

A Promise is a Promise: Inuktitut Language Handout

The Inuktitut Language

The language spoken by the Inuit is called Inuktitut. It is a very ancient language.

Qallupilluit is pronounced “ka-loo-pee-loo-eet”. Inuit is pronounced “ee-noo-eet” and Allashua is pronounced “a-la-soo-ak. In English, not all words necessarily sound the way they are spelled. Can you think of some English words like this?

Vowel Sounds

Inuktitut has only three vowel sounds: “aa”, “ee”, “oo”.

What are the vowel sounds in English?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

And sometimes...

6. _____

Part 2: Vocabulary

Some words we use in English are taken directly from Inuktitut, like parka, moccasin, mukluk and anorak. Can you think of any others? Make a list of such words and their meanings. In Inuktitut, there are about fifty different words for snow because the Inuit can identify around fifty different kinds of snow. They have one word for powdery snow, one for wet-packing snow and another for grainy snow in the Spring.

Some words do not exist in other languages at all. There is no Inuktitut word for “promise”, which means the Inuit would have difficulty expressing this idea or concept in their language. What would the story called if the word promise didn't exist in English?

Try to think of some things in English that would have no Inuktitut words such as pineapple or elephant. Today the Inuit people know of these things they may not have known about these things a long time ago.