic Quebec and Baffin communities. The proportions of respondents who listen mostly or exclusively to Inuktitut broadcasts are the following: Povungnituk, 86.9%; Ivujivik, 76.0%; Lake Harbour, 43.3%; Igloolik, 49.0%; and Iqaluit, 32.3%.

The data gathered on television watching are puzzling. In some communities, the percentages of respondents stating that Inuktitut is the only language they hear on television (35% in Povungnituk, 25% in Ivujivik) or answering that they hear Inuktitut as often as English (34% of the Iqaluit respondents) seem unduly high, given the fact that Inuktitut programming does not exceed 5½ hours a week. It is possible that many students understood this particular question as inquiring if they watched Inuit programs at all or that their answers reflect the fact that a good number of native people make a special effort to watch the Inuktitut programs. In any case, the following percentages of respondents stating that they watch exclusively or almost exclusively English (or French) programs should probably be higher: Povungnituk, 34.0%; Ivujivik, 11.5%; Lake Harbour, 90.0%; Igloolik, 78.4%; and Iqaluit, 52.2%.

Finally, language use has been measured in the field of informative reading. As is the case with most other language situations, a sharp distinction exists between Povungnituk and Ivujivik, on the one hand, where most of the reading takes place in Inuktitut, and the three Baffin communities, where English is overwhelmingly predominant. It should also be noticed that everywhere the younger respondents (for whom informative reading is probably equivalent to school reading) read more Inuktitut than the older ones. The proportions of respondents who read mostly or exclusively in Inuktitut are as follows: Povungnituk, 75.3%; Ivujivik, 78.2%; Lake Harbour, 6.6%; Igloolik, 17.6%; and Iqaluit, 12.9%.

CONCLUSION

The figures and percentages presented in the preceding section show that if Inuktitut is still strong in the Canadian Eastern Arctic, there are, nonetheless, some reasons for concern. In the sampled Baffin communities the picture is clear. The use of the native tongue diminishes markedly when one shifts from inter-generational communication to communication among the young people. In the town of Iqaluit, for instance, 73% of the respondents' parents generally speak Inuktitut at home and a similar proportion of children address them in this language. But when it comes to speaking to their brothers and sisters, these same respondents use mostly Inuktitut in only 54% of the cases. And when communication with friends is concerned, only a small minority of 27% do likewise.

In the communities of Igloolik and Lake Harbour the percentages of habitual Inuktitut users are higher, although the same regular diminution is observed: over 80% use their native language when the parents are involved, but only 77%

(Igloolik) and 56% (Lake Harbour) when among siblings, and 61% (Igloolik) and 31% (Lake Harbour) when among friends. This tendency to use English among the young people seems to be symptomatic of a gradual drift toward this language, despite the still massive use of Inuktitut within the community. Such a drift is also occurring in the reading habits of the respondents. In Lake Harbour, Iqaluit and Igloolik, the respective percentages of those who read mostly or entirely in English are respectively 50, 55 and 80%. Inversely, in spite of native language instruction in the first grades, those who prefer Inuktitut reading materials constitute a small minority: 17% (Igloolik), 13% (Iqaluit), and 7% (Lake Harbour). This leaves 43% sharing their reading time equally between the two languages in Lake Harbour, 32% in Iqaluit, but only 3% in Igloolik.

In the arctic Quebec communities of Povungnituk and Ivujivik the situation is very different. Higher percentages of parents (over 92%) speak mostly Inuktitut at home. The young people use a little less Inuktitut among themselves than with their parents, but still the proportions of respondents who habitually speak the native language with their siblings and friends hover around 88%, a figure that differs markedly from that for the Baffin villages. Similarly, the percentages of habitual readers of Inuktitut materials exceed 75% in arctic Quebec, as compared with less than 20% in the other sampled communities.

The obvious question that comes to mind is why such a difference? After all, Lake Harbour and Ivujivik, on the one hand, and Igloolik and Povungnituk, on the other, share many similarities in terms of size and economic activities. The answer is probably linked to the fact that the two arctic Quebec communities are quite peculiar in terms of recent political and cultural developments. Both have rejected the James Bay Agreement, on the explicitly stated grounds that the land of the Inuit is not for sale and that the arctic citizens ought to possess a regional government with powers of decision at all levels.

Concretely, this has led to a rejection of the bureaucratic administration, bilingual education and centralized cultural development sanctioned by the agreement. The Povungnituk and Ivujivik people have insisted on the importance of locally based community councils (financed by bingo games and other village fund-raising activities); of schools where a curriculum stressing the language and culture of the Inuit is devised by the local people, and of the necessary decentralization of cultural undertakings. Coupled with a strong and long-standing involvement in the cooperative movement, such an attitude — and its concrete results — have probably made the Povungnituk and Ivujivik Inuit the least dependent and colonized natives in the Canadian Eastern Arctic.

Such a finding leads us back to our theoretical framework. If our analysis is correct, the diglossic situation now observed in the North, where the vernacular language is both strong and threatened, would be due to the late (post-World War II) forced inclusion of the Eastern Arctic Inuit within the majority society and to the recent development of southern-controlled superstructures. As it reflects linguistic conflict, which constitutes, in turn, a specific instance of a wider situation of internal colonialism and dependency, language use in the North is characterized by two principal tendencies: 1) Those who are involved the most in the academic and bureaucratic superstructures — the students and young

people in general — are drawn to the dominant language, English, and accordingly have a preference for it when they are among themselves. 2) Those who resist the ongoing situation of dependency and colonialism — the Povungnituk and Ivujivik people — are also more confident with their language and consequently are less drawn toward English (or French).

Naturally enough, such an analysis is only tentative. Research should continue in order to see if this kind of theoretical framework is relevant and really yields a better knowledge of the social and economic processes underlining diglossia and bilingualism. More particularly, language use should be studied in those arctic Quebec communities that do accept the James Bay Agreement, in order to understand if political dissent really constitutes the principal factor explaining the tremendous differences in bilingual behaviour between the Quebec and Baffin communities sampled by Dorais and Collis.

However, the situation makes us cautious about predicting a positive future for Inuktitut in the Canadian Eastern Arctic. Despite its current strength, if the younger generations are as attracted toward English as their language behaviour seems to show, it is quite clear that because of the particularities of the diglossic situation, Inuit/English bilingualism is, indeed, subtractive. As such, it can really be detrimental to the survival of the native language unless the situation changes.

But is Inuktitut so important for the preservation of Inuit identity? According to sociologist J.J. Simard (Simard, 1988), the insistence on the survival of traditional language and culture stems from an anthropological bias that has no place in the real world. If he is right, the Inuit could well preserve a distinct identity — if they wish to — even after having completely lost the language, world view and living habits of their parents and grandparents. At this point, however, it is difficult for the social scientist to give an objective answer. Only the Inuit can address the question adequately.

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