

Adapting the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory for Inuktitut

Inuktitut is an Indigenous language of Canada with about 34,000 native speakers. Most Inuit children in the Eastern Arctic learn Inuktitut as their first language. To determine whether a child's language is developing typically or exhibiting delay, Speech-Language Pathologists need language assessment tools in Inuktitut. However, as noted by Speech Language and Audiology Canada's 2010 report "Speech, Language and Hearing Services for First Nations, Metis and Inuit Children in Canada" there is a critical lack of research and assessment tools available to SLPs serving Indigenous children.

We will report on the development of a culturally and linguistically appropriate Inuktitut adaptation of the Words and Sentences MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory (CDI). This measure of vocabulary and early morphosyntax knowledge was first created in English and has since been adapted for 20+ languages around the world.

Inuktitut is an agglutinative, polysynthetic language, and thus very different from the Indo-European languages which form the majority of CDI adaptations to date. In addition, the cultural context in Nunavik results in significant differences in vocabulary used. Instead of beginning with translation from English and then adding culture-appropriate words, a wholly different approach to this adaptation was taken. The primary source for the first draft of the adaptation is two sets of longitudinal spontaneous speech data from eight Inuktitut-speaking children between the ages of 1;8 and 3;6 from Nunavik in northern Quebec, Canada. (Crago 1988, Allen 1996)

As recommended by Ball (2007), the project is developing Indigenous research partnerships and is working with community members who serve as research partners in two Inuit communities on the Ungava coast of Nunavik. The project is currently in progress with a completion date expected by May 2016.

The following steps of the project will be described:

- Initial informal interviews to establish the overall culturally congruence of the CDI and whether it is of interest to Inuit families, and useful to those that work with them.
- Interviews and focus group meetings with 6 native speakers with expertise in Inuktitut child language development to evaluate and suggest revisions to a draft version of the questionnaire.
- Trial of two subsequent revisions of the Inuktitut questionnaire with 28 Inuktitut parents.

- Finalization of the questionnaire

We will complete our presentation with a reflection on the successes and challenges of the process, as well as our future plans for wider norming.

Selected References

- Allen, S.E.M. (1996). *Aspects of argument structure acquisition in Inuktitut*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ball, J. (2007). *Aboriginal young children's language and literacy development: Research evaluating progress, promising practices, and needs*. Paper prepared for the Canadian Language and Literacy Networked Centre of Excellence, National Literacy Strategy.
- Crago, M. (1988). *Cultural context in communicative interaction of Inuit children*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, Montreal, QC.
- SAC (2010). *Speech, Language and Hearing Services to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Children in Canada, with a Focus on Children 0 to 6 Years of Age*. Ottawa: Speech-Language & Audiology Canada.