

## BOOK REVIEW

SOME GRAMMATICAL ASPECTS OF LABRADOR INUTTUT (ESKIMO): A Survey of the Inflectional Paradigms of Nouns and Verbs; LAWRENCE R. SMITH; *Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 37; National Museums of Canada; Ottawa; 1977; 98 Pages; 58 Tables (No Price Given).*

Although limited in coverage, this is a good honest piece of work. A lot of effort has gone into its preparation, and the author demonstrates that he does have knowledge of his subject matter. Despite some obvious shortcomings, this work is not just a superficial stab at the obvious. The presentation at times is a bit wearisome, as it must be if it is to accomplish what it sets out to do, but it demonstrates a great deal of tedious and careful research.

There are, however, some criticisms that can, and should be made. The work, somehow, has an aura of incompleteness, as if the author were not putting down everything he knows. In some places it seems to be a sort of first draft of a portion of a larger work, subject to revisions and emendations. Criticisms that can be made are both of a specific and a general nature.

Two obvious very general criticisms that can be made are: first, the writer sometimes uses simplistic terminology and examples, almost talks down to his readers. For instance, on page 1, in the fifth paragraph, he explains what a phonemic alphabet is. And on page 5, first paragraph of Section 4, he explains that the language under consideration often builds sentences by building words. Admittedly, he is writing to two audiences, those who may want to learn Labrador Eskimo, and the professional linguist, but both classes of audience know these rather commonplace facts, and they are therefore redundant. Second, at various places something is presented that immediately leaves the reader wondering, but this is not explained until some pages further on. For instance, on page 3 it immediately becomes evident that the familiar k/q distinction is not operative here as it is among most Eskimo groups. It is, moreover, evident that Smith uses the symbol q quite differently from what is the case generally in English writings about Eskimo. It is only on pages 9 and 10 that we finally get the explanation. Another instance of this is with respect to the relative case. He first gives some indications of its use (presented in a more complicated manner, I think, than need be); then on the next page he adds the information that this case can also be used to demonstrate possession. Nowhere does he point out that many linguists refer to this as the

ergative. To this reviewer it would seem a lot simpler, easier to understand, if the complete lexical functions of the case were first given.

The instances where specific criticisms can be levied are many, and only some can be given here:-

- On page 1 Smith tells us he employs a phonemic orthography. On page 3 he uses the characters n and g, each of which have distinct (and definitely phonemic) values to signify ŋ. In this day and age of linguistic sophistication, and sophisticated type fonts, there is no excuse for this. And this is not hair splitting. There are instances where confusion can arise, e.g., the famous case, beginning with Morgan's interpretation of Kleinschmidt's kinship data, where anga is confused (equated) with angqa, and on that basis is built the now standardized error that most Eskimos call mother's brother by the same term as sister's child.

- On page 3 we find that q represents a voiceless fricative, but on page 9 the same symbol is used to represent a velar stop. Similarly, on page 5 there are a number of words that begin with q. Unless I am very sadly mistaken, these are more in the nature of stops than fricatives. One also is left wondering whether k and q are neutralized word initially.

- On page 4, in the second column under Key Words Illustrating Double Sounds, we find ngg (evidently ŋg). This is a valid example, if material from other Innupiaq Eskimo dialects can be extrapolated. It should have been listed and explained in the preceding chart.

- On page 13, Smith gives us a class of "Nerbals" (a very creditable terminological invention). These include tutuḵ, an example of the class that can take both nominal and verbal suffixes. I suspect that the phenomenon goes deeper than the writer lets on, and certainly a more complete glossing would have helped the explanatory process. In most Eskimo dialects one can "whale," "walrus," "seal," "bird" or "egg," i.e., carry on the action of obtaining those natural products. Tuttuvuk, I suspect, could have, and probably should have, been glossed as, "He caribous (or cariboued)" rather than "He gets a caribou." Much the same, I think, can be said for the translation of angluak near the middle of the page on page 21. It is glossed as "big" or "more," but it probably means "exceeds in size," or, as I have heard Eskimos say in English, "He biggers him."

There are a number of other places where the author, while he does not make downright mistakes, should clarify, explicate and emend, and it is to be hoped that he will do so in the expanded work that one feels is to follow.

The above criticisms aside, Smith definitely has made a contribution. It will serve as a learning device for those interested in learning Labrador Eskimo, and it will also serve the professional Eskimologist and linguist, especially for comparative and historical purposes. The work is a good mix of "traditional" linguistics and the "new departure," without being either stodgily

old-fashioned or nauseatingly "current" with the newest cliches. Finally, the morphonemics appear to be very good, and the tables, which this reviewer is not competent to judge empirically, appear to be good and the result of carefully analyzed, well documented field data.

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