

CLASSROOM CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS CLASSROOMS

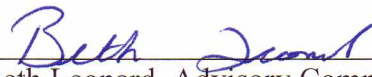
By


Hishinlai' "Kathy R. Sikorski"

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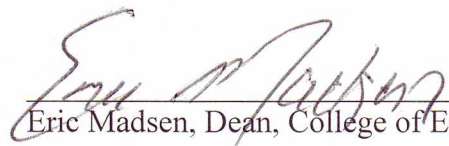

Sabine Siekmann, Committee Chair



Patrick Marlow, Co-Chair

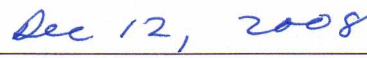

Beth Leonard, Advisory Committee Member


Anthony Strange, Department Chair
School of Education Graduate Program

APPROVED:


Eric Madsen, Dean, College of Education


Lawrence Duffy, Dean of the Graduate School


Date

CLASSROOM CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS CLASSROOMS

A
THESIS

Presented to the Faculty
of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

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Hishinlai' "Kathy R. Sikorski", B.A.

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous languages have been traditionally learned by doing activities on the land, with the family or around a village. Sometimes, because this is not feasible, Indigenous languages can be learned in a classroom.

This is a qualitative research on the author's own Indigenous language classroom with the theoretical foundations of second language acquisition and group formation processes. Data collected were videotapes, audiotapes, student journals, and an exit interview, which were triangulated and verified by an interrater.

Results were that the instructor had to possess a philosophy of second language teaching and learning; set high expectations, and create a positive classroom culture. Learners had to be extremely motivated; participate, and pull their own weight.

The overall recommendations are that (a) learners need to learn their ancestral language as a second language, (b) Native language teachers need training on theories of second language acquisition, (c) Native language teachers need to have a strong philosophy of second language learning and teaching, and (d) learners need to have a mindset that they will learn to speak their ancestral languages by practicing. These recommendations have worked in the researcher's classroom, and can be extended to any second language teaching or learning arena.

Table of Contents

	Page
Signature Page.....	i
Title Page.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables	vii
List of Appendices.....	vii
Acknowledgements.....	ix
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Rationale.....	9
Problem Statement	10
Research Questions	15
Definitions	17
Chapter 2 Literature Review	19
Second Language Acquisition.....	19
Behaviorism.....	20
Cognitivism	28
Classroom Culture.....	45
Group Formation as Process.....	52

Chapter 3 Methodology	62
Research Design	62
Credibility	65
Transferability	66
Setting	66
Participants	70
Procedure and Data Analysis	72
Summary	75
Chapter 4: Findings	76
Research Question 1	77
Research Question 2	96
Research Question 3	116
Summary	133
Chapter 5 Discussion	135
Research Question 1 Discussion	135
Research Questions 2 and 3 Discussion	145
Problem and Need	154
Conclusion	155
References	161

List of Figures

Figure 1.1. Alaska Native Languages.....	3
Figure 1.2. Gwich'in Communities.....	5
Figure 1.3. Gwich'in Population by Village.....	14
Figure 1.4. Total Gwich'in Speakers by Age and Gender.....	15
Figure 2.1. Explosion of Unexpressed Thoughts.....	53
Figure 2.2. First Few Days of Group Formation.....	54
Figure 3.1. University of Alaska Campus and Colleges.....	69
Figure 4.1. Relationship Between Research Questions.....	77
Figure 4.2. Teaching Philosophy.....	78
Figure 4.3. Student Responses.....	95
Figure 4.4. Map of Gwich'in Country.....	101

List of Tables

Table 1. Timeline of Numbers of Alaskan Athabascan Language Speakers	11
Table 2. Communicative Competences and the Gwich'in Language Classroom.....	31
Table 3.1. Researcher's Fit into Qualitative Study.....	63
Table 3.2. Summary of Techniques for Establishing Trustworthiness.....	65
Table 3.3. History of Student Enrollments from 2002-2007.....	68
Table 3.4. Language Learners' Profiles.....	72
Table 3.5. Overview of Data Collected.....	75
Table 4. Classroom Rules.....	118
Table 5. ACTFL Novice High Speaking and Gwich'in Classroom Comparison.....	139

List of Appendices

Appendix A. IRB Approval.....	170
Appendix B. Informed Consent Form.....	171
Appendix C. Transcription Codes.....	174
Appendix D. Verbs taught in ANL 141.....	175
Appendix E. Vocabulary Learned over One Semester.....	176
Appendix F. Examples of Games, Activities, Worksheets.....	177
Appendix G. Traditional Stories and Cultural Artifacts, Fieldtrips.....	178
Appendix H. Thematic Units.....	179
Appendix I. Class Syllabus.....	180
Appendix J. Kinship Terms.....	182
Appendix K. Resources.....	184
Appendix L. Language Verifications.....	185
Appendix M. Student Presentation.....	186

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Without the kind and supportive fluent speakers who have made it possible for me to learn my ancestral language, I would not have been able to consider learning to speak my language. In particular, for the many hours that I have asked the same question, Lillian Garnett of Arctic Village has been unfailing in her gentle push for not only me, but for other language learners as well. Mrs. Garnett and I worked together from 1990 on a part-time basis when she was hired as the instructor of Gwich'in at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Up until that time, we had hardly known each other, but it was not long before we became friends. In 1995, we both attended a workshop on how to stay in the ancestral language, and Mrs. Garnett was quick to apply this to her future classes. When she retired in 2002, I was quite humbled to be hired in her place. Other fluent speakers I would like to thank are my mother Katherine Peter for the many obsolete words that she provided me (sometimes in the middle of the night). Of all the other fluent speakers who have influenced reclaiming my ancestral language, I would also like to thank Vera Englishoe who lives in Fort Yukon because I feel I have harassed her many times over the phone or by e-mail, asking her many questions which she cheerfully answered.

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Dr. Siekmann has been untiring and more than generous in her time away from a young family in order to see a student, such as myself, graduate.

Besides my committee chair, I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Beth Leonard and Dr. Patrick Marlow. I have known Dr. Leonard since ~1990 as an undergraduate, and then later having obtained her master's. I admire her tenacity, calmness, and connectedness to Indigenous peoples when expressing her opinions. If it were not for Dr. Leonard, I probably would not have considered referencing other Indigenous scholars. Dr. Marlow has been influential in my life since 1995. We met and clashed--a non-Native man out of the mid-west, whose dissertation was on historical linguistics of the Modern Indo-Aryan language, and an Indian woman from Alaska. The worst Athabascan woman a non-Native man can meet is a Gwich'in woman, and that is just what Dr. Marlow did when he met me, and later, Mrs. Garnett. However, despite our strong stances and opinions, we have always relied on each other: I have relied on Dr. Marlow for academic advice, and he has relied on me for Native cultural norms.

Another person I want to thank is Dr. Charlotte Basham because she has been instrumental in my academic career for her unrelenting desire to see Indigenous students succeed at higher education.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband David, my daughters Francine and Hannah, and my granddaughter Tierra for the times that I could not spend with them because I was writing on "second language acquisition."

Chapter 1 Introduction

In learning a second language in the classroom, some people may bring with them preconceived ideas about learning. How they studied, and may or may not have learned another language may influence their ideas about learning yet another language. Their experiences may include knowing something of the grammar and the structure of how the target language works. Or perhaps they also learned how to speak, and can read and write in the target language. In order to do any of these skills, one also has to listen. Even if language learners come into the classroom without any experience in learning another language, they may still come in with their own ideas. Some may believe that learning the grammar will lead to their speaking abilities or that writing and seeing the written form will help them to remember. Whatever notions language learners have about learning another language is a factor that can not be ignored. It must somehow be a part of the equation for an overall view of language learning.

In teaching a language, all language teachers, whether they are aware of it or not, have their own theories about how to teach. How do language teachers know what to teach, and in what sequence? What do they do to get the learners to interact with others?

Teaching languages is an art that is like no other type of teaching. It is an art that requires getting into the minds of learners and capitalizing on their strengths. It is getting them to interact; to question; to facilitate them so that learning takes place.

With this thesis, a critical look will be taken at an Indigenous university language classroom where the learners and the instructor interact in such a way so that communication is possible in the target language. Even though this thesis is about an Indigenous university language classroom, the relevancy of what and how interactions take place can shed light on other classroom based language learning. This will occur by reviewing the underpinnings of the classroom from (a) learner expectations, (b) teacher expectations, and classroom culture.

The Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC), a department within the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), offers classes in a few of Alaska's Indigenous languages. Eskimo language classes offered in the past have been Aleut, Alutiiq, and Siberian Yupik. Currently, the Eskimo languages offered, which are degreed, are Central Yup'ik and Iñupiaq. Indian language classes offered in the past have been Holikachuk, Deg Xinag, Upper Kuskokwim, Tlingit, and Haida. Currently, although not always offered, Indian languages taught are Gwich'in, Koyukon, Tanacross, Dena'ina, Ahtna, Lower Tanana, and Upper Tanana.

Alaska has twenty different Indigenous languages. Language families include: (a) Eskimo-Aleut (four Eskimo languages and Aleut), (b) Athabascan-Eyak-Tlingit (eleven Athabascan languages, Eyak, and Tlingit), (c) Haida, and (d) Tsimshian. All of these languages are endangered because most of the languages are no longer being learned by children (Krauss 1997).



Figure 1.1. Alaska's Native Languages

(<http://www.uaf.edu/anlc/>, retrieved February 2006)

The beginning Athabascan Gwich'in classroom will be the focus of this study. Gwich'in is spoken in northeastern Alaska and northwestern Canada; however, this study will be limited to the Gwich'in of Alaska. In Alaska, the Gwich'in population is approximately 805 with approximately 272 speakers. These speakers range in age from approximately 27 years old to approximately 98 years old. The source of this information is from an informal survey with the following reliable Gwich'in people who live in the various Alaskan Gwich'in communities (R. Peter, K. Tritt, V. Englishoe, Chalkyitsik Village Council, M. Simple, Circle Traditional Council, P. Williams, Jr., W. James, personal communication, April/May 2006).

In this study, the beginning Gwich'in classroom will be examined for what the learners and the instructor do together to achieve the goals of the classroom. The beginning Gwich'in class has been taught at the UAF campus since 1973. Two semesters or one academic year of the beginning language class satisfies ten credits towards a language requirement as a general requirement or a minor in a B.A. degree requirement. The average number of students who were enrolled in the beginning Gwich'in class from 2002 to 2007, or since the researcher has been teaching, is from five to ten students. For a breakdown of numbers of students, their ethnicities, and class standing, see Table 3.4 under methodology (Chapter 3). There are a number of reasons why students do not continue for a full academic year of Gwich'in. Some of these reasons include (a) commitments involving child care or work, (b) disillusionment as to how the class is taught and their expectations, (c) emotional distress such as depression from the darkness, (d) inexperience with academic pressures or (e) withdrawing from all of their classes because of family matters outside of their control.

Those students, who do continue after one academic year of the beginning class, may continue on to an intermediate class, which is also an academic year for a total of six credits. These intermediate classes are not very big with anywhere from two to four students enrolled. The main reason for these low enrollment numbers are usually because of other commitments in their degree programs.

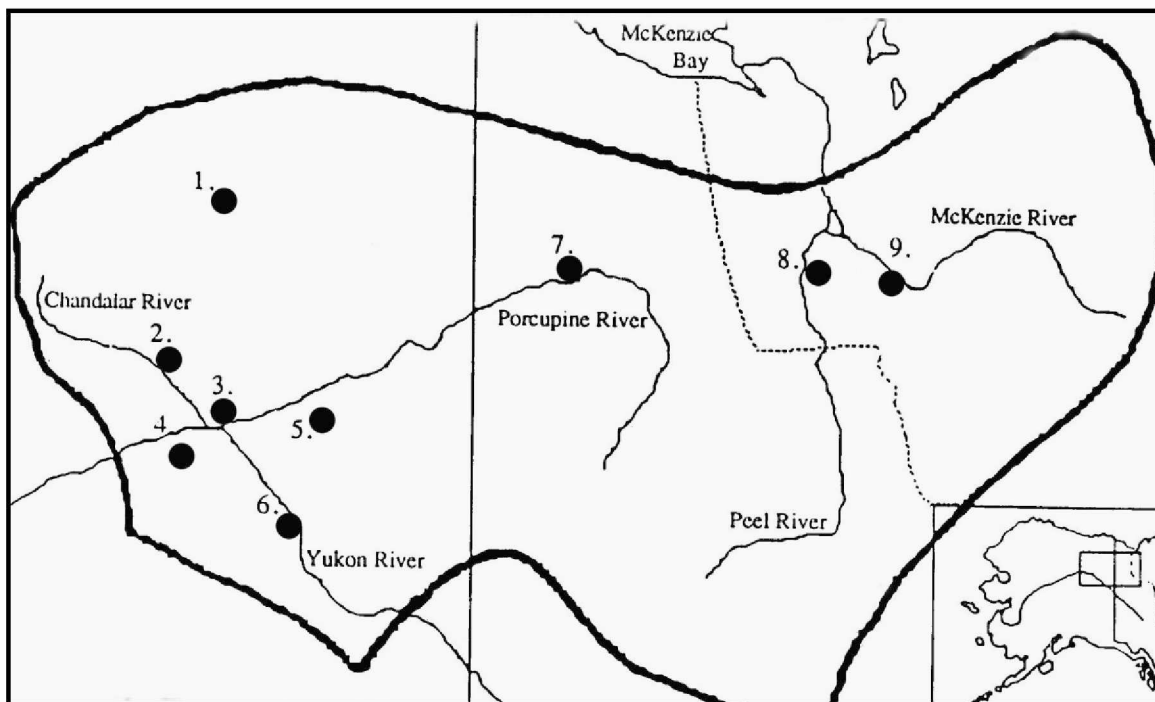


Figure 1.2. Gwich'in Communities: 1. Arctic Village, 2. Venetie, 3. Fort Yukon, 4. Birch Creek, 5. Chalkyitsik, 6. Circle, 7. Old Crow, 8. Fort McPherson, 9. Tsiigehtshik

A short history of Gwich'in teaching will frame this particular classroom context. Originally, Gwich'in literacy was taught to a few fluent speakers beginning around the 1960's by missionaries. From this time onward (1960's), language shift began for much of Alaska's Indigenous languages. This shift was from learning and speaking the ancestral language as a first language to learning and understanding the grammar or structure of the language. Most of the Indigenous groups in Alaska

preferred to use english¹ as their first language because of financial and economic gains that could supposedly be made. As a result, many of the generations after the 1960's learned english as their first language. However, many from that time period could understand their ancestral languages. Although they were not required to be able to speak and use the ancestral language with the previous generation, the previous generation's first languages were their ancestral languages which were used as a means of communication with the succeeding generation. It was in this context that the researcher grew up in a Gwich'in village, living on the cusp of language shift and oblivious to what the future would bring in the way of Native language revitalization or maintenance.

Beginning around the 1970's, as Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and ANLC linguists began to discover how the Gwich'in language structure behaved, they began to teach the grammar to those who were interested. It was a combination of these two forms, literacy and grammar, with which the Gwich'in language was taught. Though there is merit to these two approaches, many more learners wanted to focus on speaking and communicating in the language. Thus, these two approaches were not enough to meet the growing demand by non-speakers (including Gwich'in) to speak the language.

In 1990, a new Gwich'in language instructor by the name of Lillian Garnett, who is a fluent speaker of Gwich'in from Arctic Village, was hired. At that time

¹ The spelling of "english" will be used in the lower case throughout this thesis. It is a small form of resistance on the author's part.

though, Lillian was not given any explicit pedagogical training or ongoing professional development on how to teach a second language, and so what had been going on in teaching an Indigenous language for the past years continued.

Later in 1999, a new colleague by the name of Patrick Marlow collaborated with school districts where the ancestral languages were Athabascan and submitted a proposal and received a federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The goals of this grant were to produce Native language teachers and career ladder employees through their respective school districts (U.S. DOE, grant #T195E980090).

It was during this first year of the grant that all participants were treated to a training provided by Dr. Leanne Hinton from the University of California Berkeley and an adult learner of the Hupa language by the name of Gordon Bussell. Hupa is also an Athabascan language. Dr. Hinton and a group of Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival, after observing how endangered the California Indigenous languages were, devised a method to pair fluent speakers with those who want to learn their ancestral language. Fluent speakers are known as the master (or mentor), while the learner is known as the apprentice (or learner). The Master-Apprentice (M-A) approach is to devise strategies to stay in the target language without reverting to the first language, which in this case is English.

The ways in which to stay in the target language are varied and may include the use of props, pictures, activities, gestures, or games (Hinton, et al., 2002). After this training, the fluent instructor of the Gwich'in class, Lillian Garnett and myself as a person trained in linguistics, immediately began to incorporate these props into our

language classes in order to stay in the target language. My role was very much dependent on the instructor as my "mentor". This meant that my responsibilities included setting up the classroom; lesson plans and making sure that all the props were in place. This "master-apprentice" pairing for us meant that our roles, though divided, worked in tandem. It worked in tandem because I was not a fluent speaker of Gwich'in and we were still experimenting with what we had been taught through the M-A program about how to teach and revive an Indigenous language.

After using this method in the summer classes, we discovered how much learners were able to perform after an intensive three weeks (3 hours x 5 days per week), and began to apply it to the regular beginning university Gwich'in classroom. These classes were based on thematic units that made sense in teaching the culture; therefore, 1999 launched us into our style of teaching the Gwich'in language. Occasionally, if Lillian as the instructor at the time asked, I would provide basic grammar with which I was not totally comfortable. In 2002, Lillian retired her position as Gwich'in language instructor, and I was hired in her place as the Gwich'in language instructor.

This thesis will focus on my discoveries of how a language can be taught and learned in a classroom environment which is conducive to language learning. These discoveries will be shared in the hopes that other language teachers and learners will be inspired to learn another language by learning from the trials and tribulations that had occurred during this research.

Rationale

The factors underlying the rationale of this thesis are as follows:

- Dispel the myth that learning an Indigenous language is impossible
- Give other Indigenous language teachers options for ways of teaching and provide learners with strategies for learning
- Examine classroom culture based language learning methodology and outcomes

One of the myths that some people have about learning another language, and especially an Indigenous language, is that it is very complicated and impossible to learn. How is learning an Indigenous language more impossible than learning any second or third language? The added factors that might contribute to this myth include the historical genocide of the language and the difficulties associated with revitalization; however, even though there is an awareness that these factors exist, it must be pointed out that the scope of this thesis is limited to the second language classroom. Because of this situation, it is especially important to know what works in the classroom. For instance, the concept of providing grammar in the classroom has changed. Past efforts for teaching Indigenous grammar have been purely structural in nature. Some of these learners have flourished with this grammar but are unable to speak. This tradition is still being carried out; however, the ways in which grammar is introduced can make use of interaction for language learners who want to attain some

level of oral proficiency. This change includes an awareness of just enough grammar so that it becomes a tool for learners to communicate (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002).

Traditional methods of language teaching, such as the audiolingual method (ALM) have not produced positive results for speaking, listening, and grammar skills. However, when interaction and co-construction of knowledge takes place, this results in proficiency. These are theoretical promises which in turn lead to practical applications and learner outcomes. This particular theory places interaction at the center of language learning (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Lantolf, 2000; Hinkel. & Fotos, 2002; Wink & Putney, 2002; Intrator, 2003; Johnson, 2004).

Interaction is an important theory in second language teaching and learning because meaning is negotiated in context (Gass & Selinker, 2001). In the Gwich'in classroom, interaction occurs between the instructor and the learners, and then between peers. When meaning is negotiated through interaction, feedback occurs, which in turn co-constructs the language learning process (Ohta, 2001).

Problem Statement

Almost all of Alaska's Indigenous languages are endangered. This is because many of Alaska's younger generations do not understand or speak their language, yet many want to learn their ancestral language for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most resounding reason heard is to be able to speak to their grandparents.

To provide an idea of just how endangered Alaska's Indigenous languages are, below are the numbers of speakers over time from 1979 to 2006 for some of the Alaskan Athabascan groups. Not only are the Alaskan Athabascan languages

endangered, all of the other Alaskan Indigenous languages are in the same situation. To compound language endangerment, most of the speakers for these languages are elderly. For instance, Haida, a southeastern Indian language has only five remaining speakers who are all over the age of 80 (J. Lachler, personal communication, February 15, 2006). Central Yup'ik, an Eskimo language, has approximately 10,500 speakers. Though they have the highest numbers of speakers, and a few of the children are learning from birth, the majority of children are learning Yup'ik through the school system (S. Charles, personal communication, February 10, 2006). The bottom line is that children are no longer learning their language in a home atmosphere, where interaction can take place in context.

Table 1. Timeline of Numbers of Alaskan Athabascan Language Speakers

Language	1979 (Krauss & Golla)	1997 (Krauss)	2006 (Sikorski)
Ahtna	200	80	16
Deg Xinag	100	40	10
Dena'ina	250	75	62
Gwich'in	1200*	300	272
Han	30*	19	13
Holikachuk	25	12	5
Koyukon	700	300	unavailable
Lower Tanana	100	30	16
Tanacross	120	65	51
Upper Kuskokwim	130	40	33
Upper Tanana	250	115	100

Note: Does not include those with passive knowledge of the language (those who understand but do not speak). *Includes Canadian.

The figures from 1979 (Krauss & Golla, 1981) and (Krauss, 1997) are from estimated numbers of speakers. The figures from 2006 were obtained by the researcher in an informal attempt to ascertain the current situation from well-known and respected fluent speakers or those in academia who work closely with those languages for names, approximate ages, and numbers of speakers from each village, city or other places (P. Frank; A. Boraas; R. Peter; K. Tritt; V. Englishoe; Chalkyitsik Village Council; M. Simple; Circle Traditional Council; P. Williams, Jr.; W. James; R. Ridley; S. Silas; M. Riley; C. Silas; B. Petruska, personal communication, February/March/June/November 2006).

In Alaska's Gwich'in villages, including Alaska's largest cities of Fairbanks and Anchorage, plus a few other Alaskan villages, there are approximately 272 fluent Gwich'in speakers. Although the range of definitions for a fluent speaker is diverse, the definition will be limited to those individuals who understand almost everything in the language, including cultural knowledge.

(<http://french.about.com/library/weekly/aa072701b.htm>, retrieved December 11, 2008). Reliable contacts were established in every Alaskan Gwich'in village, where names and approximate ages of fluent speakers were collected. This information was then categorized into the name of the village, total population, percentage of Gwich'in people, ages, numbers of speakers, and gender. The total population and percentages of Gwich'in people were retrieved from the 2004 Alaska Community Database

Community Information Summaries (http://www.commerce.state.ak.us.dca/commdb/CF_CIS.htm, retrieved May 4, 2006).

It was found that there was a high concentration of fluent speakers in the Fairbanks area. Fairbanks is Alaska's second largest city, and is the city nearest to all the Gwich'in villages. Demographics for the greater Fairbanks Borough show a total Native population of 23.2%; however, this population may consist of Indigenous groups from throughout Alaska and beyond. Many Gwich'in families move to Fairbanks for educational purposes, for work, or to live an easier lifestyle than what could be afforded in the villages. Some of these villages do not have running water and may depend solely on wood for heating their homes.

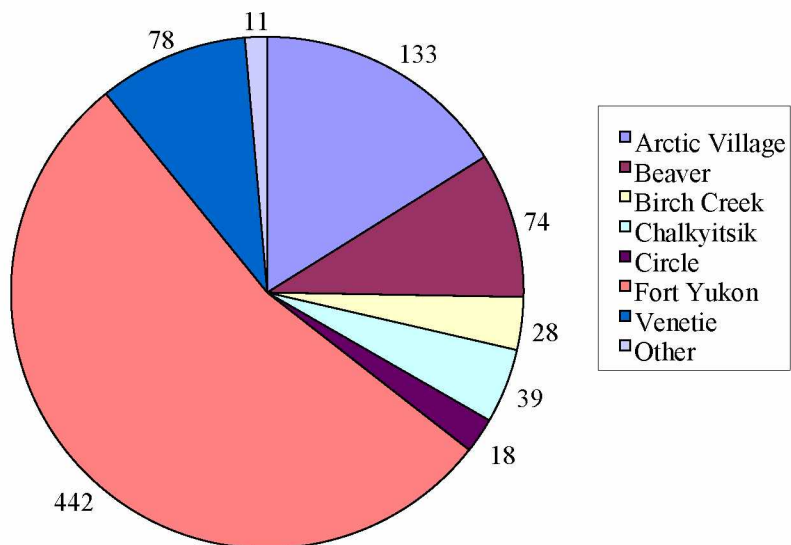


Figure 1.3. Gwich'in Population by Village. Note: Does not include Gwich'in populations in Fairbanks, Anchorage or Canada. Total numbers of Gwich'in in villages = 805. Overall total numbers of Gwich'in speakers = 272

Number of Speakers

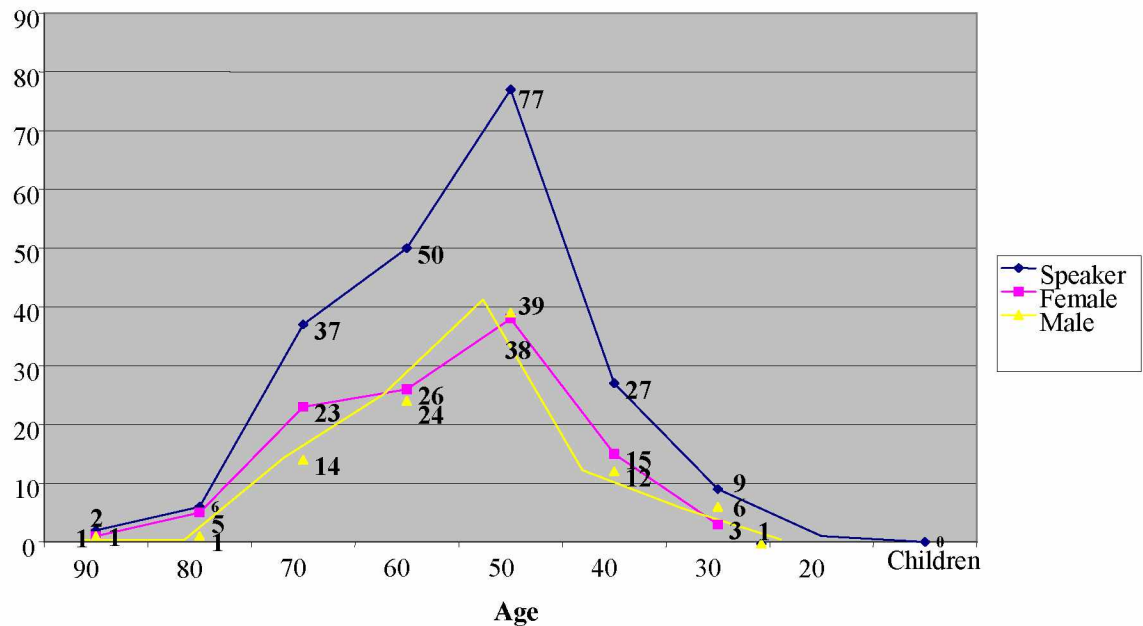


Figure 1.4. Total Gwich'in Speakers by Age and Gender

To summarize, teaching orthographies, grammar and ALM have not produced fluent speakers. Furthermore, if speaking is the overall goal, then a vastly different approach to teaching is needed if the goals of Indigenous (or others) peoples are to maintain and/or to revitalize their languages.

Research Questions

Research questions that I would like to address concerning my beginning Gwich'in language class are:

1. What classroom goals do I have of the learners in my beginning Gwich'in university classroom?
2. What are student goals? And how do these fit with classroom goals?
3. What kind of classroom culture is created by these expectations and SLA theories?

The first question: What classroom goals do I have of the learners in my beginning Gwich'in university classroom? Classroom goals are driven by teaching philosophy and are formalized in my class syllabus which targets the goals that are set by me. These goals are primarily to speak, although learners also learn the orthography and emergent grammar. Learners are also required to interact in the language as much as possible.

The second question: What are student goals? And how do these fit in with classroom goals? This research question will look at how student expectations and classroom goals mesh.

The third question: What kind of classroom culture is created by these expectations and SLA theories? This research question addresses classroom culture. Classroom culture is what is shaped in the classroom by both the teacher and the learners. This is done by taking all of the expectations and activities into a cohesive sphere which in turn enlightens learners to engage themselves in the learning process.

With the above research questions tied into the rationales, let us begin our journey as we explore the beginning Gwich'in language class. Before this journey

begins however, a few definitions need to be made clear about the various terms that I will be using throughout this thesis.

Definitions

Second Language Acquisition/Learning: Second language acquisition includes foreign languages as well as second or more languages, and may include acquisition or learning in the classroom or a natural setting. No distinction will be made between language acquisition or language learning. The terms will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

Second Language Theories: A set of abstract assumptions about various parts of learning another language, their relationships, and the processes for an explanation. Second language theories should be able to be tested against evidence or data through formal experiments or through natural events where data is analyzed and interpreted. These various parts of learning another language should be spontaneous to account for new facts (Mitchell & Myles, 1998).

Second language approach in the classroom: An approach is based on a theory of language and language learning, which then has an effect on the practices and principles of language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Theories of language and language learning: Theories of language and the degree to which languages are learned are based on three points of view. The first view is to examine the structure of the language being learned. Methods that are based on this structural view include the audiolingual method, total physical response, and the silent way. The second view is to use the language for function according to the

needs of the learners. An example of this view is the English for specific purposes (ESP) drive to teach to the specific goals of the learners in any particular field. The third view is based on interaction between people, especially in communication. An example based on this view would include sociocultural theory.

Theories of language teaching: Some approaches to SLA are direct approach, reading approach, oral-situational approach, cognitive approach, affective-humanistic approach, comprehension-based approach, master-apprentice approach, and communicative approach.

Methods for second language teaching: An organized set of procedures on how to teach a second language. Some methods are the audiolingual method or the silent way (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Literature reviewed for this thesis will include some theories and/or approaches of second language acquisition (SLA) and classroom culture. The reasons for reviewing some theories and/or approaches of SLA are because Gwich'in, like other Indigenous languages in Alaska, has to be taught and learned as a second language. The primary reason that this must occur is because the first language of most of the learners, including ancestral language learners, is English.

Additionally, when a classroom of language learners and the instructor forms, there is a phenomenon called classroom culture which is how a group of people form to be either cohesive or not. The ways in which this formation takes shape plays an integral role in the learning that may take place. When these two areas, SLA and classroom culture, are combined they provide a foundation for the acquisition of the target language.

Second Language Acquisition

In this section, a short historical overview of SLA will be provided. The reason for this short historical overview will be to address SLA theories which have been controversial in a second language (L2) classroom. As a researcher trying to understand SLA theories in a classroom context, theories of interaction from a sociocultural theory perspective seem to be most beneficial; however, many teachers continue to use outdated theories, such as audiolingualism, in their L2 classrooms.

Block (2003) states that there may be as many as 40-60 SLA theories, and as a result, the literature review on SLA in this research will not be exhaustive. Three main

frameworks which have influenced SLA since the 1950's are based on the views of (a) behaviorism, (b) cognitivism, and (c) sociocultural theory (Johnson, 2004). These eras, in a somewhat synchronic order, provide a glimpse of how interesting and stimulating language teaching and learning presents itself through the various theories.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism as a scientific field is a branch of psychology that views learning as the formation of habits based on stimuli and responses. It was thought that humans are exposed to stimuli in their environment. If their responses to stimuli result in a positive nature, they will continually seek these same reinforcements which will in turn result into habits. In the late 1950's, it was this type of thinking that a lead behaviorist, B. F. Skinner, applied to language teaching, as he felt language learning resembled an acquisition of habits (Skinner, 1957).

Behaviorists believed their theory could apply to teaching second languages. Ways in which it was applied to language was that learning takes place from the consequences of observable conditions such as imitation, practice, feedback on success, and habit formation on real world activities (Ellis, 1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Block, 2003; Johnson, 2004).

As a result, SLA language teaching lessons consisted of memorizing dialogues, imitating, sequencing grammar, stressed pronunciation, and vocabulary which were all very limited in the initial stages. The focus was on teaching listening and speaking skills and to prevent the learner from producing any errors. This type of language

teaching is better known as the audiolingual method, which is based on behaviorism theory and structural linguistics (Fries, 1952).

The focus of behaviorism was on *language teaching*, but not on *language learning*. Furthermore, even after most of the audiolingual methods were dispelled, there still remained quite a bit of contention over the role of the first language in second language learning (Brown, 1994). The repercussions of these debates led to various way of looking at what language learners learn, which had a great impact on second language classroom teaching (Johnson, 2004). They include (a) contrastive analysis, (b) error analysis, and (c) the morpheme order studies. Each of these three theories will be briefly discussed before the next major field of SLA theory known as cognitivism is addressed.

Contrastive analysis: The theoretical underpinnings of contrastive analysis (CA) resulted from research by Robert Lado. Lado suggested that a systematic way of comparing languages in order to provide teaching materials for second languages was needed. He provided ways in which to compare two languages based on the sound systems, grammar structures, vocabulary systems, writing systems, and cultures in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957). Lado's claim was as follows:

We assume that the student who comes in contact with a foreign language will find some features of it quite easy and others extremely difficult. Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.

(p. 2)

Central to behaviorists' theory regarding second language learning was the notion of transfer. That is that learners would use patterns from their L1 and use them in their acquisition of an L2 (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Two types of language acquisition transfer exist and are known as positive and negative transfer.

Positive transfer occurs when languages in the same language family, such as the Athabascan language family, share similarities through linguistic elements or cognates. Lower Tanana for instance is in the same Athabascan language family and takes the same word order as Gwich'in for the placement of adjectives. In Gwich'in, "łajj choo"² is literally "dog big" and for Lower Tanana, it is "łiga chwɔ" for "dog big" (S. G. Tuttle, personal communication, January 27, 2006).

Negative transfer occurs when there is polarity between the two languages. For example, in the Gwich'in language classroom most of the students' L1 is English. In using adjectives in English, we say 'big dog'; however in Gwich'in, we say 'dog big' where the adjective follows the noun. Learners consistently use the English word order when using Gwich'in adjectives.

Finally, through the theory of CA, the role of the first language became an important link to second language acquisition. The language learning component of CA was based on American structuralism, in that it was a belief that oral language was much more important than the written. Oral language could be transcribed and

²Unicode is used in this research for the spelling of the Gwich'in language, which uses tone and nasal diacritics. Unicode has some limitations for all of the Gwich'in font, therefore the spelling may or may not include all of these diacritics.

analyzed according to a set of linguistic levels. These levels included--in order of acquisition--phonetic, phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels. It was these levels of acquisition, and the thorough understanding of each level which were the basis for how to teach a second language. It was posited that structural knowledge should be known of the first and second languages so that sound pedagogical materials could be developed (Johnson, 2004).

Pedagogical materials that were developed as a result of CA were contingent on two interpretations. One interpretation was considered to be a strong variation, while the other interpretation was considered to be a weak variation. Respectively, these came to be known as *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Gass & Selinker (2001) expounded on these terms to mean the *predictive* versus the *explanatory* views.

In the strong or predictive view, pedagogical materials were based on a description of language structures and cultures of both the first and target languages. The purposes of these linguistic and cultural descriptions were to identify or to predict what would be easy or difficult for the learners. The strong version of the CA had contradictions within it and was therefore rejected. Learners' performances sometimes proved otherwise. For example, where it was predicted that learners would not have difficulty actually revealed itself as places where they in fact, did have difficulty, and vice versa (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

The weak version was not as strongly criticized because analysis focused on learners' errors which repeatedly appeared. Based on these errors, there is an effort to account for the errors by comparing differences between the native language (NL) and

target language (TL). The weak version's contribution to SLA was that there was an attempt to see what learners do, to see what they produced, and to study language learning strategies in order to create an interlanguage (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Johnson, 2004).

Error analysis. Error analysis is an approach in SLA which focuses on actual learners errors and what they do to construct language use. The types of learner errors are from the TL, as opposed to the differences of the NL and TL in the weak version of the CA. Saville-Troike (2006) notes that error analysis took the place of CA in the early 1970's because of the following reasons:

- Predictions made by CA did not always materialize in actual learner errors, as noted above. More importantly, many real learner errors could not be attributed to transfer from L1 to L2.
- As linguistic theory changed, the exclusive focus on surface-level forms and patterns by structural linguists shifted to concern for underlying rules.
- The behaviorist assumption that habit formation accounts for language acquisition was seriously questioned by many linguists and psychologists. There was a shift to Mentalism in explanations of language acquisition, with emphasis on the innate capacity of the language learner rather than on external influences.

- The study of SLA was no longer motivated as strongly by teaching concerns as it had been for CA. L2 learning came to be thought of as independent of L2 teaching to some extent, and researchers began to separate issues in SLA from pedagogical concerns. Learning processes became an important focus for study in their own right. (pp. 37-38).

Learner errors which are described and analyzed were first introduced by S. P. Corder in his seminal paper called *The significance of learners' errors* (1967). In this paper, Corder urged applied linguists to take heed of learner's errors as they are in the process of learning a second language (Corder, 1967). The synthesis of these two disciplines--psychology and linguistics--provided the theoretical framework for learners to work out hypotheses about target language grammatical structures. It was through trial and error that learners went through the "grammar" of a language in a methodical way, and as learners acquired more of the grammar of the TL, they produced their own interlanguage, which is neither the L1 nor the L2 language.

It was through these trials and errors in which the errors were analyzed, which came to be known as "error analysis." "Error analysis" focuses on errors a learner makes through linguistic analysis. In contrast to "contrastive analysis" that focuses on comparing languages, error analysis makes comparisons on errors a learner makes in production of the L2 based on the L2 forms. A similarity to the weaker version of contrastive analysis is that both analyses focus on learner language production.

From a pedagogical viewpoint, error analysis may provide teachers with an opportunity to identify and analyze errors made by learners and then to alter how they teach based on these errors. Also the data highlighted the L2 learners--what they produced and their strategies for their arrival at their interlanguage.

Researchers such as Schachter (1974, 1983, 1992) and Schachter & Celce-Murcia (1971) found disadvantages with error analysis because (a) it only looked at errors and did not take into account any other information, (b) they found it problematic as to determine *what an error is an error of*, (c) there is the assumption that just because a form is correct that the correct linguistic rules are also known and (d) some errors do not belong in one of the two categories of errors. Dulay & Burt (1974b) added yet another category to error analysis which they termed *ambiguous goofs* (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Ideas on language learning and/or language teaching from the disciplines of psychology, cognitive science, and linguistics were based on hard sciences with stress on predictability, reducing data and processes to seem less complex, and develop universal laws for causal relationships. Finally, cognitive processes were completely ignored because these researchers were interested in reactions or to look at simple speech as it applied to abstract linguistic structures (Roebuck, 2000).

In these early days of SLA, these theories on "language acquisition" and "language teaching" were brought into question as far as theory and practicality. It was especially the strong version that was disliked because it mainly aimed at the absence

of universal grammar systems which could give leverage to the teacher in comparing languages (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Behaviorism and the offshoot of CA were under the realm of "hard science," therefore; any mental processes could not be evaluated, and furthermore, could not be measured. At least two reasons surfaced as to why behaviorist theory and its applications were rejected: (a) researchers were in search of responses that answered their own questions and methods, and (b) any thoughts and/or feelings of the subjects were ignored, leading one to believe that the researcher took a subjective role.

The great impact of the CA on SLA theory was that it affected second language teaching in the classroom (Johnson, 2004). Even though CA was rejected, its' biggest contribution to research on SLA was the realization that comparing two language structures could lead to difficulty or ease in learning a second language. At a later time, Lado realized the limitations of his work, in that error predictions could not be validated (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

Morpheme order studies. The work on morpheme order studies are related to the concept of interlanguage (IL). IL is described as the interim grammar that a language learner knows as they move towards the goal of learning a target language (Saville-Troike, 2006). The theory that guided the morpheme order studies was that learning a second language was like learning a first language because individuals possess universal, innate mechanisms, which came to be known as the L1=L2 hypothesis. As an extension of the research by Brown (1973), the acquisition sequence

of English morphemes was studied in children learning English as either their L1 or L2 by Dulay and Burt (1974).

Dulay and Burt provided evidence that morphemes are acquired in a somewhat sequential order as language learning progressed in L1 and L2 learners. These morphemes included the order of acquisition for English L1 learners, and the order of acquisition for English L2 learners. They concluded that internal, rather than external forces are how second language learning can be researched and explained. This conclusion dispelled the notion of behaviorism. Researchers then began to focus on the internal processes of language learning, which came to be known as cognitivism (Johnson, 2004).

Cognitivism

This theory of SLA centers on the individual and their internal mental processes as it relates to language learning, and is linguistically based. The literature reviewed for cognitivism will include (a) the distinction between communicative competence and performance, (b) proficiency, (c) Krashen's input hypothesis, including the affective filter hypothesis, (d) Long's interaction hypothesis, and (e) Indigenous learning.

Communicative competence and performance. In the mid-1960's, Noam Chomsky, a well known linguist, was the first to provide the distinction between what is meant by linguistic competence and linguistic performance when learning a first language. His theory was linguistically based which stemmed from his work on the language acquisition device (LAD) of which universal grammar (UG) is a part.

According to Chomsky, the LAD is responsible for the innate knowledge that is unique to humans, and it is this knowledge which is common to all languages during the acquisition of a first language (Johnson, 2004; Saville-Troike, 2006). Chomsky's definition of linguistic competence and performance is as follows:

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. (Chomsky 1965, p. 3)

Linguistic competence and linguistic performance were the outcomes of Chomsky's linguistic theory. Linguistic *competence* is one's tacit knowledge of grammar and linguistic *performance* is the use of the grammar for speaking.

In response to Chomsky, researchers in language acquisition began to form their own perspectives on competence and performance. Most instrumental among these researchers were Canale and Swain (1980), whose empirical research incorporated research by Hymes (1972) and Campbell and Wales (1970).

These three researchers, Hymes, and Campbell and Wales expounded on Chomsky's distinction between competence and performance. Hymes first introduced the term "communicative competence" which he defined as broadening Chomsky's terms to include sociolinguistic, as well as contextual and grammatical competence (Hymes, 1972). Campbell and Wales, on the other hand, thought that using language

appropriately in context was vital for “communicative competence” (Campbell & Wales, 1970).

Canale and Swain used the above researchers’ perspectives to critique and analyze theoretical views on competence and performance. Their findings revealed that researchers were using the term “communicative competence” as being distinct from the terms grammatical or linguistic competence. However, they concluded that grammatical or linguistic competence is only one segment of communicative competence.

As a result, and in relation to second language acquisition, they provided the following as general guidelines for communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), which have been matched with the UAF Gwich’in language classroom:

Table 2. Communicative Competences and the Gwich'in Language Classroom

Canale & Swain "Communicative Competence"	UAF Gwich'in Language Classroom Examples
<i>Grammatical Competence</i> (knowledge of lexicon, rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology)	Speech sounds, sentence structure, units of meaning in language, and vocabulary which are based on thematic units once per week over one hour of class time
<i>Sociolinguistic Competence</i> (appropriate use of language in sociocultural context, including attitude and register)	Understanding why Gwich'in people introduce themselves in a certain way.
<i>Discourse Competence</i> (combination of utterances and communicative functions but not grammar)	Being able to answer impromptu questions and give presentations.
<i>Strategic Competence</i> (verbal and non-verbal strategies used during communication breakdown) (Canale & Swain, pgs. 29-31)	Use of circumlocutions, gestures, props, pictures, real items, role play, drawing or technology. Suggestions by instructor on how to use language in context when not in class.

Although Canale and Swain did not fully articulate discourse competence in their 1980 article, Canale (1983) later explained this particular competence in more detail. His definition of discourse competence was then incorporated and became officially known as the four competences of communicative competence as originally set forth by Canale and Swain.

In reaction to Canale and Swain's research, Savignon (1983) ascertained that grammatical competence was only one of the components of communicative

competence and provides practical applications of each of Canale and Swain's communicative competences.

An important distinction for language learners that Savignon makes is that successful communication falls largely on an individual as they are learning. For instance, their ability to take risks, verbalizing in the language and their means for being understood all contribute to successful communication. In addition, Savignon also pointed out that because communicative competence is based on varying situations that communicative competence should be thought about as “degrees of communicative competence” (cited in Omaggio-Hadley, 2001). The idea of “degrees of communicative competence” is intriguing because it adds a dimension of language proficiency.

Proficiency. Proficiency in a language is knowing and using the language in context as opposed to knowing about the language. The National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (2006), in collaboration with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) summarizes communication as “knowing how, when, and why to say what to whom.” (p. 11) Their justification is as follows:

All the linguistic and social knowledge required for effective human-to-human interaction is encompassed in those ten words. Formerly, most teaching in foreign language classrooms concentrated on the how (grammar) to say what (vocabulary). While these components of language remain crucial, the current organizing principle for language

study is communication, which also highlights the why, the whom, and the when (the sociolinguistic and cultural aspects of language). (p. 11)

In order to support these claims, the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project (1993-1996) expounded on the guidelines as set forth by the 1986 ACTFL guidelines for speaking, reading, writing, and listening. The ACTFL guidelines focus on what a second language learner should know through various stages which are novice, intermediate, advanced and superior. The novice, intermediate and advanced stages are further subtitled into low, intermediate, and high standards. For further reading regarding the history and development of these stages, see Liskin-Gasparro (1984), and for a description of each of the stages, see the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (1999).

The standards which were written by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project are intended to provide a broad perspective which can change and be fluid that could be applied to all languages. The principles used in teaching and learning a second language are based on the “five C’s”, which are communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities. None of these five C’s stand alone, as they are in one form or another, interconnected (Phillips, 1999; National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006). Included in the book of standards, are standards which have been modified in the five areas for each of the following languages: Arabic, Chinese, classical languages, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 2006).

The ACTFL guidelines and the subsequent standards by the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project historically have not been used in the teaching of Gwich'in. The ACTFL guidelines are based on non-Native mainstream language learning for foreign languages which leads one to wonder if there are components of the ACTFL guidelines and the standards which can be useful when considering classroom teaching for Indigenous languages. Another open question concerns the role of language barriers if traditionally, Indigenous peoples are not used to being the center of attention, as most communicative language classes require one to be active in the learning process. As a result of these questions, Krashen's hypotheses on adult second language acquisition, namely the input hypothesis, the affective filter hypothesis, and the learning versus acquisition dichotomy will be the focus of the next section.

Input hypothesis. In the 1980's, linguist Stephen Krashen introduced five hypotheses about second language acquisition as they pertain to adults. The five hypotheses are: (a) The Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, (b) The Natural Order Hypothesis, (c) The Monitor Hypothesis, (d) The Input Hypothesis, and (e) The Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985).

Since the focus of this review is on the Acquisition-Learning, the Input, and the Affective Filter hypotheses, the other two will only be mentioned. They are the Natural Order and Monitor hypotheses. Krashen and Terrell (1983) state that the Natural Order hypothesis "...states that grammatical structures are acquired (not necessarily learned) in a predictable order" (pg. 28), while the Monitor hypothesis

“...states that conscious learning has an extremely limited function in adult second language performance: it can only be used as a Monitor, or an editor” (pg. 30, emphasis in original).

The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis draws a division between what is meant by acquiring as opposed to learning in order to develop competence in a second language. Krashen and Terrell explain that acquiring a language is like learning a first language, where there is no formal teaching, no explicit knowledge of the grammar of the language, and subconsciously “picking up” the language. On the other hand, learning a language is gaining knowledge about the language through formal schooling where there is explicit knowledge of rules of the language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Krashen, 1985).

In relation to the Gwich'in language classroom, the acquisition/learning distinction melds because initially, the acquisition of the language is admittedly subconscious and implicit as students practice speaking and using the language through context. Only after they have practiced and used the language for at least one week does the explicit knowledge of grammar contribute to their learning. To further counterpoint Krashen's acquisition/learning hypothesis, the researcher grew up in an acquisition rich environment, yet never picked up the language because of historical circumstances that prevented this to occur. At a later time, however, the researcher began to learn her own ancestral language as an adult which in turn led to acquisition. This acquisition, coupled with knowledge of second language acquisition theories,

was enough to lead the researcher into becoming the instructor for the Gwich'in language class at the university level.

Following along the lines of the Acquisition-Learning and the Natural Order hypotheses, the Input hypothesis declares that on the continuum of the Natural Order of acquisition, learning takes place by understanding language that is a bit beyond already acquired language which is also known as the $i + 1$ concept. In the Gwich'in language classroom, it would be difficult for the instructor to ascertain the i (i.e. their actual level of acquisition) and to also determine how much students can understand. Every individual, because of their personality and past history, has their own rate of acquisition and understanding a second language. Furthermore, Krashen's concept of $i + 1$ should not be confused with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) because they reflect two diverse theories of learning. For an empirical view of the literature studied on these disparate theories, consider reading Dunn and Lantolf (1998).

The Affective Filter hypothesis, in conjunction with the Input hypothesis, relates to how second language learners approach language learning through the metaphor of a filter. This filter, in Krashen's view is known as "attitudinal" (pg. 37, emphasis in original), and can hypothetically be placed on a bar graph to depict the range of low to high. If an individual has a low affective filter, then this is considered optimal for language input, which in turn will accelerate learning the language. On the other hand, if an individual has a high affective filter, then it will adversely affect language input, and as a result slow the rate at which they learn the language.

As an Indigenous learner of my own ancestral language, I had a very high affective filter because I was constantly being put down for attempting to speak and learn Gwich'in. In speaking to many other Indigenous language learners (not only Gwich'in), they related the same experiences of being laughed at and hearing merciless remarks from fluent speakers. Having this type of experience is enough for an Indigenous language learner to give up, even if their goal is to understand and speak with, for instance, their grandparents. This type of non-supportive environment leads one to wonder why it is necessary to learn their ancestral language when it is simply much easier to use English.

Other ideas that may carry over into the language classroom which contribute to a high affective filter include learners' perceptions that an Indigenous language is difficult or impossible to learn. This perception may have been the result of hearing fluent speakers, linguists, or language teachers express this as a frustration because none of these people have had training on how to teach a second language. If, in fact, they have had training, it was geared to learning the writing system and/or grammar points. Having this perception alone can lead to stress, frustration, anxiety, and lack of motivation; thereby raising the affective filter.

My own experience in lowering this affective filter is to seek those people who are supportive, and to practice with fluent speakers who are patient, kind, and sympathetic to your attempts. My mentor, Lillian Garnett, is a prime example of this type of person. We have had many laughs together, and there have been countless times that I have asked her questions, such as "ajj chan jidii?" (and what is that?). She

has always patiently answered my questions and as a result, I have learned a variety of ways to say the same thing, and to learn to be patient with those who are in the process of learning.

Having had this positive experience with Lillian has enabled me to carry this over into the classroom in the form of creating a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to learning the language as a second language. This thesis will further investigate how these play out in an Indigenous language classroom.

Krashen's hypotheses continue to pose interesting discussions amongst second language acquisition researchers. Many researchers of second language acquisition reacted both negatively and positively to Krashen's hypotheses. One such reaction was to study what the role of interaction plays in second language acquisition.

Interaction hypothesis. In the early 1980's, Michael Long introduced his seminal work on the role of interaction as it pertained to second language acquisition. This became known as the interaction hypothesis which highlighted two claims about the role of interaction:

“Comprehensible input is necessary for L2 acquisition.

Modifications to the interactional structure of conversations which take place in the process of negotiating a communication problem help to make input comprehensible to an L2 learner.” (Ellis, 1991, pg. 4).

These claims are based on the works of Krashen and Evelyn Hatch. In particular, it was Krashen's input hypothesis in which the learner is focused on meaning, and therefore acquires what is comprehensible. Hatch used discourse

analysis to study children and adults studying an L2 in a naturalistic setting through interaction. She concluded that L2 learners' acquisition of grammar resulted from the kinds of interactions in which they participated. The kinds of interactions between native speakers and second language participants that were a part of Hatch's study include the interactions that occurred through conversations. Between adults, below is a partial list of the types of conversational interactions studied in the form of questions:

- Who controlled the conversations and how did this occur?
- How were topics managed?
- How did turn-taking occur?
- What was the role of non-verbal gestures?
- What were the reactions of the second language learner?
- How was vocabulary used to make clarifications?
- How were repairs addressed?
- Was the sentence grammar simplified? (Hatch, 1978).

Long's research on input and interaction involved studying what non-native Japanese speakers did in interview situations. The talk that these participants produced was termed "foreigner talk." The input he examined consisted of the range of vocabulary and also the scope of sentence complexity which were used. Interactions he investigated included how time was marked, discourse, and how they incorporated topics. His findings revealed that foreigner talk enlisted some input adjustments but

many more interactional adaptations. The difference between Long's input adjustments and interactional adaptations were that input consisted of correct or incorrect usage of grammar, while interactional adaptations consisted of adjustments made by native speakers as they interacted with non-native speakers. Some examples of Long's interactional adaptations include the use of topic negotiation process, questions as comprehension checks, use of stress and/or pauses, etc. (Long, 1983). It is precisely these findings for the amount of interactional adjustments that Long intertwined with the term negotiation of meaning as:

“negotiation of meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS [native speaker] or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways.” (Long, 1996, p. 451-452, emphasis in original).

Recall that cognitivism centers on the individual and their intramental processes as they relate to language learning. Although the research conducted by Long is an expansion and improvement of previous research to include the idea of interaction, his interaction hypothesis does fall in the realm of cognitivism. Long (1997) acknowledges this belief to refute the claims made by Firth and Wagner (1997) in which they claim that “...methodologies, theories, and foci within SLA reflect an imbalance between cognitive and mentalistic orientations, and social and contextual orientations to language.” (pg. 285). Long counteracts by stating “Whether F&W like it or not (they do not), most SLA researchers view of object of inquiry as in large part

an internal, mental process: *the acquisition of new (linguistic) knowledge.*" (p. 319, emphasis in original). Long does acknowledge that SLA should be a part of a social setting, but within the same sentence he believes there is no quantitative theory behind it and discounts it as being abstract and void. He states,

SLA is a process that (often) takes place in a social setting, of course, but then so do most internal processes--learning, thinking, remembering, sexual arousal, and digestion, for example--and that neither obviates the need for theories of those processes, nor shifts the goal of inquiry to a theory of the settings (ibid.).

Long's response to Firth and Wagner is typical of those who believe that the cognitive approach is unsurpassed, despite more recent interest in the social approach (Johnson, 2004). The cognitive approach is confined to a mental process but does not take into account what occurs with the language learner as a whole--their history, their knowledge, their identity, etc. Considering the fragile state of Indigenous languages, knowing these histories, and how learning takes place from an Indigenous perspective is something that can no longer be taken for granted.

Indigenous learning. So far, we have found that behaviorism and cognitivism have their own limitations in the role of second language acquisition. Behaviorism was based on learning as a habit which was dispelled through the work of Chomsky. Cognitivism does not take into account the social aspect of individuals who are in the process of learning a second language. Furthermore, both of these theories focused on

ascertaining internal mental processes, and the attainment of linguistic knowledge of language learning.

Indigenous learning is not based on learning as a habit, nor does it discount past histories of individuals. In fact, the opposite is the case, in which Indigenous teaching and learning is all encompassing and revolves around the everyday process of life (Kawagley, 1995; Battiste, 2002; Sims, 2004). It is based on values which have been passed on to elders, who in turn pass their wisdom to the next generation. They are the main source for “survival skills, historical knowledge, ... medicine and spirituality, stories and legends, customs and rituals, language and terminology [and] values and traditions.”(Tatti, et. al, 1993, pg. 13).

Although Kawagley is not Gwich'in, his research can be generalized to include the worldview of most Indigenous cultures, in which there is a close relationship with the land and all it entails, and values as they pertain to humans.

Bielawski states that “...knowledge was gained through activity as well as contemplation and observation, and production of knowledge was also a social activity.” (cited in Kawagley, 1995, p. 23).

Observations, in part, to which Kawagley refers, extend from traditional stories, rituals, ceremonies, spiritual awareness, placenames, etc. (Tatti, et. al., 1993; Kawagley, 2003) which are an integral part of firsthand language learning as experienced through what is known as place-based learning. Place-based learning is compatible with Indigenous education, and is also associated with other types of learning, such as experiential learning, contextual learning, outdoor education or

community-based education (Gruenewald, 2003). Place-based learning has gained momentum, and has been instrumental in some situations where students have been taken out on to the land to learn various traditional ways of living, such as learning the process of skin tanning and all that is associated with it from beginning to end product. See, for instance, the various videos or dvds which have been produced by the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative and the Alaska Federation of Natives (<http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/media/videos/show.html>, retrieved October 15, 2008).

Ideally, this would be the way to learn the language, but many times it is impossible to recreate a fish camp or even to go somewhere to learn about tanning an animal skin.

Barring this place-based situation, and being confined to the language classroom, what are some things that a language teacher or instructor can do to alleviate this predicament? In this circumstance, a language teacher or instructor can make the classroom as place-based as possible by trying to make it nearly as real as if it were place-based. This can be accomplished through the use of artifacts such as pictures based in authentic settings, and real items such as traditional clothing, tools or food, etc.. In this way, conversations are in cultural context which makes sense to the students. Branching out to resources in the community is another way to expose students to experiential learning. For instance, one can take field trips to the museum or visit elders and do something real for them, such as cooking, visiting, and serving them. The impact of these activities on classroom culture will be the focus of this investigation as it pertains to the Gwich'in university language classroom.

As an Indigenous instructor, doing this type of teaching is authentic for me because this is what I have lived and know at this point in my life. This type of knowledge through this type of teaching is very social, and goes right back to the way that Indigenous people know about teaching and learning--that is to be all encompassing.

Sociocultural theory and interaction. Sociocultural theory (SCT) is based on the concepts of Lev S. Vygotsky's philosophy on learning and teaching. Vygotsky (1896-1934) was a Russian born psychologist and semiotician (Wertsch, 1985). His philosophy on learning and teaching is that they occur through interaction in social context, and that "learning is both individual and social and, at the same time, natural and cultural" (Wink & Putney, 2002, p. xxix). This learning is internalized through the assistance of a teacher/instructor or by peers. This assistance occurs in what Vygotsky calls the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD refers to a zone where there is potentially room for learning to take place. This zone is located in between what the learner already knows but in which learning can take place if there is help from another more capable person of the subject through social interaction and the use of tools (Wertsch, 1985; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

"Tools" can be envisioned as the mechanisms through which mediation takes place in order to solve a problem. These mediational tools can be physical (for example, artifacts) or psychological (for example, gestures, charts, stories, technology, language, etc.). Of the psychological tools, language is the most important and effective tool when learning a language. The idea of learning a language gives one

access to these tools which is quite different than the traditional belief that language simply “transmits” meaning. Language does so much more because it causes one to be social and to speak in context. The importance of this to ancestral language learning is that Indigenous teaching and learning occurs through social activities. These activities can make use of a myriad of tools which have an infinite potential for creating context for language learning.

Humans as social beings also carry with them their personal histories which affect their goals and expectations. These personal histories in a language classroom relate to both the instructor and the students. The personal histories and the goals of the instructor and students will be further investigated as this research progresses.

SCT and interaction through the use of tools (physical and psychological), then, is an essential part of the Gwich'in language classroom. Tools normally used in a community, such as language or artifacts used in context, makes it a social and community-like atmosphere.

Classroom Culture

The basis for classroom culture can be traced back to the field of social psychology (Marrow, 1969; Alderfer, 1977). It is a field which endeavors to understand how an individual learns, and then extends this notion further into how groups are formed. Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), a German born psychologist, was most influential with his research on individual motivation in a social environment. He extended this research to what are known as group processes. At the crux of his study of varying groups, he was interested in “...how leaders are chosen, how group

atmosphere is formed, how group decisions are reached, how the members communicate with one another, how group standards are established.” (Marrow, 1969, p. 166) Marrow goes on to state that Lewin coined the term “group dynamics” in 1939. In the field of second language acquisition, Ehrman & Dörnyei have applied this concept to the classroom. Group dynamics is associated with values, expectations, behavior, and social systems (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998).

Wells, Jr. (1990) states that a group is the “sum total of the individual co-actors (members) and their intrapsychic dynamics. ...the group has a life of its own distinct from but related to the dynamics of the co-actors who compose the group membership.” (pg. 55). In a classroom context, this definition explains the totality of the interaction between classroom participants which includes all of the students and the instructor. It also takes into consideration student and instructor goals. For example, student goals might be: reclaiming an ancestral language, preparing for fieldwork in indigenous communities, or a general interest in learning Alaskan Native languages. Instructor goals might be: stay in the target language, provide as much scaffolding as necessary for the learners, or get the learners to understand that it is possible to learn a Native language. This mesh of learners and instructor goals creates a close-knit community which provides the foundation of a classroom culture.

Groups form based on common purposes and generate many more ways of thinking than what one individual could generate alone. In many cultures throughout the world, groups form to express their commonality of purpose. For example, at the Gwich'in gathering (1988) which has been translated by the author, an elder says

“Nihłaa tr’agwarah’in ji’ diit’ aii gwiheelyaa.” (If we work together, we will be strong.).

A group of people at a bazaar or a group of people at a concert are not what is meant as a “group” for this research because these types of groups only stay together temporarily. By the term “group”, the author seeks to define the process by which a group becomes cohesive. In this sense, students who sign up for a class have a common purpose, which is to learn the target language. This act of signing up for the class is what marks the first step in creating a group. It is a process that includes (a) commitment and interaction between the learners and the instructor, (b) sharing a common goal, (c) roles of the learners and the instructor with implicit or explicit rules, and (d) patterns develop over time. Group formations may either be negative or positive, and is dependent on what occurs in the classroom from the first few days that the class meets (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

The knowledge of how classroom culture works in a language classroom, therefore, provides powerful knowledge for language teachers in creating and maintaining a positive learning atmosphere. In this sense, there is an inextricable link between language classrooms, teachers, and learners in the way they begin to create a positive group (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). As a result, the following will include a review on (a) the role of the instructor, (b) the role of the learners, and (c) the formation of a group in the language classroom.

Instructor’s role. In general terms, as described by McCollom, forming a group is a process that requires the “leader” to (a) provide expectations or goals, (b)

establish norms which infer behavioral rules, and (c) provide a safe and productive environment. These three steps (a) allow interaction to take place, and (b) allow the leader to see relational patterns as they emerge between individuals when they interact (McCollom, 1990). In the classroom, the role of “leader” relates most closely to the instructor. In addition, part of providing a safe and productive environment is for the leader to also notice when too much information is being conveyed (Gillette, 1990). When this happens, reactions from the learners begin to present themselves in the form of body language.

In sum, the role of the instructor is (a) to set goals, (b) to set and enforce behavioral rules, (c) provide a safe environment, and (d) to notice relational patterns. Each will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. While exploring each of these dimensions is an important component of the data analysis, and will be discussed further in Chapter 4, a few examples from the Gwich’in classroom will be provided here to illustrate the constructs.

Instructor Expectations or goals. The instructor’s expectations or goals are paramount in the formation of the group in the language classroom. It begins the moment the instructor steps into the classroom, for example, with the expectation that the learners hear and use the target language as much as possible. The instructor’s expectations are crucial on the first day, as they set the tone that all learners are expected to participate and “stay in the language.” Another expectation is that there are no English translations. The ways to get around translations are to use props, pictures, gestures, or technology to get the point across. Learners are also expected to

practice and provide brief presentations which can be understood by anyone who might be visiting the class.

Instructor Behavioral Rules. Usually, adult students do not need classroom “rules”; however, it is very important to establish them, even if one does not think they are necessary. They may appear in the form of either explicit or implicit rules. Some examples of explicit rules may be not to chew gum or to be on time. It would be extremely difficult to say something like “vikeech’alch’yaa” (I am cooking something) because the gum would get in the way of the ch’ and ł consonants. As for time, there is only one hour per day in which a lot of material is covered. It is a waste of the other learners’ and the instructor’s time to repeat what had already been said. Examples of implicit rules are that humor is part of the culture. Since implicit “rules” are unstated, they are a little harder to understand, especially for serious students. Humor is an integral part of many of Alaska’s Indigenous languages, and Gwich’in is no exception. However, as the “classroom culture” develops, they begin to see through interaction with the instructor that laughter is a large part of the class because of the constant teasing and joking that takes place. The bantering might begin as they begin to learn about kinship relationships (boy/girlfriends, wife, husband, etc.). The reasons as to why rules are important in a language classroom are because they support the expectations of the instructor and provide a framework for the learners.

Safe and Productive Environment. Most adult students in a language classroom come in with a high affective filter, which is not conducive to language learning. As stated under sociocultural theory and interaction above, students are given

psychological and physical tools to cope with using the TL and to try to lower their affective filter. To reiterate, psychological tools are in the form of language, while physical tools are in the form of props. An example of one of these language tools which provides the cushion for a safe and productive environment is the expectation from the onset that everyone will have a chance to speak on the first day, despite the fact that the sounds and word order of the language are very different from their first language. This is done by providing them with a mechanism of being able to ask “Nats’ ahts’ à’ (english word or phrase) gwinyàa?” (how do we say (english phrase)? Without these tools, it would be impossible to teach the class, and learners would not be able to make sense of the language. It would be a frustrating experience for both instructor and learners.

Notice Relational Patterns. Relational patterns refer to the beliefs about what learners have established about themselves as individuals, and the task which is before them. These patterns in turn, “form the group culture.” (McCollom, 1990, p. 44). In this case, these relational patterns apply to the Gwich’in language classroom by way of learners’ individual interactions with all the learners in various combinations of small groups. As individuals, in these small groups, and also in the group as a whole, it situates their beliefs about language learning. These beliefs can be in the form of questions which arise concerning their role in the language classroom, and also the expectations of the instructor. Although there may be many more, such questions may include:

- Why am I taking this class?
- What do others think about me (especially with my class standing)?
- Where will learning this ancestral language lead me?
- Why do I want to make the time to make weekly presentations?
- Will I learn anything out of this class?
- How much time am I willing to spend on learning the language?
- Why would I care about this Indigenous language?

For their part, learners must also possess (a) a reason for wanting to learn the language, (b) motivation, and (c) a positive attitude about learning a second language (Gillette, 1994).

Learners' Role. Gillette goes on to point out that learners are "...motivated human being[s], whose existential experience, world view, and intentions all influence classroom behavior." (p. 196). In relation to learners' behaviors in the language classroom, the following are factors which are a reflection on Gillette's points:

- Underlying reason that learners are in the classroom
- Learner's attitude about learning an L2
- Learner's background history

The underlying reason that learners are part of the language classroom culture determines how they will behave. This behavior will take one of two paths, which is either a genuine interest in learning the L2 or because it is part of a requirement, such as through work or school.

A learner's background history on the value they place on learning a second language also plays a major role regarding their attitudes, which in turn affects their language goals. A learner's background history which takes into account their social environment will shape their thinking on language learning, and will affect whether their experiences will be positive or negative (Gillette, 1994). Additionally, this positive or negative experience connects with the instructor's expectations and contributes to the classroom culture which is co-constructed.

The notion of having a positive or negative classroom atmosphere illustrates the dynamics of how members of the group evolve over time as they work together. In the classroom, this group as a whole is made up of the instructor and learners (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The role of the instructor is to facilitate (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), rather than to have one way communication from the instructor to the learners (Freire, 2007) and the roles of the learners are to be engaged and take full responsibility for their learning (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). When this type of facilitating and learning takes place, it is known as a social unit which is a powerful concept because it "...is in many ways bigger than the sum of its parts" (p. 4). The rewards of a positive classroom culture are fulfilling for everyone in the group because the positive atmosphere pushes learners beyond their limits and expectations.

Group Formation as Process

How then, does a positive group form in an L2 classroom? Simply put, it begins on the very first day. The first day is taut with the unknown and uncertainty, i.e. not knowing the other learners or the instructor or not knowing how to behave

socially (McCollom, 1990). There are daunting feelings and emotions which explode in everyone's minds as they arrive for the first day of class (see Figure 2.1.).



Figure 2.1. Explosion of Unexpressed Thoughts

Dörnyei & Murphey (2003) sum up uncomfortable feelings that learners may experience as they begin to form a group during their first day of class as:

- general anxiety;
- uncertainty about being accepted;
- uncertainty about their own competence;
- general lack of confidence;
- inferiority;
- restricted identity and freedom;

- awkwardness;
- anxiety about using the L2;
- anxiety about not knowing what to do (comprehending). (p. 15)

Since these uncomfortable feelings are generally unexpressed, the first few days of class appear to run smoothly, with learners being polite to one another through their interactions (see Figure 2.2.). However, what is not apparent is the active, yet invisible structuring and organization that is taking place. As this occurs, first impressions are created: participants begin to form relationships, rank the various abilities of others, and establish norms and roles which will stay with them over a period of time (McCollom, 1990; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Senior, 2006). It is up to the instructor then, during these initial days, to take advantage of this little window in order to establish the framework so that a positive group takes root.



Figure 2.2. First Few Days of Group Formation

In addition, the instructor may also experience some of these uncomfortable feelings. This means too, that the instructor is also a forming part of this group, and in doing so needs to take part in activities with the learners and provide a reciprocal relationship, i.e. sharing personal information.

There are two conditions on which the group members base their membership in a newly formed group. These two conditions are attraction and acceptance (Dörnyei & Murphey, p. 18) The focus of this research will be on the second condition because attraction is a short-lived condition.

The condition of acceptance is more important because it is this concept that bonds the group, and will thwart any type of ill will if it exists. According to Dörnyei & Murphey (2003), some contributing factors which may lead to acceptance of members of a group are: (a) getting to know each other, (b) proximity, (c) connection, (d) interaction, (e) cooperation, (f) activities outside of class, (g) struggling together, and (h) observing the instructor exercise this acceptance, essentially acting as a role model. Acceptance, then, is the foundation for group formation and is another valuable and powerful tool for teachers to use and understand as they begin to create their own classroom culture.

Getting to know each other and the teacher involves sharing personal information through oral interaction. This can be done by way of helping learners to relax through non-threatening activities or what are popularly known as icebreakers or warm-up activities. Some non-threatening information that learners may obtain from each other include likes or dislikes, personal information about their siblings, hobbies, habits, etc. (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003; Senior, 2006).

Proximity refers to the nearness of physical space between individuals, and can be equated to what a group of learners share in common, and may lead to solidarity. In the first few days of class, it is best to move learners around so that there is plenty of

interaction and sharing of personal information. This in turn will lead to development of relationships that promote acceptance through interaction which can be achieved through group work.

The way in which cooperation promotes acceptance is that it enables language learners to become a unified team, especially as they are solving tasks or other activities that require them to work together. Learners begin to bond by assisting each other to reach a common goal (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

Activities outside of the language classroom, such as fieldtrips encourage learners to get to know one another better by not being confined to the classroom. Their affective filters go down, and they treat one another as if they were not learners, but as ordinary citizens. Activities outside of the classroom should be free from stress and be something that is fun for the learners.

Struggling together to overcome a concept or activity is yet another way to promote acceptance. Once learners experience these struggles together, it is something that they can never forget; therefore making them become a close knit group.

Learners, by observing the teacher's behavior of being empathetic and supportive, will take this as a lead. When learners see that the teacher praises all learners, they take this as a cue as something that they can also mimic. In particular, teachers need to be tuned to all learners to gauge whether they are accepted or not by others in the classroom. If they are not, then they should be given attention so that the other learners will also begin to accept that person or persons. It is through these

actions that the instructor then becomes a role model whereby the class is inclusive as a group no matter what the skills and levels of the individuals may indicate.

Of all the acceptance protocols above, at least two warrant special attention. They are (1) knowing names, and (2) using non-threatening activities to get to know one another.

Knowing one another's names is crucial because it is difficult to speak to someone if you do not know their name or to even have a rapport with them. If a teacher makes a concerted effort to know all the names in the group, learners begin to have a sense of belonging or identity in the classroom. This seemingly simple maneuver on the part of the teacher can bring enormous rewards in the way of learner performance at an increased level of learning.

Using non-threatening activities (icebreakers) should engage everyone in a way that lowers the affective filter. The goal is to get learners to relax as much as possible, for them to get to know one another by interacting and moving around, and to involve humor. On a deeper level though, learners get used to hearing one another's voices, seeing the movements of their fellow learners, and setting the framework for relationships by sharing personal information that is not embarrassing.

Equally as important as acceptance amongst the group members are the establishment of norms because they can lead to the amount of learning that occurs. Group norms are explicit and implicit rules of the classroom which should ideally be negotiated by all members so that everyone knows what to expect. An explicit norm include behavior with one another, use of target language, attendance or what is or is

not allowed, etc. Implicit norms are expectations which are not put forth directly, but nonetheless are expectations that evolve over time and are unplanned, i.e. humor. Both types of these norms, explicit and implicit, helps guide one's expectations in the classroom as a teaching and learning process. The teacher who guides the classroom is the one person who should abide by and model these norms; because if learners see or sense that the teacher does not heed them, then the norms will drop by the wayside.

No matter what the groups may be, as they form, they all go through various phases during their development (McCollom, 1990; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

Dörnyei & Murphey (2003) summarize these developmental phases as:

1. Group formation.
2. Transition.
3. Performing.
4. Dissolution. (p. 50)

During the group formation stage, learners depend a lot on the leader (instructor) to guide them through what is unknown to them. Learners are typically polite and tentative during this stage. The teacher's role is to "...establish a friendly climate, manage group anxiety, clarify group goals and project enthusiasm for the group." (p. 51).

The transition stage is a time when learners begin to release pent up tensions through arguments, not only amongst themselves but also with the teacher. Without necessarily being aware of it, they are mainly trying to decide how the group will function, and the roles that each of the members will play. Although this is a stage that

is typically fraught with tension, some groups that have good communication skills are able to talk through the process and avoid arguments. The best thing a teacher can do is to intercede and negotiate with the learners as they go through this phase. In the long run, the outcome will be that the learners formulate new feelings for one another through trust, support, and commitment, leading to open communication and cooperation.

Once the two previous stages have been established, and there is trust between the members of the group, they then divide amongst one another what each of them will do in the group. This is known as the performing stage, and is not relevant to this study of a language classroom.

Finally, as this stage suggests, the dissolution stage involves having closure for the group. Although it is inevitable that a semester long class will dispel, the dissolution stage provides learners with memories and times for reflection. For instance, in a broader perspective what their experiences were like in the classroom, how much of the language they are able to use, or how much of the culture they have experienced.

Learner and teacher roles. The roles of all individuals in the class set the foundation for their reliance with one another. In the case of the instructor, it is to gauge and help manage group anxiety and to set boundaries or tacit rules. The reason the teacher does this is to help the group form so that they feel like they are included and therefore, accepted. This means that the teacher must understand learners' rationalizations for the fears they may feel, and to address them accordingly. The

teacher should also set goals and procedures and allow opportunities for the learners to be able to ask questions. In all, the teacher needs to create a safe, positive environment which leads to productivity (McCullom, 1990).

Maintenance of a Positive Classroom Atmosphere. Berg & Smith (1990) state that “Simultaneous and opposing emotions, positions, and reactions exist both inside individual group members and inside the group as a whole.” (p. 107). These simultaneous and opposing states are a paradox which can make a group vibrant or stagnant. Differences that individuals have as they form a group allow them to express hopes and fears simultaneously. It is precisely this paradox that makes the group a safe place. As frightful as this may sound, this is a necessary component of group life because it allows individuals to participate (Berg & Smith, 1990). Although the following are not specific to language learning, there are additional readings on how groups form. See, for instance, Bennis & Shepard, 1956; Tuckman, 1965; Slater, 1966; McLeod & Kettner-Polley, 2004; Poole, Hollingshead, McGrath, Moreland, & Rohrbaugh, 2004; Wittenbaum, Hollingshead, Paulus, & Hirokawa, et al., 2004; Lipgar, 2006.

Maintenance and vitality of the group depends on the development of their respective roles within the group. If individuals are not satisfied, they will lose interest and give up. However, if individuals are satisfied, they will be dynamic in the sense that their actions will be positive.

This qualitative study on a university Indigenous language classroom provides a lens into how learners of any age can access their potential for language learning,

and also how their unknown classroom expectations can be shaped into their instructor's expectations or vice-versa. To this end, theories of second language acquisition which are linked with classroom culture provide a theoretical framework for this research.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The research methodology is closely linked to the research questions and also the theoretical framework of this study. The research questions address the expectations and goals of both the instructor and the learners in a language classroom, and how these expectations shape classroom culture. To reiterate, the research questions are: (a) What classroom goals do I have of the learners in my beginning Gwich'in university classroom?, (b) What are student goals? And how do these fit with classroom goals?, and (c) What kind of classroom culture is created by these expectations and SLA theories? The literature review addresses second language acquisition theories and group formation. These are the theoretical frameworks which contribute to the understanding of the complexities of interactions that take place at all levels in the classroom, as a positive classroom culture is established. In this chapter, the research design, setting, participants, data collection, and analysis will be discussed.

Research Design

The nature of this research is qualitative because it investigates human interaction in learning a second language in a classroom setting. The classroom is a complex phenomenon which is considered as an entity that is whole and in a naturalistic setting which can not be compartmentalized. Therefore, the classroom is considered a holistic setting which makes it impossible to explore it in simply quantitative ways. Furthermore, even though the instructor had only taught this particular class for a couple of years at the time of data collection, she has had a long

standing commitment in shaping how the class has arrived at how it is currently taught. This has taken place through a close relationship with the previous instructor over a twelve year time period. It is these human interactions which interweave the research questions and theories of second language acquisition and classroom culture.

On the left column in Table 3.1, Miles and Huberman (1994) provide the foundations of a qualitative study. In the right column, the researcher explains how each of their points justifies her study.

Table 3.1 Researcher's Fit into Qualitative Study

Canale & Swain "Communicative Competence"	UAF Gwich'in Language Classroom Examples
<i>Grammatical Competence</i> (knowledge of lexicon, rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology)	Speech sounds, sentence structure, units of meaning in language, and vocabulary which are based on thematic units once per week over one hour of class time
<i>Sociolinguistic Competence</i> (appropriate use of language in sociocultural context, including attitude and register)	Understanding why Gwich'in people introduce themselves in a certain way.
<i>Discourse Competence</i> (combination of utterances and communicative functions but not grammar)	Being able to answer impromptu questions and give presentations.
<i>Strategic Competence</i> (verbal and non-verbal strategies used during communication breakdown) (Canale & Swain, pgs. 29-31)	Use of circumlocutions, gestures, props, pictures, real items, role play, drawing or technology. Suggestions by instructor on how to use language in context when not in class.

One way to approach qualitative data like those in this study is through a method known as grounded theory. In the field of social sciences, this theory was first

proposed by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in a book entitled *Awareness of dying (1965)*. In this book, the method for their research was originally called the *constant comparative method*, but in later years they agreed upon the name *grounded theory* in another collaborative publication called *The discovery of grounded theory (1967)*. In the time from when their research was first published, their idea of grounded theory was very controversial amongst both quantitative and qualitative researchers. However, since that time, grounded theory has taken root within qualitative research (Hood, 2007). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) provide a definition of grounded theory as follows:

Grounded theory: a method of conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data. Hence, the analytic categories are directly ‘grounded’ in the data. The method favors analysis over description, fresh categories over preconceived ideas and extant theories, and systematically focused sequential data collection over large initial samples. This method is distinguished from others since it involves the researcher in data analysis while collecting data--we use this data analysis to inform and shape further data collection. Thus, the sharp distinction between data collection and analysis phases of traditional research is intentionally blurred in grounded theory studies. (p.608, emphasis in original)

In other words, inductive reasoning begins by looking at data, and finding emerging patterns which in turn provide the researcher the opportunity to place them into categories. Thus, one never knows what these patterns and subsequent categories will consist of until it is apparent through repetitive occurrences.

Some researchers might question how analyses can be considered trustworthy if data can be gathered in such a loosely structured approach. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that analyses and trustworthiness of qualitative research depend on the following techniques:

Table 3.2. Summary of Techniques for Establishing Trustworthiness

Criterion Area	Technique
Credibility	Field activities Prolonged engagement Persistent observation Triangulation (sources, methods, and
investigators)	Peer debriefing Negative case analysis Referential adequacy Member checks (in process and terminal)
Transferability	Thick description
Dependability	The dependability audit, including the audit trail
Confirmability	The confirmability audit, including the audit trail
All of the above	The reflexive journal

(pg. 328)

Credibility

Credibility was established by the prolonged engagement and persistent observation by the instructor of the course. The prolonged engagement covered fifteen weeks of classes which allowed the instructor to understand the goals of the learners,

and how they matched or did not match the instructor's goals. Data sources which were triangulated included learner journals, class syllabus, videotapes, and exit interviews. The chair of the committee and the author looked at the data for emerging themes. By doing this, the committee chair acted as an interrater which provided a reliability check.

Transferability

The thick description became possible through the student journals, instructor expectations, videotapes, and exit interviews. The student journals revealed their goals and innermost thoughts regarding how they perceived the class was taught, classroom activities, presentations and their interaction with peers. The instructor used the syllabus and her own philosophy of second language teaching and learning to explain and define her goals for the class. The videotapes were used to show how the learners interacted as they worked in small groups, what they did and to also reveal how much of the target language was used.

Setting

The Beginning Athabascan Gwich'in language class is taught by the researcher with the new academic year beginning in the Fall semester, and continues into the Spring. Degree seeking students may use the credits towards a major or minor for language requirements in linguistics or Native language education. The researcher has been teaching this class since 2002. The numbers of students who enroll for this class vary from year to year. The male female ratio is quite high, where most of the registered students are female. Interest in the class also varies among students. Some

reasons that students enroll in the class are that graduate students are working on either their master's theses or their doctoral dissertations where their research may be focused on Gwich'in people. In working with Gwich'in people who are speakers, they want to be able to use the language. Others are in the class because they are of Gwich'in descent, and want to be able to communicate with their grandparents or family. Still others have heard about how the class is taught, and have decided to enroll. One student in particular, took the class so that she could use the same methods of teaching for her own Native language class.

The demographics of the Gwich'in class students from 2002-2007 (see Table 3.3) are that of the 46 students enrolled, there were 10 Gwich'in students, 24 non-Native students, 1 Korean student, 1 Japanese student and 10 students who represented other Alaskan Athabascan groups. These groups include the Deg Xinag, Koyukon, Ahtna, and Dena'ina.

For as long as the researcher has been teaching the beginning Gwich'in class, UAF registrar's office records show the following enrollment numbers from Fall 2002 to Fall 2007:

Table 3.3. History of Student Enrollments from 2002-2007

Year	Students enrolled	Male	Female	Gw	ON	NN	F	S	J	Sr	G	ND
2002	7	1	6	2		5	3	2	1	1		
2003	9	2	7	2	3	4	4		1	1	2	1
2004	10	2	8	2	3	5	3	4	1	2		
2005	8	3	5	2		6		3	1		3	1
2006	7	2	5		3	4	4	2				1
2007	5	2	3	2	1	2	3		1			1

Legend: Gw = Gwich'in; ON = Other Native; NN = non-Native; F = Freshmen; S = Sophomore; J = Junior; Sr. = Senior; G = Graduate; ND = Not declared

Once students are in the class, they must be extremely organized in their note-taking skills because there is no textbook available for the students. In place of the non-existent textbook, the class is driven by the researcher's own syllabus, goals, lessons, and activities. In the future, because of a grant the researcher received from the National Science Foundation, a textbook will be made available as soon as 2009 for future students who enroll in the class.

The University of Alaska is a statewide university with three main campuses and several rural campuses and colleges interspersed throughout various regions of the state. There are three main campuses that are located in the cities of Fairbanks (interior), Juneau (southeast), and Anchorage (southcentral), and are the main hubs for the rural campuses and colleges.

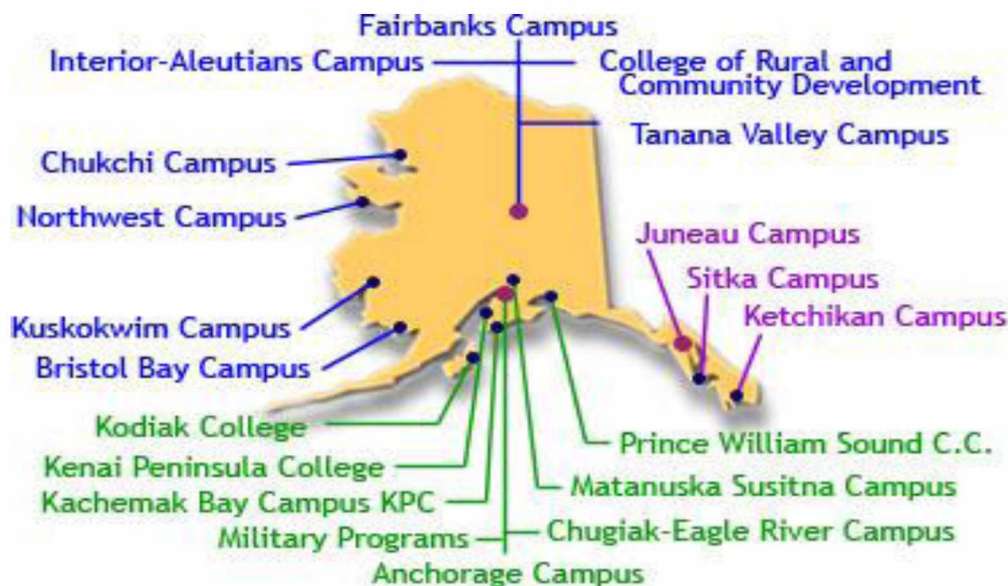


Figure 3.1. University of Alaska Campuses and Colleges

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is located in the interior of Alaska, and is known as a land, sea, and space grant institution. The student population is diverse comprising of local, statewide, national, and international students. As of Spring 2005, there were 9,417 students enrolled, of which 21.2% are Alaska Native/American Indian; 4.17% are Asian/Pacific Islander; 2.57% are African American; 2.55% are Hispanic; 61.26% are Caucasian; and 8.23% are listed as Other/Unknown (http://www.uaf.edu/pair/pub/report_close_200501.pdf).

UAF is unique in that the institution takes pride by incorporating community and statewide concerns which are reflected in university class offerings. One such concern is that there is a need to involve the teaching, learning, documentation, revitalization, and publication of Alaska's Native languages. This is accomplished

through a major UAF research center called the Alaska Native Language Center (ANLC), which houses rare information on all twenty of Alaska's Native languages in its archives in written, video, and audio forms. Native languages that have been or are currently being taught at UAF through ANLC include Alutiiq, Siberian Yupik, Central Yup'ik, Aleut, Tlingit, and some of the Athabascan languages, such as Deg Xinag, Holikachuk, Dena'ina, Gwich'in, Koyukon, Lower Tanana, Tanacross, and Upper Kuskokwim (ANLC brochure, 2004).

As with the Gwich'in enrollment, enrollments for other Athabascan language classes, class sizes vary from year to year. In some years there may be as few as five or as many as ten enrolled at any one time. These variations may be due to the fact that there is limited numbers of language teachers or students whose ancestral language match with any one of the Athabascan languages that are being taught. Also, other factors such as what season or where the classes are taught add or subtract to enrollments. The reason that season is a factor is because of subsistence activities which can happen only during those times. Classes that are taught at the university usually require students to travel to a city where they may be uncomfortable. Before the researcher could begin the study, an application and approval were necessary from the UAF Institutional Review Board (Appendix A).

Participants

Participants for this research were students enrolled in the University of Alaska Fairbanks Fall 2003 beginning Gwich'in language classroom. Initially, there were eight participants, but because of various reasons, the numbers of participants

dwindled to five; however, only four took part in this research. Unfortunately, one of the students who was from another Athabascan language family, and an excellent student had to be dropped from the study because that student found it uncomfortable to be videotaped and did not provide an exit interview. This is unfortunate because any information provided by this student would have been an invaluable contribution from a Native student's perspective. Of the four students who participated, two were graduate students in Anthropology, and two were undergraduate students of Art and Linguistics (see Table 3.4). Students were from New Jersey, West Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin whose first languages are English. None of the students knew anything about the Gwich'in language structure or culture. As far as learning other languages in a classroom, two students had taken Spanish and one had taken Latin. They were asked by a third party during the second week of class if they would like to participate in this research by signing informed consent forms (Appendix B). All of the students gave their consent to become a part of this study.

Reasons as to why these particular students were enrolled in the class included:

(a) desire to work in Gwich'in country, (b) structural study of the language, (c) interest, which was piqued by news reports on the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and Porcupine Caribou Herd, and (d) anthropology language requirement, and desire to use the language with fluent speakers, mostly elders.

Table 3.4. Language Learner Profiles

	L1	L2	Major	Reason for taking class
Student 1	English	American Sign Language, Spanish	Linguistics	Learn language structure
Student 2	English	Spanish, German, Latin	Anthropology	Work in TL country.
Student 3	English	Spanish	Art	Interested in language
Student 4	English	Spanish	Anthropology	Language requirement, use of language with fluent speakers

Procedure and Data Analysis

Data were collected through the Fall semester (see Table 3.5) During the first week of class, students who agreed to be a part of the study signed consent forms with the option of non-participation at any time during the study.

As part of the class, students were asked to keep a written journal, which was not graded, about their learning Gwich'in. This journal could be kept on a daily or weekly basis, and were turned into the instructor every Friday. Once the instructor received the journals, she would read through them and answer any questions they might have, provide comments or praise them for their achievements. Before the journals were returned, they were photocopied, and then typed onto the computer verbatim. The student journals were used to determine what their thoughts were on the various interactions with each other and the instructor, and activities that took place in

the classroom. The journals were entered onto a table which had three columns. The first column had the name of the student, class date, and what was written in the journal. As the journals were read by the researcher, a second column was added which consisted of themes which began to emerge. Descriptive entries were color coded according to which research question was answered. These codes were then collapsed into categories such as “vague notion that class was positive, student feelings (regarding class, peers or instructor), concrete positive reaction, student interactions, etc.” A third column provided space for analysis. As explained under *Credibility*, these codes were constantly checked and rechecked by an interrater who verified the reliability of the categories.

Three weeks of lesson plans during weeks one, four, and eleven were collected. These lesson plans consisted of the instructor’s language goals and the activities that accompanied them. After each of the days, the instructor also placed these into three columns of language goals, activities, and performance. The language goals supported the instructor expectations for any one of the fifteen days of weekly lessons. The activities were to note how those language goals were executed. The performance column was twofold, in that it served to show what was done by the instructor and the learners. Reasons for spacing the collection of lesson plans were to ascertain the level of progression of instructor expectations and to also determine how much students had learned over these three time periods.

Videotapes of four classes were made but had to be discontinued after one student remarked that the videotaping made her uncomfortable. The goal for recording

was to videotape ten classes; however, because of this comment the taping had to be stopped immediately. Nonetheless, these four videotapes were reviewed to determine what the students said or did as they interacted in the classroom. It was quite disconcerting for this researcher to watch and at the same time keep track of what each of the learners was saying. As a result, the researcher had the audio parts of the videos tape separately, and in that way, it was easier to watch the classroom interactions.

The four students in the study provided audiotaped exit interviews. These interviews consisted of broad questions which were conducted by a third party. The researcher did not obtain them until after grades were submitted. The exit interviews were transcribed based on typical transcription conventions (Appendix C) which are commonly used by many qualitative researchers for such data collection as talk through videotapes, audiotapes, and exit interviews (Lepper, 2000). The same procedure (descriptive categorizations, color coding to answer research questions, etc.) was used for these exit interviews as were used for the student journals.

Finally, the class syllabus provides a foundation for what learners should expect out of the class. It provides the roots which set the foundation for the beginnings of the classroom culture (i.e. this is what the instructor expects vis-a-vis what you as the learner will do, etc.). The syllabus is something that should not be taken lightly by the learners or the instructor, however, later on it can be modified according to how the group culture takes place.

Table 3.5. Overview of Data Collected

Data Collected	Length	Dates
Student Journals	96 pages	September 4 to December 11, 2003
Lesson Plans	Week 1 Week 4 Week 11	September 4-10, 2003 October 1-7, 2003 November 18-24, 2003
Videotapes	240 minutes	October 1-2, 2003 October 6-7, 2003
Student Presentation (1)	4 mins. 45 secs.	December 8, 2003
Student Exit Interviews (4)	66 pages	December 9-17, 2003
Class Syllabus		September 4 to December 17, 2003

Summary

In summary, this chapter on methodology provides a window on one way of how this researcher has navigated her way as participant-observer. The measuring instrument was the researcher, who was also the instructor of the beginning Gwich'in language class. Participants in this study were enrolled in this class. Data collected included the triangulation of student journals, lessons plans, videotapes, student presentation, student exit interviews and the class syllabus. The findings of this triangulation will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, the findings regarding instructor goals, student goals, and resulting classroom culture are discussed. All three of the research questions are inextricably linked (see Figure 4.1. below) because the classroom is driven by the teaching philosophy of the instructor which either matches or does not match the goals of the students. Throughout the course of the first few weeks, the instructor and the students form a group which leads to a microcosm or what I call “classroom culture”. Data analyzed in answering the research questions come from a triangulation of course syllabus and instructor’s readings and her own philosophy on second language acquisition. Other data analyzed include audiotaped student exit interviews, videotapes of five classes, and student journals. All of these artifacts reveal rich data which speak to answering the three research questions about expectations on what is learned and how this learning takes place in this particular classroom.

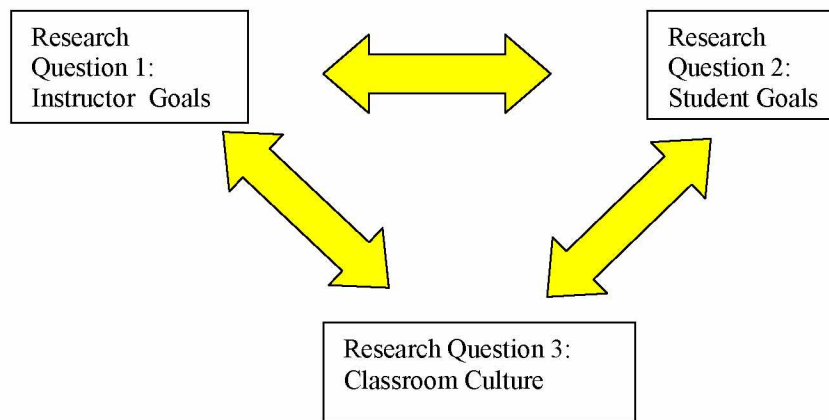


Figure 4.1. Relationship Between Research Questions

In the following, each research question will be discussed in turn.

Research Question 1

What classroom goals do I have of the learners in my beginning Gwich'in university classroom?

Research question one will be answered by my own teaching philosophy, and will include (a) my own experiences in learning my ancestral language as an adult, (b) my own beliefs about teaching and learning a second language, (c) expectations I strive for in the language classroom, and (d) theoretical foundations of second language acquisition and group formation. My teaching philosophy will be corroborated with what students said about the classroom.

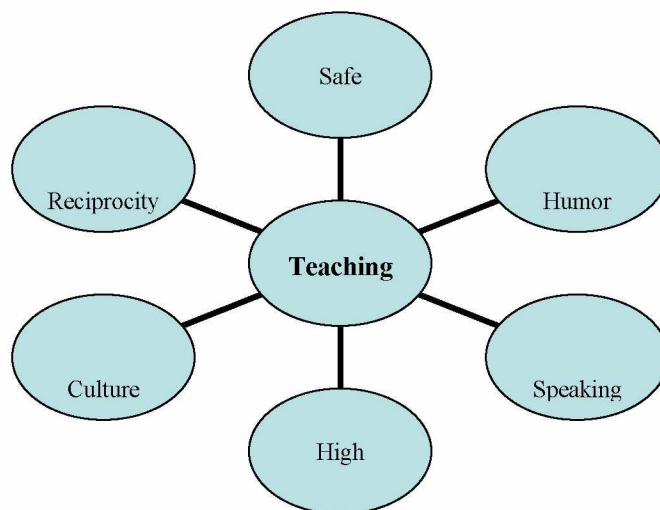


Figure 4.2. Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy (see Figure 4.2.) is based, in part, on my experience of learning my ancestral language as an adult. As a child and throughout some of my adult life, I heard Gwich'in spoken but was never required to use the language. It was not until I was in my 40's that I actively began to learn the language. I went about this endeavor by initially enrolling in the year long first year UAF Gwich'in language class which was taught by a fluent speaker. Though I took the entire year, I was still unable to speak enough to carry on a conversation. About four years later I began taking Athabascan linguistics courses, and learned the grammar of my own language which I did not understand initially, but I did take many detailed notes which helped me later on as I began to use my language in context. In the meantime, my colleague Patrick Marlow wrote a federal grant to foster language development in five of eleven

Athabascan languages, of which Gwich'in was one. The Gwich'in instructor at the time and I were paired to teach a summer language class, but before this class, we were treated by Leanne Hinton to a workshop on how to teach a second language without using the first language through the use of props, pictures or gestures and by asking and answering questions. This was a turning point in learning my ancestral language because I forced myself to speak by trying to stay in the language. After attending a French language class in 1997 where the instructor orchestrated a French Table, I got the idea to begin the Gwich'in Table where interested learners and speakers were invited to speak only Gwich'in for one hour a week. This Table continues to this day.

There is not one day that goes by when I do not remember words or phrases from my childhood that I want to understand. In this way, my learning is like any other learning which presents itself as a continual process. Since learning to speak my ancestral language, I now have the opportunity to pass the language on to my granddaughter since her birth for the past three years. This is the type of opportunity that I wish for everyone who wants to learn their ancestral language--that is to be able to learn and then teach someone younger.

I have to admit that learning my language was not always positive because of the indelicate and often hurtful comments that I received from some fluent speakers. One comment that remains cemented in my thoughts is hearing several fluent speakers (not only of my ancestral language but of other Alaskan Indigenous languages) say that Indigenous languages were impossible to learn. By saying this, the message being

sent to future generations is that language revitalization or maintenance can not occur. This is unfortunate and counterproductive since at almost every Native gathering or meeting, whether they are local or statewide, both elders and youth stress the importance of learning their ancestral language.

It is for this reason, among other things, that I am striving to explain away this notion that our languages are impossible to learn. However, this is not to say that there are not special challenges associated with learning Indigenous languages. Our ancestral way of life has been drastically changed over the past 60 years from one of nomadic to one of a sedentary way of life. Trying to learn a language from this sedentary way of life, rather than from the perspective of watching, listening, doing, then speaking has been disrupted by our assimilation into another culture. Since we used to learn by being place-based through context, and that is no longer the case, our languages are not being passed on to the younger generations in this way. Furthermore, our ancestral languages must be learned as a second language because the first language of most of the generations for the past 60 years is english. What then can be done to alleviate this predicament?

In most cases, learning our languages through the context of the land is not feasible because of our sedentary lives. Because of the decline of not only Gwich'in, the primary way to revitalize the language is through classrooms by using techniques of language learning and teaching that are highly contextualized, culturally appropriate and rely on using speaking skills. By using second language acquisition and teaching

theories and embedding them in our culture, our languages can be learned in much the same way as other languages.

My teaching philosophy for a second language classroom is to create a safe but challenging learning environment for the students where the use of the target language is emphasized. I strive to make the class interactive, collaborative and expect both the students and the instructor to use meta cognitive and cognitive strategies through context. By the time learners leave the classroom, they should be able to speak and learn about the culture, yet have fun as they are doing so. Since I also consider myself continuously learning the language, the learning that takes place should be reciprocal between the instructor and the students. I will now elaborate on each element listed in Figure 4.2. above.

Safe and Fun. Providing a safe environment stems from my own challenges as I learned my ancestral language as an adult. A safe environment lays the foundation for students to work within their zone of proximal development without feeling threatened about their understanding and practice in using the target language. An overarching way in which I strive to provide this safe environment is to make the class a fun place for learning through the use of humor. Another example of creating a safe environment is that students are not prodded during their weekly or bi-weekly presentations to the class. During the first semester, students' pronunciation is not corrected, and in this way, a safe feeling is provided during their presentations. If students were prodded during their presentations, it would more than likely affect their train of thought. Additionally, at the end of every presentation, regardless of their level

of performance, everyone in the classroom claps their hands to congratulate the student presenter.

Humor manifests itself through the use of games and activities, or learning about the culture through, for instance the use of parties that feature Gwich'in foods. Humor is a very large and important part of Gwich'in culture. For the most part, one can hardly speak with a fluent speaker without the conversation coming around to laughter. Humor also occurs when students mispronounce a word and change the meaning to something that is very funny. When this occurs, all the students laugh including the student who made the mistake.

Challenging. I believe in setting high expectations for the students by staying in the target language. This can be challenging for the students because I conduct the class almost entirely in Gwich'in. However, combined with my expectation that they speak in Gwich'in, this helps to foster a relatively high level of communicative competence. Initially, my goals for the first semester were to have them be able to speak and carry on a limited conversation with fluent speakers, even if the fluent speakers had to really listen. The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) has guidelines for speaking, and I found that most of the students in the Gwich'in class fell in their category for speaking at "Novice High Speaking" which is as follows:

Able to satisfy partially the requirements of basic communicative exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances but occasionally

expanding these through simple recombinations of their elements. Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material. Shows signs of spontaneity although this falls short of real autonomy of expression. Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones. Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and most common kinship terms. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by first language. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice-High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.

(retrieved November 19, 2007 from

<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/OtherResources/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines/ACTFLGuidelinesSpeakingNovice.htm>)

Students should also have some knowledge of grammar. “Grammar day” in the Gwich’in class consists of “basic” knowledge of morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. Gwich’in is a verb based language in which one “phrase” may constitute a whole sentence. Some of these verbs may be extremely short or extremely long, and this is where morphology becomes part of the equation of grammar knowledge. Students must be able to identify a stem, and a few prefixes such as the classifiers and areal prefixes which are relevant to their communicative competence. Usually, by the end of the semester, students will have been exposed and have used approximately 50 verbs (Appendix C) in what is known in English as the present tense.

Another segment of the grammar that students must know and use is the word order when creating a “sentence” or “question.” Typically, this word order is subject-object-verb (SOV) which is foreign to most of the students because their first language is English in which the word order is SVO. Besides the SOV word order, students are also exposed to the use of time and postpositions. Postpositions behave like prepositions but in Gwich’in word order, postpositions occur after a noun and are used in at least three environments (human, non-human, and areal).

Students are expected to be able to learn and use a large amount of vocabulary over the semester which builds on one another as each day passes in the class. Vocabulary (Appendix E) learned from day one or through each thematic unit continues to be used until the end of the semester.

Traditionally, the way in which Athabascan grammar is taught by linguists can be an intense experience because it is taught more like a science. It is compartmentalized until it becomes abstract. In the Gwich’in language class however, most of the students do not have a background in linguistics. In order for the grammar to make sense to them, it is contextualized because linguistic knowledge is based on what they had been speaking for the week. In this way, the target language can be used for the grammar examples because the vocabulary is already familiar to them.

Reciprocity. Although there are a number of Gwich’in speakers in the Fairbanks area, including members of my family, none of them live in my house. Also, I do not have daily interaction with Gwich’in speakers. For this reason, teaching in the Gwich’in language class provides me with a chance to speak my language. In

this sense then, I am in the constant mode of simultaneously teaching and learning, therefore making the experience in the classroom reciprocal with my students. When there is a reciprocal relationship in a safe environment where students are allowed to ask challenging questions, it provides me an opportunity to research their questions with fluent speakers and provide them with answers. This in turn, provides me with tools for future classes.

Questions that some students ask are either of the culture or language use or both. If I do not know the answer, I make it a point to let them know that I will seek an answer to their question. Answers are sought by either consulting (a) a junior dictionary written by a fluent speaker, (b) with fluent speakers, (c) elders who are known as wisdom keepers, or (d) linguists who specialize in Athabaskan languages, also known as Athabaskanists. One example that involves both culture and language comes up as they are learning about kinship terms. Invariably, students want to know why the kinship terms are different on the maternal and paternal sides. The answer to this is one is a matter of Gwich'in worldview.

A more concrete example in which I have to do research is when students ask about the structure of the language, such as when to use a focus word "jidii" with adjectives. There are three ways in which to work with adjectives, so it is not uncommon for students to ask about these environments. For instance, let us look at the Gwich'in word "tsal" which means small. One way to use it in a sentence is to use it as an adjectival verb as in "Natsàl." (s/he/it is small). Another way is to use it as a true adjective to describe something, such as "Vindee jidii tsal nilji." (his/her eyes,

they are small). Finally, the adjective can be used in conjunction with an areal form of “to be.”, such as “Vindee tsal gwanlji.” (s/he has small eyes--in general). It was during this type of encounter that I had to ask an Athabaskanist, and we came up with the environments as previously stated, which in turn led to my understanding and resultant worksheets for the students for them to practice.

Speaking. One of the most important goals and expectation that I have of the students and myself is to stay as much as possible in Gwich'in without using English. In addition, learners need to speak from the first day of class. In the Gwich'in language classroom all of us make mistakes as we engage in discourse to improve our communicative competence. Culture plays a central role here because whenever speaking occurs it must be culturally appropriate. For example, from the first day of class, students learn to introduce themselves in the appropriate manner by stating (a) their name, (b) where they are from, (c) the names of their parents, (d) the name of their grandmother, and (e) the first and last name of their grandfather. Culturally, this is appropriate because by introducing oneself in this manner, everyone knows who your family is and where they are from. It also indicates whether one is related to the individual.

Other ways in which communicative competence is fostered are through the use of appropriate games, activities, worksheets and presentations. In the beginning, these weekly presentations are very short (approximately 2-3 minutes). As the semester goes on these presentations are bi-weekly and much longer in time (approximately 5 minutes). The final oral presentation is approximately 15 minutes.

Some examples of presentations are (a) introducing themselves, (b) introducing and stating what family members like, (c) describing someone or something, (d) serving food or tea to each other, etc. Usually by mid-semester, there are about six presentations which have been done. The first of these presentations occurs after only seven days of classroom practice. Leading up to the culminating presentations, students are given ample time in the classroom to practice repeatedly their new vocabulary through a variety of games, puzzles, word search, (Appendix F) etc. These types of activities provide the framework for interaction and collaboration to take place through context. For instance, one game in which they must interact by asking each other questions and answering is the game called Guess Who? where one side asks either in first singular (I), second singular (you), or third singular (s/he) whether the eyes are brown, etc.. The other person must answer correctly by looking at their card. Many of the games are non-competitive; however, some students like to tease others about “winning”. Other times, students are allowed to work in groups so that scaffolding takes place. The interaction that takes place may also be in the form of working through worksheets.

During presentations, students are expected not to write their presentations in the target language and read it to the class. Instead, they are expected to use props or pictures and present as if they were presenting to non-speakers of the language. Students are given the option of presenting individually or as a team. Depending on their schedule, sometimes students take advantage of this opportunity. Thus, the goal

of the class is speaking and students having to engage in speaking during class in order to reach that goal.

Culture. Culture is embedded in the language learning and teaching that occurs in my classroom. One example, self introductions, has already been discussed on the section on speaking. This is also materialized through annotated traditional stories and cultural artifacts such as clothing, tanning tools, animal furs, food, fieldtrips, etc. (Appendix G). An example of a thematic unit on clothing, one lesson includes a modified traditional story on the process of tanning skins. Usually, as a group, the story is read through in its entirety, and then it is read again by showing and having students handle the traditional tools. By giving learners the opportunity to handle the tools, they are shown the appropriate way to hold the tools, and also can physically see how the tool is made and of what material. The rest of the processes on tanning skins are then illustrated through the use of pictures. Eventually, the entire clothing unit culminates with a fieldtrip to the UAF museum where students must answer a worksheet, and also talk about the various clothing that is shown. For instance, they must describe what skins are used, whether it is fancy, who would wear it, etc. The museum staff has been very accommodating about displaying the Gwich'in beadwork and clothing.

When culturally appropriate thematic units (Appendix H) are introduced, such as the thematic unit on animals, students are expected to do research outside of class and present their findings to the class through the use of pictures, drama, stories or technology. The animal thematic unit is very large, and so it lends itself well to outside

research. The one dilemma about research outside of class is that information in the language at the ANLC archives is too advanced for the students; therefore, they rely on English to get the information. There are however, certain books such as Sherry, et. al. (1999) book on Gwich'in animals in Canada called *Jii nành tth'aih hèe ginkhii: The land still speaks* that the instructor lets the students borrow so that the information is accurate from a Gwich'in vantage point.

Theoretical Foundations. Ways in which I attempt to create the type of learning atmosphere for the students and me stems from my own understanding and beliefs about second language acquisition (SLA).

Unfortunately, many native speakers teaching their own language do not connect what they do through praxis with theory. However, the way in which I became entrenched in second language acquisition was originally through university classes on methods and theories of second language acquisition. This, coupled with a workshop by Dr. Hinton, were the theoretical foundations of my understanding and beliefs regarding second language acquisition and learning. Since being exposed to those classes and workshops, I have been continually deepening my understanding through reading additional articles and other books on SLA and learning.

One theory in particular that has greatly influenced my beliefs about second language learning and teaching is a theory called Sociocultural Theory (SCT). SCT is based on the works of Vygotsky, a Russian born psychologist in the early 1930's who believed that learning takes place through social interaction. This social interaction should be in context, be meaningful, and take into consideration the history of the

learner. Other important aspects of SCT are that the learning should be within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD is the place where learning can take place with assistance or guidance from another person until the learner eventually does not need assistance or guidance.

SLA Learning and Teaching. I believe in learning and teaching through social interaction in the classroom because human beings, by nature, are social. In order to be social, the most important tool that humans use is language. From the moment we are born, is the moment that language is used with us. Depending on the culture and environment, all of us acquire a language through social interaction. This social interaction can be in the form of watching, listening, being engaged in any given situation or reacting to speakers through speech. Tied in with this are appropriate ways of behaving which manifests itself through learned and shared social history of a particular person from their own culture.

Therefore, knowing the history of a language learner has special implications for a language instructor because knowing what students like or actually do in their communities can be tied into language lessons in a classroom. The fact that some of Alaska's Native languages are not being learned in a home environment is cause to consider Native language classrooms as an alternative to learning an ancestral or heritage language.

Social interaction in my Gwich'in classroom is highly contextualized and embedded within the culture through the various activities and presentations. What is learned in the classroom can also be applied outside of the classroom through events

with other speakers of the language. In many villages and cities throughout Alaska, there are always ample opportunities to socialize with Native people either through dances, celebrations, cooking, or eating.

Social interaction in the classroom also enables learners to use strategic competences as they make an effort to use the language with other speakers. These strategic competences for staying in the language include the use of gestures, acting out what is trying to be communicated, application of grammar knowledge, or circumlocutions. Social interaction then is the tool which can simultaneously be used to attain the goal and the path to take for language learning and teaching.

Student reactions. Some goals for the Gwich'in language class are not only evident in my teaching philosophy but are also expressed in comments from students. Some of these comments will now be used to illustrate students' perspectives regarding the instructor's goals.

Excerpt 1

S1: "Overall to acquire new vocabulary I really liked the games that she had us play and when we do back and forth questions in class with each other I think that was really the best help because with the back and forth it gave us a lot of chance to the mine and yours placements and then do the plurals and stuff like that so that really would test our skills and it seemed like when we do that I would really get the new vocabulary when I'd learn it. She'd present it and then we'd get a chance to work with it like that"

[EI]³

³ EI indicates Exit Interviews.

Games in the Gwich'in class are meant for the students to practice using the language in the form of questions and answers. Students implicitly use grammar as S1 states that the games give them a chance to use singular and plural forms of the verbs in the language. Games provide a chance for the students to experience interaction, scaffolding and collaboration or assistance from each other because sometimes they are in teams of two as they “play” the games.

The comments of the above student align with the instructor's teaching philosophy in six areas, which are (a) acquisition of vocabulary, (b) games for practice, (c) interaction, (d) working within the ZPD, (e) collaboration, and (f) grammar. All of these areas intertwine so that acquisition of vocabulary through the use of games fosters interaction. As the games are played, their ZPD is stretched through collaboration with their peers as they learn. Through “grammar day”, students explicitly learn how to use the various classifiers which can become a resource for them as they apply them implicitly to speaking.

Excerpt 2

S2: It's [learning the language] a bit like chamber music class--scary enough to challenge but not so hard that it is discouraging.

[SJ⁴: September 4, 2003, Day 1]

Chamber music is based on classical music but is played either as solo or in small groups of up to eight people. Learning to play chamber music requires a student to be an individual because there is no conductor; therefore, their listening skills and

⁴ SJ indicates Student Journals.

teamwork are an important part of playing chamber music on whatever instrument the player chooses to use (http://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chamber_music, retrieved February 22, 2008).

S2 likens learning chamber music to learning Gwich'in, as when learning a Native language, many times there are no other resources besides what is in the classroom or what the instructor produces for the language lessons. This requires students to use their listening skills and to cooperate and interact with the other students and the instructor.

This student had an excellent ear for the diacritics in the language because of her listening skills. S2 was the only student who could distinguish between nasal and non-nasal sounds. In one of the conjugations (barred l), the only distinguishing mark between 2s (-ah-) and 3s (-ah-) is the use of the nasal.

S2 contends that learning Gwich'in and chamber music are both scary and have their challenges but it does not mean that learning them is impossible, especially in a safe environment. The safe environment encourages, rather than discourages this student. The instructor's teaching philosophy is to provide a challenging but safe environment, and to also dispel the myth that learning our language is possible with daily practice through context.

Besides the use of listening and cooperative skills, students are expected to provide short presentations to the class on whatever the thematic unit may be that is being studied. The following student expounds on these presentations:

Excerpt 3

S3: I loved our various presentations. I think those were a really good component. You know we had to write a little story. We had to talk about animals. We had a whole bunch of different creative presentations and those started out as being once a week. Just short little "my name is ..." and they built to more complex presentations and so we weren't doing them as often. We were doing one every other week or so I enjoyed that a lot. It was a really good thing to do. Also she didn't expect us to have them memorized as they got more complex. We could use notes.

[EI]

This student's comments match up with the instructor's expectation to have presentations which are not written in the TL but that notes in the L1 could be used. The instructor provides these roles because she does not want the students to rely on reading their presentations in the target language. Rather, presentations should be done through the use of pictures, gestures, skits, props, etc. Even though this student was not an art major, she was as creative as a good drama major in her presentations-- dressing the part, skipping, using circumlocutions, etc. Also, the fact that vocabulary from thematic units build on one another is another instructor expectation which is evidenced in her comments that "[vocabulary] built to more complex presentations...".

Presentations are part of the high expectations of the instructor. The students' first presentation is usually on the seventh day of class. By having these high expectations, some students find the class to be "serious." Not only are the presentations a challenge, but there are also phonological sounds and syntax with which the students must contend.

Excerpt 4

S4: I got a bit confused at first but I was able to catch up.”

[SJ: September 4, 2003, Day 1]

The instructor’s goal of striving to stay in the language is sometimes met with confusion, especially during the first few days of class. This comment refers to the first week of class when students were supposed to do homework so that it could be practiced in the classroom the following week. The homework was to practice using the third singular conjugation of a verb so that they could begin to speak about a third person. The assignment was given in the target language and when students returned to class to practice, they discovered that they had studied something else. As a result, most of the students were “confused.”

The above are just a few of the comments made by the students which tie in with the instructor's teaching philosophy and goals (see Figure 4.3.). Student goals, as well as their alignment or misalignment with the instructor’s expectations will be addressed in more detail with question two.

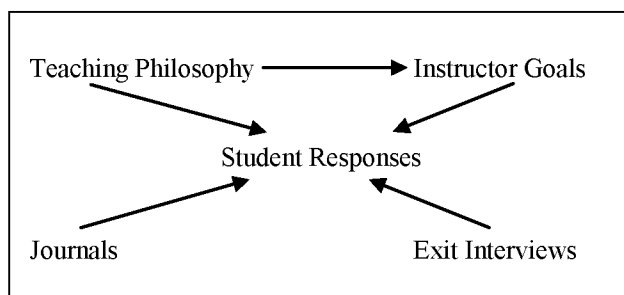


Figure 4.3. Student Responses

Research Question 2

What are student goals? And how do these fit in with classroom goals?

Research question two will be answered by analyzing students' comments from their journals and exit interviews, and from the videotapes. Students kept a learning journal over the course of the semester which was not graded. At the end of the semester, each student provided an exit interview of a set of questions which was audio taped by a third party. Students were also given the opportunity to express any other parting thoughts if they so wished. After analysis of the student journals and the exit interviews, they were compared to the classroom goals to find out if their goals differed from that of the instructor's goals.

A variety of learner goals emerged as themes out of the data. These goals included (a) knowledge of grammar, (b) knowledge of culture, (c) language should be written and (d) practicing in order to speak through use of learning aides.

Knowledge of Grammar. Three out of the four students expected to learn grammar as part of the class. This expectation came through in their many comments about how much they enjoyed the grammar or how it would be beneficial in other related classes. The data revealed many instances where students wrote or spoke about learning grammar. Following are some student comments which will be discussed:

Excerpt 5

S1: I liked how the grammar directly related to what we have learned in class so far. The vowel harmony is very interesting. I never understood it very well before you explained it.

[SJ: September 9, 2003– Day 4]

It is not surprising to have many comments from S1 on the importance of grammar in the classroom because her major is linguistics. As it is the goal of the instructor to include grammar based on what is used in the classroom, it is apparent that there is a match with this student. UAF offers linguistics courses in some of Alaska's Native language families. One of these language families is Athabascan. These courses are very intense with jargon on various structures of the languages. One of these grammar structures is the explanation of vowel harmony. Gwich'in operates on the notion of vowel harmony in its spelling conventions. It is simply the notion of a schwa changes to *a* or *i* depending on the first vowel in the stem of a word.

In the wider picture, the main goal of the Gwich'in classroom is to acquire communicative competence, of which grammar is but one competence of the four. However, since the Gwich'in class is not a full blown linguistics class, explanations about grammar are geared to non-linguists. Apparently, for this student of linguistics though, the explanations were clear enough for her to grasp the meaning of a term of which she was unsure.

Excerpt 6

S2: Today is grammar day. We reviewed parts of speech and their functions/placement in a sentence. It was good to review all this and helped make the new vocabulary more solid in my brain.

[SJ: October 1, 2003, Day 19]

The first day of grammar usually occurs after five days when students have had a chance to use two verbs (to be and to live), word order, and one postposition. As this student alludes to, "grammar day" is held once per week, and the written mid-term and final tests are based on the grammar they have learned in the class. Since

most of the students' L1 is English, the instructor uses some English parts of speech (such as nouns, verbs, prepositions, etc.) to make the point more clear to the students as they are learning Gwich'in grammar.

Adult students like to make the connection between grammar and learning new vocabulary. Practical examples by making use of the learned vocabulary help S2 to retain, and therefore aid in the learning process. The following student also finds the grammar helpful and its' contribution to her overall understanding of the rules and the connections to speaking

Excerpt 7

S3: It just helps me to see things organized. I really love diagramming sentences in eighth grade. You know I probably have the makings of a linguist as far as thinking analytically and just organizing and understanding how to apply rules. I've also shared before that I think the balance between learning and speaking new vocabulary and learning grammar rules is really perfect. It works well for me, anyway.
[EI]

This student is a Ph.D. student in anthropology where students are required to include a language component of a group with which their research coincides. At the time, she had worked in a Gwich'in community, and as a result became interested in working with the Gwich'in people. She equates learning grammar to being organized through an understanding of the structural rules of the language. Being organized also speaks to the fact that there is no textbook for the class; therefore students have to be highly organized in their note taking. The ratio of grammar to speaking strikes a positive chord for her as it relates to her learning and this is an area that matches with the instructor's goals that knowledge of grammar should aid the students in their

speaking skills. The same theme occurs repeatedly about grammar, in that students feel that the grammar helps them to speak, as with the following student:

Excerpt 8

S4 Grammar class was good. It helps me to understand why the language works the way it does for speaking.

[SJ: September 10, 2003, Day 5]

As with S3, S4 enjoys the grammar portion of the class because it helps her to understand the rules of the language, and its relation to aiding her in speaking. Unlike fluent speakers of Gwich'in who do not have to consciously access grammar rules in order to speak, these learners make use of the grammar in order to speak. The role that grammar plays in contributing to their speaking ability works as a resource that they can access as they conjugate verbs or inflect nouns. Although students may know some of the grammar rules, the grammar taught is only enough for them to make this connection for speaking. These adult students are more comfortable with their analytical side of second language learning; however, because the instructor expects them to speak, they feel it aides their speaking skills as they grapple to make sense of the language. This is further shaped by the instructor's expectation that learners practice speaking in the classroom through many repetitions of questions, answering, and through games, activities, and worksheets.

As noted on the ANL 141 Beginning Athabascan Gwich'in syllabus (Appendix D), the instructor expects students to have grammar at least one hour every week. The instructor's expectations may have had an influence on their expectation of having grammar. The grammar taught is based on vocabulary they had learned and practiced

throughout the week. As a result of teaching grammar in this way, it is a way of teaching without going into difficult linguistic jargon, albeit there are a few terms that students must know, such as schwa, areal, classifiers, etc..

Knowledge of Culture. Learning another language is learning a different worldview. If this worldview is much different from what a student has experienced all their lives, then sometimes it can be quite fascinating or shocking. The worldview of the Gwich'in, as in many other Indigenous cultures, is dependent on the land, what it has to offer, and our knowledge of taking care of ourselves in the elements. These are evidenced through the thematic units, such as the ones on animals or clothing. Knowledge of living off the land and its care are not the only features that become evident through the learning of culture. Our culture is constantly changing, and has dramatically changed over the past 60 years. This change brings with it various ways of maintaining a culture which is reflected through social thought and language use.

One example of how the culture is changing is in the concept of walking from one place to another. Traditionally, people physically walked from one village to another. Sometimes these distances would be over 150 miles, for instance, walking from Arctic Village to Fort Yukon (see Figure 4.4.). When they would reach their destination, another person would ask “Nijìn gwats’an inhaa?” (Where are you walking from?) The person being asked would say “Vashrajjì K’oo gwats’an ihshyàa.” (I am walking from Arctic Village.) Traditionally, this was the correct response, but now people do not walk from one place to another. As a result, because of this change, one can not ask this question and answer it in the same way. One now asks ““Nijìn

gwats'an inlii?" (Where are you from?) and then the corresponding answer would be

"Vashraji K'oo gwats'an ihlii." (I am from Arctic Village.)

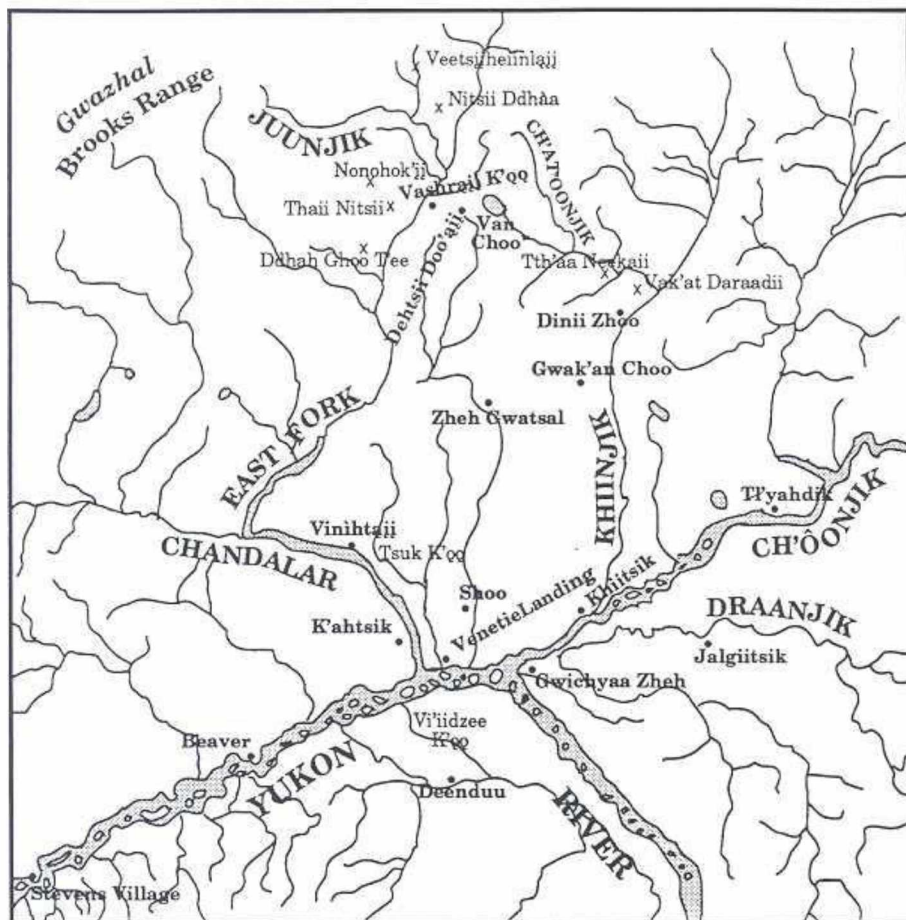


Figure 4.4. Map of Alaskan Gwich'in country. From Gwichyaa Zeh (Fort Yukon) to Vashraji K'oo (Arctic Village) is 150 miles by foot. (Peter, 1992).

Some student comments regarding culture are discussed below.

Excerpt 9

S1: I look forward to learning more about Gwich'in culture.

[SJ: September 8, 2003, Day 3]

On day three, this student looks forward to learning about the culture. This may also have to do with the fact that the instructor is Gwich'in, and has lived in the Gwich'in village of Fort Yukon. As a child, the instructor experienced much of the culture even if she did not speak the language. This understanding of the language and having lived traditionally contributed immensely to the instructor's knowledge about culture. Later, this same student talked about how learning about the culture is fun, especially as it is linked to the language. As S1 demonstrates below, each thematic unit carries with it much vocabulary which ties in both language and culture which she seems to enjoy.

Excerpt 10

S1: It's such a nice mixture of fun and the cultural parts that come into it and then the relevance with the language.

[EI]

Gwich'in has many traditional stories; however, not many of them are used in the beginning class because they all have to be annotated to be at the level of the students' comprehension. There are some though that has been annotated for the students by the instructor, such as the publication which the following student mentions on kinship terms.

Excerpt 11

S2: Also, we spent time reading part of a short Gwich'in publication on identifying oneself and one's family. This got me wondering about the social structures within Athabascan Gwich'in culture. Is a Gwich'in person's heritage traced back through their father's or mother's side?

[SJ: September 22, 2003, Day 12]

Learning about kinship is a big part of the class and the cultural component presents itself implicitly through the lessons. There are many kinship terms that students learn. In the beginning classroom, there are at least 31 terms (Appendix J) that are taught. The first idea that students must get used to is the notion that one can not say "brother" or "sister" like in English. They must be addressed as older or younger in relation to the person speaking. Another surprise that students have are what "aunts" and "uncles" are called depends on if they are on the mother's or father's side of the family. These are just two examples but there are many more instances of using kinship terms. When students become aware of this cultural knowledge, it creates curiosity as expressed by this particular student. This type of curiosity may or may not lead to further discussions in the classroom. At times, as in this case, when the student expresses these types of questions in their journals, the instructor will answer them in writing when returning the journal.

Student journals provide an opportunity for students to express themselves-- their joys, their fears, other students, confusion, suggestions, etc. Some of the student journals reflect what the instructor expresses in class about strategies for learning the language. Instructor comments address their concerns by acknowledgements through agreements, further explanations, thanking students for their positive comments, or praising and encouraging them. A sampling of instructor comments include: (a) "gwinziji" (good), (b) "màhsi" (thank you), (c) "I thought you had one of the best presentations. I liked the way you used the plurals.", (d) "yahoo!", (e) "They are in

the same boat as you.”, (f) "I forgot about this. We'll do that.", (g) “You can also record the class and listen to it.”, etc. This dialogue that occurs between the students and the instructor contributes to the overall classroom culture because students are encouraged to say whatever they want to say in their journals. The following excerpt by S3 is a good example of how she expresses her feelings about learning the thematic unit on animals.

Excerpt 12

S3: I am fascinated by the way that Hishinlai' is organizing the various animals by where they live. Maybe she's not doing it on purpose, but I feel like I'm getting a window into "traditional ecological knowledge!"
[SJ: November 7, 2003, Day 45]

The thematic unit on animals is very extensive because students learn a myriad of vocabulary associated with large and small animals and also (a) what they look like, (b) their characteristics, (c) where they live, (d) what the animal eats, (e) what eats that animal, and (f) whether Gwich'in people eat that animal. The research by the instructor that went into this unit was quite extensive by making use of (a) various resources (Appendix K), (b) translating them into Gwich'in, and (c) checking them with fluent speakers for word order and vocabulary (Appendix L). The instructor learns just as much as the students during this thematic unit because of the amount of unfamiliar vocabulary. Also, for future classes, it would be beneficial to bring in a fluent speaker(s) who are much more knowledgeable than the instructor about other thematic units, such as hunting. The instructor is very much aware from cultural readings that there are different names for the various ages of the moose. They can also contribute by speaking about hunting practices, butchering, stories associated

with animals, beliefs, etc., all of which would be culturally appropriate to the class. S3 is an anthropology student; therefore, she felt like she could easily connect this unit with her own research about Indigenous knowledge regarding the natural environment. Another reason that she could be fascinated is because she is not from the state of Alaska, and learning about the culture opens up a worldview that did not exist in her own culture.

Animals are but one thematic unit which is explored. There is an entire unit on postpositions (prepositions) which changes according to the linguistic environment. One environment is the use of areal in which the instructor uses a little log house to demonstrate the various postpositions associated with a house. The little “bits” of information to which S4 refers in the following excerpt are about the direction a house in a Gwich'in community faces, location of the door, and where the stove is located in the house. This is all very cultural and relevant information based on the context of the lesson.

Excerpt 13

S4: I also like the bits of information that are thrown in about life in community--I think it [sic] good to relate the language to how it's used in real life.

[SJ: October 16, 2003, Day 30]

The instructor's experience of being around the language and having lived in a Gwich'in community contributes to knowledge about culture. This sharing of cultural knowledge is appreciated by this student whose major is anthropology. These bits of cultural information come up in context from the lived experience of the instructor.

This lived experience was socially constructed within Gwich'in culture and is expressed as being used in "real life" according to this student.

Written language. This theme was not a surprise because unlike other world languages where there are many materials and texts available, there are none for most of the Indigenous languages of Alaska. All of Alaska's Indigenous languages are oral based, meaning that the written portion was an introduction into Indigenous society by missionaries, linguists, and educators upon contact.

The written component of the Gwich'in class allows the adult students to *see* the language and provide them with something tangible in their notes. Most days when new vocabulary was introduced or even mentioned casually through context they would be written on the whiteboard. If they were not written, students would request that they be written. Although the instructor had knowledge of the writing systems, she did not expect the students to depend solely on the written texts as they asked and answered impromptu questions, and especially when they had their presentations. This was a major challenge for the students, and subsequently, students had to be able to organize their written notes in such a way so that it became a learning tool for them. The instructor also used the written form to remind students when their memories needed assistance. This was done by beginning to write it out slowly on the board, and sometimes they would finish the word. Some students come into the class with their own assumptions about how the class will be taught. This following student was pleasantly surprised to find that there was a written component to the class.

Excerpt 14

S1: One thing I think of that I like the fact that it's written that we have the written part of the class. At one time I thought that maybe there was gonna be no written part. I really like that and for me it's helped me a lot because I'm dependent on writing things down.

[EI]

This student was originally under the impression that there was no writing system used in the class. Since this class was only the second year for the instructor, it could have been that previous classes had the reputation of being taught orally, and that this was an idea that this student expressed. The need for having the written part of the language is articulated because of the lack of written materials for the class, and in this way it has aided this student's reliance on the written form as a means of visual conceptualization. Once students see the language written out, some of them want the parts explained to them in order for the language to have meaning, as expressed by the following student. This meaning then, becomes a part of their learning process.

Excerpt 15

S3: I just have to have it written out and explained for it to stick in my brain in a meaningful way.

[SJ: October 2, 2003, Day 20]

Again, this student must have the written as a visual so that three processes take place. The first is to physically see the visual; the second is to physically write it in her notes, and then the third is to apply it contextually. For S3, not only does the writing component help, but the explanations through the writing help her to retain the information by using her cognitive skills.

The instructor is keenly aware that adults prefer to see the written language since there are no other resources for the students. However, in order to practice

speaking, the instructor also does not want the students to rely on the written words as they do their presentations because they would end up reading rather than using their cognitive abilities to present. By day three of the class, students have had a chance to practice speaking through questions and answers. They are encouraged not to depend on their notes for speaking, and if they get stuck or forget, the instructor assists them.

Excerpt 16

S4: I don't want to start writing everything down before I say it (I don't want to become dependent upon reading it in order to speak).

[SJ: September 8, 2003, Day 3]

Before the students' first presentation, they are told by the instructor that they are not to write the TL in their notes because then they would rely on reading their presentation. As the instructor, I have never physically checked their notes to make sure there is no written Gwich'in on which they can rely. The reason I find this unnecessary is because all the students are adults and I give them the benefit of the doubt that they are telling the truth. Some of the students have tried to physically show me their notes, but I have always said "that's OK" in the TL and wave them off. I believe in this way that it leads to a portion of classroom culture that encompasses trust.

S4 states that she does not want to become dependent on writing in order to speak. This is in line with the expectation of the instructor that when they are practicing their speaking skills that they do not rely on their written notes. This is a challenge that S4 seems to take to heart as practice takes place. S4 is a student who has taken Latin which relies heavily on the written form. By taking this class, it was

the reverse and there were many times that she did well when presenting, more than likely because of her studying skills as a graduate student. This is the one student who also said she planned to spend at least 14 hours of time outside of class to study.

Practice for speaking. In a language classroom that emphasizes speaking, the only way to obtain this goal is to practice the same vocabulary in a variety of ways. As practice occurs in the learning process, mistakes will undoubtedly be made.

When students make mistakes they will sometimes scaffold each other. Other times students self correct or ask the instructor when they are unclear about (a) word order, (b) correct vocabulary usage, (c) verb conjugation or (d) noun inflection. Some students also worry about their pronunciation and ask the instructor to bring this to their attention.

When the instructor makes mistakes, it is not apparent to the students because they are beginning students; however, the instructor is instinctively aware of them and lets them know that research is necessary. In these instances, since there is no scaffolding immediately available, there is an opportunity for research. This research was either through consultation with fluent speakers or with Athabaskanist (linguists whose research are on Athabaskan languages). This information is later made known to the students. The following student articulates the instructor's expectations that mistakes are a part of the learning process:

Excerpt 17

S1: I will practice more... I go into this "venture" knowing I'll make mistakes (as will others) and its okay. Making mistakes is part of the process [of learning L2].

[SJ: September 8, 2003, Day 3]

This student indicates that she needs to practice more. It is really difficult to practice without other speakers or learners. These students are all full time students with senior or graduate class standing which makes it difficult for time and scheduling purposes. This same student also said that when she practiced silently, she realized that when she had to create external speech that the silent practice was not advantageous. As a result of this, she began speaking out loud to herself. At one time she explained that she spoke out loud for two hours straight and ended up with a sore throat. As stated on the syllabus, students are expected to make mistakes as they learn the language. This is a natural process, and this student's journal entry expresses this sentiment. She also realizes that the other students will also make mistakes. This realization creates solidarity amongst the students which leads to the formation of a positive group environment.

One of the ways in which the instructor encourages learners to speak are through the use of props. Over the years, the instructor has accumulated a large variety of props which she uses when she is presenting new vocabulary to the students. There were some times when she used them to indicate word order. This type of modeling is expected of the students as they practice speaking. There are plastic foods, figurines, furs, houses, wigs, pictures, clothing, etc. In addition to these props, students are also expected to use their imagination or whatever means they can to get their point across in the language. This includes their use of pictures, technology, gestures or circumlocutions. The point is to be able to speak so that even if they are not

understood, their actions indicate what they are trying to say. There have been times when there was resistance from the students about the use of props but later realized the value of them as they contribute to their ability to speak. The following student gives her opinion regarding the use of props:

Excerpt 18

S4: I also found it helpful to use the dolls when speaking about my family (at first I didn't think I would want to but after I used them I kind of liked it).

[SJ: September 5, 2003, Day 2]

All learners purportedly have different learning styles which contribute to their learning. However controversial the literature may be on learning styles (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004), the above student finds that using her kinesthetic sense is initially uncomfortable. Since the main goal of the class is to speak, one of the ways to promote this is to provide a variety of props for the students to use in order for them to be understood. Providing a variety of props, such as the figurines, wigs, or pictures, affords the students an opportunity to think and connect their thinking as they use something tangible. Teaching and learning a second language has its many challenges. It is always an evolving process which requires learning what to use in any given context to reach a given goal. In this particular context, the student was talking about her family. This is only the second day of class, and already the students are speaking about their families, albeit in a very limited way.

Props are not the only ways to have the students speak. They also play games which do not have many rules. The points of the games are to get the students to speak as the following student so aptly states:

Excerpt 19

S2: Today in class we reviewed weather verbs and played a couple of games with them. The games are simple, fun, and effective. It takes H only a minute or two to define the rules--which are usually few! The objectives are clear. Say it in Gwich'in and try not to slaughter it, and it makes me think quickly (more quickly than when I study). I think the games and homework worksheets are both very good reinforcement tools for me and the material from class.
[SJ: September 29, 2003, Day 17]

It has been stated that second language learners need to hear vocabulary about 400 times in order to acquire the language (Hinton, et al., 2002). One of the best ways to use vocabulary is through the use of simple and fun games that keep students engaged enough to stay in the language. S2 provides her own take on the “rules” of the various games which she finds fun and effective which are further punctuated with homework and class handouts.

Every day there is vocabulary review through the use of questions and answers. Other days, students are expected to write questions to ask others in the classroom. By doing this, it makes for impromptu conversations which allow the different students to recall vocabulary that they have learned and used.

Another point S2 makes is that with the games, she has to think quickly on the spot. Pronunciation seems to be a concern to her but even that is forgotten as the games are played. Since there are few opportunities to speak outside of class unless the students actively seek out the greater Gwich'in community in Fairbanks or attend the Gwich'in Table on Saturday mornings, the classroom probably provides the only opportunity for them to speak. The following student appreciates the various activities which provide her with an opportunity to speak in the classroom:

Excerpt 20

S3: I especially appreciate it when Kathy finds ways to build in speaking time for us in class because I just don't do it much outside of class, so it's especially helpful for me when she uses whatever activity she can. She's used a variety that are all very useful to get us just to say the word to speak.

[EI]

S3 is unable to make the time outside of class to practice at the Gwich'in Table, and as a result appreciates the opportunities in class for speaking. This student had the opportunity to travel to two Gwich'in villages over the course of the semester. In one village, she realized she knew more of the Gwich'in language than some people whose ancestral language was Gwich'in. In the other village, she had and took the opportunity to speak to a fluent speaker who was quite a bit older than her. This time, she extended her knowledge of animals that she had learned in the class with the fluent speaker. The fluent speaker gave her additional information about the animals which she shared with the instructor upon her return. By taking the time to use her limited Gwich'in with a fluent speaker, this learner was able to learn something outside of the classroom which made her realize the importance of knowledgeable speakers. In speaking with the fluent speaker, she felt that person was being sympathetic to her use of the Gwich'in language.

With the exception of one, all students spoke or wrote about how much they appreciate Gwich'in grammar even though it is taught only one day per week. Furthermore, the instructor limits the technical and detailed structure of the language. If students want this type of technical and detailed structure for Athabascan languages, the instructor lets them know that there is a class called Athabascan Linguistics which

is offered by the university. Some of the students who wrote about their love of grammar also revealed that they are analytical. One student said that she always loved “diagramming sentences” since the eighth grade, and another student has linguistics as a major.

Gwich'in culture. Gwich'in culture and knowledge of the language is portrayed as Gwich'in epistemologies (origin, nature, methods and origins of knowledge), ontologies (nature of existence of being), and axiologies (values, judgements). These -ologies are the underlying current of the culture and this in turn prompts and engages students. Although “culture” is not mentioned on the syllabus, learning the language invariably brings with it knowledge of culture. Knowledge of culture begins on the first day of class when introductions are learned. Some students question why they have to introduce themselves by stating their name, where they are from, their parents, and their grandparents. The explanation for this varies and depends on what information is being sought. Native people have an indirect way of obtaining information or making requests. People may want to know who you are and the way to know this is because they may know the names of your parents. If they do not know your parents, then they obtain your last name by knowing the first and last names of your grandfather. In these ways, once your family is identified it situates your place within Gwich'in society. This example illustrates a typical view into Gwich'in culture to which students are exposed.

Although only one student stated that the language should be written, all the other students do appreciate that it is written for them on the whiteboard. If the

language was not written for the students, there would be no basis for them to take notes from which they could study. Some students stated that they would rewrite their notes as a type of learning and studying aide. One student expressed how it amazed her that there were five writing systems in Gwich'in. These writing systems are brought out to the students because if they encountered them, they would be aware of them. In the classroom, only one system is consistently used. This writing system is the Alaska Native Language Center writing system which the instructor learned and uses in the classroom.

Videotapes. Since these videotapes were taken during the very first week of class, they revealed that learners used more of their L1. However, as the class progresses, this reliance begins to drop because of the amount of vocabulary and practice which has taken place.

In the beginning, I was hoping to collect data that included student presentations, but because of the abrupt ending of the videotaping, it was not possible. Surprisingly, as the semester went on, and because the learners knew I was collecting data on the class, one of the students who consistently recorded the class asked me if I wanted a recording of one of the student presentations on the clothing thematic unit. I agreed and was surprised to find out the length of her presentation, the amount of vocabulary she used, use of props, and the interaction she had with the instructor. Since the learners are 'beginners', one can hardly expect them to be perfect. This learner demonstrated that she was able to get her point across, be able to ask for help, use props, and incorporate her own thoughts about how Gwich'in culture has adapted

to make use of modern materials. Although this was not part of the data collection, it is included in the appendices (Appendix M)

Research Question 3

What kind of classroom culture is created by these expectations and SLA theories?

Question three will be answered by aligning what students have said in their journals and exit interviews with the literature on group formation as a part of classroom culture. The literature on classroom culture reveals that group formation is contingent on (a) getting to know one another, (b) proximity, (c) connection, (d) interaction, (e) cooperation, (f) activities outside of class, and (g) struggling together.

Getting to know one another. In many classes, especially where there are adult learners, the very first few days are awkward because no one, including the instructor, knows anything about the next person. In fact, in some very large classes, students may go through the entire semester, and may not get to know who is seated next to them. In a communicative language class however, where interaction through speaking is required, adult students need to let down their affective filters enough so that they are able to speak or present. Initially, students have polite smiles, excuse themselves for any type of blunder, or are unsure about how to behave or not know what to expect of the class or from the instructor. At this point, the role of the instructor is crucial to how the interface occurs among the learners and between the learners and the instructor. Admittedly, as the instructor, it is also difficult to know

what the students will be like; therefore, the instructor may also exhibit these same uncomfortable feelings.

On the first day of the Gwich'in language classroom, the instructor does feel anxious about the personalities of the students but at the same time, knows that expectations must be made from the onset. A combination of oral, gestures and written communication are used to inform the students about the class. The following in-class expectations by the instructor take place on the very first day of class:

1. Roll is taken by going through the class roster of enrolled students, and as each student confirms, the instructor says thank you in the target language. Students are initially not asked to introduce themselves because they are unable to do this in the language.
2. Students are informed in the target language of my name and the name of the class with its accompanying course number which is written on the board.
3. Students are then provided with the hours and days when the class meets which are also written on the board. Since the class meets only one hour five times per week, it is imperative that students show up on time rather than being late. To get this point across, the instructor writes the correct time and a later time which is circled with a slash through it, and uses a combination of speaking in the TL and a hand gesture across the neck to indicate negation.
4. A sheet of paper is passed around to get the students' names and contact where the instructor uses the target language and a gesture to write.

5. Using the L1, the syllabus is explained about what is expected of them. At this point, it becomes visibly evident in some students that the L1 is used.
6. “Rules” of the classroom from the syllabus are as follows:

Table 4. Classroom Rules

BE ON TIME	No headsets
Participate	No chewing gum
Help one another	Please turn off cell phones
Don't worry about mistakes	Questions may be asked in english before or after class

In part, these rules are set up to create an atmosphere of what students may expect in the classroom, and also to try to get them to relax. By far, one of the most important rules is that they will make mistakes, and that it is expected when learning a new language.

7. Students are made aware of the obstacles for Indigenous people when learning their ancestral languages, and the emotions that are attached. They are also made aware that many Native languages are endangered.
8. Students are given a very short synopsis of what they can do in learning a second language. Students can not always be expected to know what is meant by a verb “conjugation”, and so that is also explained as to how it will be used in the classroom. Points 5-8 are all said in the L1, which usually takes about 45 minutes.
9. The lesson begins by using a gesture to indicate “say it like me”, and then students are taught the following phrase in the TL, nats'ahts'à' (English

phrase) gwinyàa? (how do we say _____?). This phrase is written on the board in the TL, and then the gesture is used for “say it like me.” Students provide a choral response, and then the instructor provides examples of how to use the phrase. Under guidance, students practice using the phrase until they are able to use the phrase appropriately. What is meant by appropriate use is that they are able to use the phrase by asking how to ask to say various phrases or nouns, which the instructor then answers in the TL.

10. At this point, armed with their ability to use the above phrase, their first TL lesson begins with introducing themselves by saying: shoozhri’ _____ oozhii (my name is _____). This is done by using a sticky name label and marker. The instructor writes her own name on a label and sticks it on her shirt, and then gestures for a student to do the same. The student then automatically passes the label to the next student, until everyone has a name tag on their shirt. The phrase is then written on the board, and under guidance and through choral response students practice saying each syllable of the phrase about two to three times. After this, the instructor models and then asks a student who seems to understand: noozhri’ doozhii? (what is your name?), and then scaffolds them until they have told me their name in the language. They are then scaffolded again to ask the next person in the TL noozhri’ doozhii? (what is your name?). The next student is then scaffolded by the instructor until everyone has had a chance to ask and answer in the first singular (I) and second singular (you) noun inflection of “name.”

11. After using the first singular and second singular noun inflection of “name”, students are expected to be able to use the third singular (s/he) noun inflection of “name”. The instructor inflects: shoozhri’, noozhri’, voozhri’ (my name, your name, his/her name), and has the students say all three in choral responses. After it has been modeled by the instructor with two other students, students are grouped into threes to practice introducing themselves, asking another person what their name is, and introducing a third person. The instructor is available for any questions from the students or to assist them if they are having any problems.
12. By this time, there is probably one minute left of class time. This time is used to give the students an assignment on Gwich’in Country which is due on the following Monday. The assignment questions are: (a) where is Gwich’in spoken?, (b) what are the Gwich’in village names?, (c) how many speakers are there of Gwich’in?, and (d) why is the language endangered?

As illustrated above, the first day of the Gwich’in language class is an important start because it sets the tone, pace, and expectations for the students. Additionally, it allows the students and instructor to get to know one another through interaction. Another way that the instructor gets to know the students is through a student journal which is not graded. Students are told that they are expected to keep a journal to express whatever thoughts they have about the class, the instructor, other classmates, their joys or frustrations, concerns, or ideas they may have about lessons or games. These journals are picked up every Friday, and then if appropriate,

responses are given to the students. Some of these responses are in the form of clarifications, agreement or praise. The instructor is sincere about these journals, and has occasionally used student ideas for teaching the class.

An unspoken rule that the instructor follows is never to say anything that is negative in or about the journals. They are not discussed in class, and because of this, students begin to open up more in their journals over time. As a result, student journals provide an excellent segway into getting to know the students. The student journals help the instructor to gauge when to adjust expectations for the students and thereby creating a balanced and wholesome relationship.

Ways in which students begin to know each other and form as a group are through their daily interactions in the classroom by way of collective responses to daily review and practice, scaffolding each other through group work, questioning each other, finding out personal information, and oral presentations. Below are some student journal entries after the first week of the Gwich'in language class:

Excerpt 21

S4: Class was good. I was a bit nervous but I think I will get over it. Gwich'in sounds very serious.

[SJ: Thursday, September 4, 2003 - Day 1]

In excerpt 21, in response to the first day of class, S4 provides a vague positive notion that “class was good.” S4 writes about her feeling of nervousness which is a natural and typical way to feel when meeting others for the first time; however, she is confident that it will pass with time. On this first day, it is imperative that the instructor set high but attainable expectations for the class. These expectations include

the use of the target language and making one understood through the use of props. S4 realizes from the first day that the instructor expectations are high and that it is expected that students and the instructor try to stay in the TL as is modeled from this first lesson.

Excerpt 22

S1: I like our group, even though two [one] professors and two graduate students are intimidating.

[SJ: Monday, September 8, 2003 - Day 3]

In excerpt 22, S1 decides she likes the group of students in the classroom and provides a vague positive reaction. It is unclear why she thought there were “two professors” in the classroom because there is only the instructor providing the lessons at this point. The only way she could know that there are two graduate students in the classroom is through communication with them, as this type of information is not shared in the classroom until much later. There were indeed two graduate students of anthropology, with one of them working on her Ph.D. This student found the thought of “two professors” and two graduate students intimidating; however, day three is still early in forming a group. The instructor response in the journal was that “They are in the same boat as you.” to indicate to the student that everyone at this point does not know anything about the language or the culture. Usually, it is only later that they decide they are collectively struggling and begin to form solidarity. The following student exemplifies the idea of struggling together and scaffolding one another in a group:

Excerpt 23

S1: Meeting to practice with other students is extremely helpfull [sic]. It helps to speak in front of other people to ease nervousness. I find it is very hard work cause I break into a sweat. Ha! When I can help someone else with a question-- I also help myself remember--learn more. I enjoyed the presentations today. I think the last minute practice really helped.

[SJ: Thursday, September 11, 2003 - Day 6]

By day five, students are beginning to meet outside of class to practice giving their presentations to one another before their actual presentation in the classroom. Presentations in a new language can be nerve wracking, especially after only six days of taking the language. Practicing in front of one another outside of class allows students to express their presentations in the TL and their L1 if they are not understood without the presence of the instructor. In this way they receive feedback which further helps them to feel more comfortable in the classroom. In order to ease their nervousness, the instructor does not disturb them by making corrections as they are making their presentations. After each student presents, the instructor begins to clap, and then everyone else in the room claps no matter how much the student might have struggled. Only after the presentation does the instructor then provide them with corrective feedback. This is done especially if the student is not understood by eliciting what they were trying to say and then negotiating with them so that it is a positive experience for the student.

Proximity and interaction. In group formation, proximity refers to what a group of learners share in common, and may lead to solidarity. In order for this to occur, it is best for the instructor to move the learners around so that there is plenty of interaction through questions and answers. Despite feeling nervous during the first few

days of class about speaking, students eventually appreciate this opportunity as it gives them practice in the classroom. The following students addressed this in their exit interviews or student journals:

Excerpt 24

S1: ...when we do back and forth questions in class with each other I think that was really the best help because with the back and forth it gave us a lot of chance to the mine and yours placements and then do the plurals and stuff like that. So that that really would test our skills and it seemed like when we do that I would really get the new vocabulary when I'd learn it. She'd present it and then we'd get a chance to work with it like that.

[EI]

Excerpt 25

S1: I am starting to be able to formulate questions and answers easier.
[SJ: September 25, 2003, Day 15]

Excerpt 26

S3: ...I especially appreciate it when Kathy finds ways to build in speaking time for us in class because I just don't do it much outside of class, so it's especially helpful for me when she uses whatever activity she can. Well she's used a variety that are all very useful to get us just to say the word to speak.

[EI]

Excerpt 27

S4: ...a card game that we play is "Go Fish" but it was pictures of animals which I thought was really good because you had to sit there and you had to think about like the question you were going to ask about the animals like right off the top of your head. I think thinking on the spot like that is good especially with language cause you have to really utilize it.

[EI]

Excerpt 28

S4: I hope we will take turns making up sentences and saying them to the class.
[SJ: September 11, 2003, Day 6]

Many times, in a classroom, students sit in the same seat and make connections with the nearest person seated next to them. If the connections are positive, then they might always want to work together, either during pair or group work. If the instructor notices this, then they are told teasingly “clique kwàa” (no cliques). Eventually, students all get to work with everyone else in the class. The instructor forms the groups by either assigning numbers in the TL or pairing students who seem to understand the material with another student who may need scaffolding. The following students state in their student journals the following:

Excerpt 29

S1: When I can help someone else with a question, I also help myself remember and learn more.

[SJ: September 11, 2003, Day 6]

Excerpt 30

S4: I think it [making up sentences] will help me learn to listen carefully to what others are saying.

[SJ: September 11, 2003, Day 6]

Excerpt 31

S2: Today we spent much of the class time practicing our "company conversation" for our presentations. It was very good practice, especially because everyone had to be the guest and had a turn being the host. Hearing words and phrases repeated is very helpful to me, then having an opportunity to say them and be corrected about pronunciation work well.

[SJ: October 9, 2003, Day 25]

Excerpt 32

S1: ...hearing the other students speak helps reinforce what I know and learn what I may have missed.

[SJ: October 14, 2003, Day 28]

Group work then, leads to the development of relationships which promote acceptance through interaction. By day three, one student already wrote in her student journal “I like our group.” Other students expressed their acceptance of the group as in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 33

S1: I think I am a little more relaxed in class now. I like the people in your class. The way you teach brings fun into the classroom. It is a great way to help ease shyness or awkwardness. I liked working with the cards and in groups again.

[SJ: September 23, 2003, Day 13]

Excerpt 34

S2: We really get a lot of good practice in class and we get to interact with each other.

[SJ: September 23, 2003, Day 13]

Excerpt 35

S4: Working in groups is always helpful.

[SJ: October 7, 2003, Day 23]

Excerpt 36

S1: I feel a sense of cohesiveness in our group--a togetherness and it's nice. I like my fellow classmates and enjoy that we are learning together.

[SJ: October 14, 2003, Day 28]

Commonalities that this group of language learners shares are that they are all non-Native adults who are trying to learn a Native language as a second language in a university setting. Although the university offers world languages, such as, among others, Spanish or French, these students chose to take the Gwich'in language class, which is a unique class offered at this university. It is unique because there are only a handful of Native language classes which are taught at the university level. By choosing to take this class, students already

have in common an interest in taking this language which sets them apart from those who are taking world languages. As with learning any language, they will make mistakes and will have many questions that relate to the language and culture. Native languages, in general, have a distinct phonology from their first language (English), and as a result they will share almost a new set of sounds and diacritics which do not equate to their first language. This undoubtedly will affect their pronunciation. Furthermore, the word order for the most part, in Gwich'in is SOV (subject-object-verb) whereas the word order in English is SVO (subject-verb-object). Learning another worldview is also confusing. For instance, a common question that occurs when learning about kinship terms is "why do you have to call your aunts and uncles differently depending if they are on your mother's or father's side?" They can also draw on each other's strengths and in this way form a group where they form questions in a collective manner.

Differences between individuals in the group were their ages (early 20's to late 40's), level of class standings (freshman to graduate), and their varying goals for taking the class. These goals included knowledge of grammar, knowledge about an Indigenous language from an Athabaskan territory, knowledge of culture, and academic research among the Gwich'in. Differences between the instructor and the students are that the instructor is of Gwich'in ancestry, learned her language as an adult, knows the culture, and has very high expectations of the students. Some students come into the class with preconceived ideas about the ways in which Native language classes are taught. The following are two such examples:

Excerpt 37

S1: At one time I thought that maybe there was gonna be no written part.
[EI]

Excerpt 38

S3: I've gotten the impression that with a lot of Native languages there's usually traditionally more emphasis on immersion and that wouldn't have worked so hot for me probably. Just speaking the language and trying to make sense of it and I don't know much about how languages are taught but I just know that this worked for me really well. It seems like a model that works well in general. You know to combine grammar with speaking because it just helps me to see things organized...
[EI]

It is unclear where these perceptions originated but students come into the Gwich'in language classroom thinking that there will be no writing involved, and that it will be full immersion. S3 also said that she thought the way the class was structured--grammar, speaking, writing--was similar to the way Spanish was taught. S3 also states that she thought that traditionally Native language classes were taught using full immersion, and that it would not have worked for her. A question that presents itself then is that if S3 had this impression, then why did she enroll in the class? However, over all, she thought the way the class was taught worked well for her which means that how the class was taught exceeded her expectations.

Connection and cooperation. Cooperation amongst language learners promotes acceptance and enables them to become connected as a unified team. There are many confusing moments as students are learning the language. It is these confusing moments that provides the momentum for the students to connect and cooperate as they begin to solve tasks, play games, or do presentations. As a result of this, learners begin to bond by assisting each other to reach a common goal. They

begin to feel a connection with other classmates (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The following students express their thoughts through their journals about others in the class:

Excerpt 39

S1: It feels strange when co-classmates miss class because I wonder about them.

[SJ: September 23, 2003, Day 13]

Excerpt 40

S3: Two days in a row, both A & L missed class. That makes me nervous that they won't come back, and I don't want to lose them!

[SJ: October 9, 2003, Day 25]

Excerpt 41

S2: Everyone in the class seems to be able to laugh at themselves, which is good. It's hard not to laugh when I know I am butchering a word.

[SJ: October 28, 2003, Day 28]

Excerpt 42

S1: The presentations went pretty well today. I am pleased that others did well in class. I like our class and I am glad we have made it this far.

[SJ: October 28, 2003, Day 37]

The relevance of the above student journal excerpts are that they begin to show that they support and are concerned about one another. In excerpt 40, “A & L” are mentioned. They are Indigenous students that this particular student (S3) wants to see succeed in high education. Learners have gotten used to the idea of humor, and are relaxed enough to laugh at themselves. In their struggles together, such as when they give presentations, provides them a chance to applaud each other.

Activities outside of class. Activities for language learners outside of the language classroom provides a more relaxed environment because there is a different emphasis on interaction. It is more casual and thus enables learners to get to know one

another better as their affective filters go down. They become more engaged so that they treat one another as if they were not learners, but as ordinary citizens. This is consistent with the literature which emphasizes that activities outside of the classroom should be free from stress and be something that is fun for the learners. For the Gwich'in classroom, there are not many opportunities to practice outside of the classroom, except for the Gwich'in Table, which is facilitated by the instructor. The Table meets every Saturday, which is usually negotiated around the schedules of the students. The Table is provided for the students to give them a chance to hear fluent speakers over a one-hour time period. There are no translations or English allowed at the Table. Since the Table is not the classroom, one never knows what will be said, as there is no agenda. Learners might hear and learn about various culturally appropriate activities or what it was like for the fluent speaker(s) to grow up nomadically. There is more vocabulary learned at the Table which is learned in context that do not necessarily occur as part of the classroom. Although students can get more exposure to the language by attending potlatches or attending churches where the language is used, all of these students are full-time students and can not find the time to attend these gatherings. It is usually not until the end of the semester when students are taken on a fieldtrip to the UAF museum so that they have the opportunity to see the various traditional clothing and talk about them. All of the students went to the Gwich'in Table at one time for another; one went to a Gwich'in community, and another checked out books and spoke to other Gwich'in people. These are reflected in their exit interviews as follows:

Excerpt 43

S1: I went to one of the Gwich'in Coffee Tables that she has on Saturday and I liked that but unfortunately I didn't go as many times as I would have liked to.

[EI]

Excerpt 44

S2: ...I would rewrite my notes from class and... I'd talk to people about it because I was excited. I'm still excited about the class and so I'd tell "Well isn't this cool. A cool thing to say." and I probably butchered it but that helped too, to say it to other people and I'd check out books from the library. Like books that Katherine Peter had written or different museum books with different shoes or clothes or look at them and try to associate words in Gwich'in with them.

[EI]

Excerpt 45

S3: ...I went to the Gwich'in Table that Kathy runs on Saturdays a couple of times but Saturday is a bad day for me. I kind of claim it for myself and spend time outside and do all the things that I don't get to do during the week. So I didn't take as much advantage of that as I could have.

[EI]

Excerpt 46

S3: I did go to [Gwich'in community] once this semester to present a report. I just played around just a little bit with one of the speakers in the village and just a couple of words and he understood me. It was really nice to have a real world connection to what we were doing in class.

[EI]

In the next section, meeting outside of the classroom takes on another dimension--one in which students struggle together and try to place meaning on the different thematic units in the class.

Struggling together. Learners automatically promote acceptance of one another when they decide that they should work on perplexing concepts or activities together. As they work together, each learner contributes their individual strengths on the subject. These strengths may include knowledge of vocabulary, word order, or

grammar rules. This shared experience acts as a foundation so that solidarity amongst the learners is framed which in turn allows opportunities for language learning and speaking transformations. Some group struggles that students experienced were practicing in front of each other before class for their presentations, understanding a story, or being assertive. Below are some excerpts from students as they struggled collectively to make sense of materials presented in class:

Excerpt 47

S1: Meeting to practice with other students is extremely helpfull [sic]. It helps to speak in front of other people to ease nervousness.... I enjoyed the presentations today. I think the last minute practice really helped.

[SJ: September 11, 2003, Day 6]

Excerpt 48

S2: Four of us stayed after class to pick our way through "Nats'ahts'a' Ch'adhah Ałkhii" [How I Tan Hides] We came across a few things we didn't understand at all, but it was nice to see how much we collectively could understand.

[SJ: December 3, 2003, Day 58]

It has been brought to my attention that beginning students usually do not give presentations, especially after only six days in the classroom as is expressed in excerpt 47 above. Already, by day six, students are serious enough to meet outside of class to practice their presentations on each other. As expressed, presentations can be nerve wracking, so struggling together to overcome this anxiety through practice was helpful in this case. One of the thematic units which occur towards the end of the semester is on how to tan hides. Besides bringing in the traditional tanning tools for the learners, there is also a booklet on how to tan hides in a traditional way. It was this book which was full of new vocabulary which had the students baffled. Excerpt 48

explains nicely how they collectively began to figure out the booklet. The next day, the determined group asked me for clarification on the vocabulary that they could not understand.

Although only two students spoke about the lack of a textbook, this could also be seen as a class struggle because all the students had to be able to rewrite and organize their notes. Additionally, the instructor encouraged students to record the class, but this might have been something that the students could not afford or found inconvenient. The one student, who did record, found it to be helpful as she listened to them as she commuted between home and school.

Summary

This study of how groups form through the venue of a language classroom has been explored and data analysis for each of the three research questions has been put forth. The students in the beginning Gwich'in language classroom who were a part of this study expressed their thoughts about the class through their student journals and an exit interview to show the complexities of classroom culture. They exhibited all of the traits of how groups form which also included the instructor--the idea of getting to know one another, their interactions, and struggles. When students first came into the classroom, all of the students had no idea of how the class would be taught, but once they realized that they would be learning to speak and know enough grammar to help them speak, they fell into a pattern of these expectations. The instructor also armed with knowledge of second language acquisition, her own language teaching philosophy and high expectations provided a stable framework for the class. This

combination of student and instructor expectations begins to form right from the first day of class, and by the end of the semester everyone has had a chance to have intense interaction. Their responses to the broad question “what did you think of the beginning Gwich'in class overall?” were all very positive from every one of the students. To summarize, (a) they were surprised at the amount they had learned; (b) they enjoyed how the learning was tied in with appropriate cultural activities and visual aids; (c) they appreciated the organization of the class, and (d) one student revealed that she had gotten “...well over my money’s worth...”

The following chapter will address the implications of this study as it relates to classroom culture and second language acquisition.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The theoretical frameworks which are the basis for this study are second language acquisition and group formation. This chapter will therefore integrate the findings in chapter four which are discussed according to each research question. Question one will be addressed separately, while questions two and three will be combined in the discussion. The goal is to provide guidance and recommendations for other teachers and students of Indigenous languages. Furthermore, it can not be reiterated enough that Indigenous languages can be learned. The instructor has been teaching since 2002, and will discuss additional pertinent personal and student vignettes both from before this research and after data collection because the instructor's expectations keep evolving.

Research Question 1 Discussion

This first research question explored the expectations the instructor had of the learners, and was based on my own experiences in learning my ancestral language as an adult. Armed with theories of teaching and learning a second language, the instructor formed a teaching philosophy which drove her expectations of teaching and learning in the language classroom. The discussion under this question will therefore be on (a) instructor expectations; (b) my own language learning experiences; (c) theories of second language acquisition (SLA) and second language learning (SLL), and (d) language teaching philosophy.

Instructor expectations. It is important for instructors to have high expectations of the students. If an instructor sets high expectations for language

learning, it drives how the class will be taught. It provides a foundation for the learners, especially if they do not know what to expect. These high expectations should be well rounded, and should not focus exclusively on any one of the learning skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, culture, or grammar). Rather, they should include all of the components. In this way, it affords learners an opportunity to experience all of these components, which in turn leads the learners to understand cultural knowledge in context.

In addition, the high expectations should include what the learners will do once they have practiced using vocabulary for the various thematic units. One way is to expect the learners to give a small presentation. These presentations do not have to be very long, although as the learners progress through the class, they do tend to get longer. This is because of another expectation that vocabulary learned on the first day is not put to the wayside, but rather is used throughout the entire semester and incorporated into subsequent presentations. Expecting the learners to stay in the target language can be accomplished through the use of physical and psychological tools. This does not necessarily mean that the learners are expected to have all of these tools in their repertoire; rather the instructor keeps a wall full of physical tools which are offered and are available for learner use during their presentations.

Having high expectations in and of itself is not enough. They need to be executed with help from the instructor. This help is in the form of scaffolding, and providing the learners with the necessary physical and psychological tools.

In 2002, when I was hired as the Gwich'in Native language instructor, I had many doubts about my qualifications. For one, I was in the process of learning my own language, and also because I had been under the wing and semi-assistant to Lillian Garnett. During this time, I had felt "safe" because she, as a fluent speaker, was always there to provide me as a second language learner (SLL) with language assistance. Suddenly with her retirement and my subsequent hire, I felt like I was in a vacuum. It was a terrifying experience for me that first year because as mentioned before I had had no training on how to teach a second language, save for the Hinton workshop and the experiences I had with Mrs. Garnett in her own classroom.

In the meantime, I was enrolled as an undergraduate in the linguistics program where I did learn about the structure of my language. One semester, I enrolled in the class called Methods and Theories of Second Language Acquisition. This class marked the beginnings of understanding and application of these theories, and I continue to read books and articles on how to improve my class. Knowing and understanding the theories is a major step which then sets the foundation for instructor expectations. These expectations should be high with the belief that the learners are capable and motivated individuals. High expectations include the belief that learners will begin to speak on the first day of class, and should be loosely outlined in the syllabus. Perhaps the most useful expectation is that the target language will be used as much as possible. If this is consistently done, learners will grow to expect it and hold you, as the instructor, to this notion. I remember clearly when I used an English word. The students immediately got confused and asked me "Ajj chan jidii?" (and

what is that?). When they found out it was english, they could not believe they did not understand the word to be english. We all had a good laugh. There is a fair amount of teasing that goes on both inside and outside of the classroom between the instructor and learners. This is not to say that they do not show respect. The following vignette attests to the instructor expectations that the class is fun, yet very serious:

One month before the completion of this M.Ed. thesis was done, a former student who took the Gwich'in language class dropped by my office to visit. I asked him how his semester was going, and he stated that he had dropped a language class which was on his ancestral language. I asked him why he would do such a thing, and he said "you spoiled me [after learning Gwich'in in your language class]." This is a dynamic statement that speaks to how a language class can be taught so that students are learning and being social. Along these same lines, another student of the Gwich'in language told me in class that when she teaches her Native language, that she "wants to teach **just** the way Hishinlai' teaches."

Other expectations the instructor has of the students are to integrate speaking, listening, grammar, culture, reading and writing. This combination, which was enhanced by using learning aides, helped the students to obtain the ACTFL Novice High Speaking category. There are some parts of ACTFL's category in which students excel. For example:

Table 5. ACTFL Novice High Speaking and Gwich'in Classroom Comparison

ACTFL: Novice High Speaking	Gwich'in Language Class
Able to satisfy partially the requirements of basic communicative exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances but occasionally expanding these through simple recombinations of their elements.	Students go beyond basic and simple recombinations during their presentations. For instance, during their final presentations, some students get very creative and talk at length by using their various props.
Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material.	This is true and on par, although there are many culture and grammar-related questions.
Shows signs of spontaneity although this falls short of real autonomy of expression.	Students do show signs of spontaneity; however, there is real autonomy of expression during their presentations. For instance, they will incorporate past vocabulary which makes their presentations longer. See Appendix M for an example.
Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones.	There are many verbs and associated vocabulary that goes with each thematic unit. Students bring in their own items from home or make circumlocutions when they are unable to express themselves in the language. One student said, (This is a female moose. This is a male moose. In the fall, they make a baby moose.)
Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and most common kinship terms.	Vocabulary for the thematic units extends beyond basic objects, places, and common kinship terms. For instance, with postpositions, there are eleven "basic" postpositions, but they are extended to three environments for using them. As a result, there are a total of 28 different forms which can be used.
Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by first language.	For the most part, this is true and on par. During this study, two out of the four students had excellent pronunciation, including the use of tone and nasal sounds.
Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice-High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.	Because of the instructor's insistence on using props or other manipulatives, it was easy to understand what the students were trying to convey. One student who went to a Gwich'in village did say that the fluent speaker to whom she had a Gwich'in conversation was pretty sympathetic. I believe she was being modest because her errors were infrequent in the classroom.

The ACTFL Speaking rubric is a good start as a gauge for setting language goals and expectations. However, the instructor needs to maintain the high expectations and engage the students so that they accomplish the language goals.

The ACTFL Listening rubric mentions understanding the language. After one semester, students fall into the ACTFL Intermediate-Mid Listening range. The rubric for this range of listening is as follows:

Able to understand sentence-length utterances which consist of recombinations of learned utterances on a variety of topics. Content continues to refer primarily to basic personal background and needs, social conventions and somewhat more complex tasks, such as lodging, transportation, and shopping. Additional content areas include some personal interests and activities, and a greater diversity of instructions and directions. Listening tasks not only pertain to spontaneous face-to-face conversations but also to short routine telephone conversations and some deliberate speech, such as simple announcements and reports over the media. Understanding continues to be uneven. (retrieved March 7, 2008 from

<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/OtherResources/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines/ACTFLGuidelinesSpeakingNovice.htm>)

Even though students come into the class not knowing what to expect, they end up being drawn into how the class is taught. It is a lot of hard work for the students because of the expectations of doing presentations, keeping organized notes, and

practicing that puts them so high on the ACTFL speaking and listening levels. If anyone is to be applauded, it is definitely the students.

Ancestral language learning experience. The instructor's experiences in learning her own language as an adult proved to be a challenge that could have easily been squashed by the ideology that Native languages are impossible to learn, and the resultant demeanor of fluent speakers.

For those who want to learn their ancestral language, these types of messages are unnecessary because they foster an ideology which in turn creates the mindset that Indigenous languages are impossible to learn. Grammarians may find the structure of the languages impossible to decipher, but the languages themselves can and should be learned like any other second language. Like some participants in this study, this mindset may include the notion that one must learn grammar. Although, as the researcher, I do not disagree with grammar as being part of the classroom (especially in a university class), I do not believe it should be the focus of the class. Learning one's ancestral language can be accomplished by using the notions of sociocultural theory, which takes into account understanding the social history of an individual, and using this knowledge to understand the learning process.

Understanding and applying theories of SLL. One of the most important aspects of teaching a language is to become versed in the tenets of second language acquisition (SLA) and second language learning (SLL). However, some Native language teachers and learners are so used to thinking that learning a language is to know the structure of the language that despite learning these theories of SLA and

SLL they revert back to their old ways, which is to teach grammar. Because of this, it is important for instructors to reflect on their goals for the language classroom, and have this reflected in their own language teaching philosophies. Teaching grammar, if one understands their own Native language structure, does not allow students the opportunity to speak. However, in teaching a communicative class, it requires an enormous amount of work and resiliency to change one's language lessons at the snap of a finger and still keep the class flowing smoothly. Granted, even though one may not get through the daily lesson as planned, it seems the overall syllabus still manages to be accomplished at the end of the semester because of the guidance and resiliency of both the instructor and the students.

Although the classes I took on SLA and SLL were formal, training for teaching a L2 does not necessarily have to be as formal, but can take place through a hands-on approach. Hinton's hands-on approach is a good start in the process of how to acquire and use the language; however, I have added four major components. These additions came about after my own experiences in working with ten other Indigenous groups (Indian and Eskimo) in Alaska and Canada. In addition to the training provided by Hinton (to use and learn language in a naturalistic setting), the components I have added are to include (a) the group's *own* language learning speaking goals, (b) assisting the group so that these goals are realized in a step-by-step process through authentic activities or language lessons, (c) creating the materials to match the speaking goals, and (d) building in an assessment based on the language speaking goals. Empirical studies (Battiste, 2002; Sims, 2004) have concluded that Indigenous

language learning ideas should come from within the communities, and not from those outside the group. In this way, groups take ownership and their own responsibility as to what they value as important in language learning. Many of the classes that I teach are in the context of a language classroom, and as a result, the four components I have added to Hinton's work satisfy the guidelines, albeit probably not as rigorous, as put forth by formal classrooms.

This combination of SLL, SLA, and teaching philosophy is an umbrella which stands on knowledge of how groups form. Having a firm grip on how groups form begins with the onset of class. As an experienced instructor, one can usually tell from the first day of class which students are more receptive to a challenge or which ones should have time to process speaking after they have heard the language a number of times. The ways that this has been done in the Gwich'in class is through slowly speaking each syllable and then scaffolding each student. After much of this repetitiveness, students become comfortable, and then jokes with the Indigenous language they have learned so far can be incorporated. This use of jokes is a natural part of Indigenous cultures, and thereby creates a fun environment where it is safe to make mistakes. Initially, serious students are stone-faced because they may not be aware that in Indigenous cultures, humor is an integral part of the culture. Part of learning the culture begins when they realize this and begin to relax. Many times over the years, I have heard students ask "Ch'adaɣ' hee?" (already?) after the one hour has passed with a sad looking facial expression.

Teaching philosophy. A person could not be a doctor without understanding and learning how the body works. This same analogy could be said of a language teacher. Too many times at many levels of education, fluent speakers and/or those who have been trained in understanding the structure of the language are asked to teach a Native language without any type of training in teaching a language. Even if Native language teachers have a variety of props in the various forms; without this foundation of knowing how second languages are learned or taught, these props are like tools which an untrained doctor could not use in an effective manner.

Second language acquisition training does not necessarily require one to have formal schooling. Much like Indigenous learning (by doing activities through context), this can be illustrated by someone who knows about second language acquisition theories. In order to fully understand the concepts of language teaching, training needs to occur over a period of time to first demonstrate the concepts, and then scaffold the Native language instructors to create their own language goals and execute them through activities that foster the use of the language.

This understanding of language teaching needs to be differentiated from the teaching of other subjects such as math, science, reading, writing, etc. because the processes are different. They are unique because learning or teaching second languages is not static. Just because a language instructor has a lesson plan does not mean that they have to adhere to the times for which they plan specific activities. In my own classes, I have never felt pressured to keep up with a textbook, or to use the “worksheets” because there are no textbooks for the Gwich’in language class.

Perhaps, because of this lack of “textbooks” for some Indigenous languages, we can sit on the balustrade and steer our own course through Indigenous and western knowledges, and quietly reclaim our ancestral languages. Although this may sound utopian, it is something that I have personally done in my own language classroom.

As Indigenous people in the Alaskan context, we have to remember that since the 1960’s, we have been trying to learn our ancestral languages. We have listened too long to advice that learning the grammar of our languages or outdated methods (audiolingual) of second language acquisition is the way to reclaim our languages. This can be reversed if Native language instructors make a concerted effort to understand and embrace a language teaching philosophy that is strong and executed in the classroom.

Research Questions 2 and 3 Discussion

This second research question explored the student expectations through their student journals and exit interviews. Their expectations were then checked to see their alignment or non-alignment with the instructor’s expectations. Question three explored classroom culture by understanding its foundations, and its use in the language classroom. The discussion under these questions will therefore be on (a) what students learned, (b) role of grammar, (c) students and learning, and (d) ancestral language learning support.

What students learned. One of the students who was initially a part of this study was really surprised to find out that she was able to understand a conversation between two fluent speakers of Gwich’in at a public gathering where traditional foods

were served. There were many Native groups and some non-Natives people present. She stated that it was hilarious because the two speakers were talking about the physique of various ladies. She had to hide her face because they kind of suspected something but because she is not Gwich'in and young, they more than likely assumed that they could not be understood. This understanding occurred only after one semester of Gwich'in, and prior to taking the class, she had no background or knowledge of the language.

Another student who is of Gwich'in ancestry went to her Gwich'in village where the language is actively used. She reported that over the Christmas holiday break, she was able to understand almost everything that was being said in the language. In fact, she would audibly laugh when something was too funny that she could not hold it back. She was asked if she understood, and she answered "kind of." Another student reported that for the very first time, he could understand what his Gwich'in grandmother said. As he was talking, his eyes were very big and he had the biggest smile when he said this.

During the exit interview, students were asked the following broad question: "How did you think the Gwich'in class went?"

Excerpt 49

S1: I really really liked it. I feel like I've learned a lot and I liked the different curriculum. The things that we did and the presentations that she had us do. I just thought it was great overall and when I talked to a fellow student [who was] in a German class, it just seemed so boring compared to what we're doing here cause it's such a nice mixture of fun and the cultural parts that come into it. And then the relevance with the language, how that ties in. It just it makes it so interesting for me. I really like it.

[EI]

Excerpt 50

S2: Well I thought it was great. I thought I learned more than I guess I anticipated. Learning a lot about grammar and now that the end of the semester is here there are a lot of things that I can say in Gwich'in that I guess you know I never thought I'd be able. So I thought overall it was well organized. I know Kathy has said several times throughout the semester that she is still experimenting but I thought the flow to the class was good and it was logical though we started out heavy on grammar. And the second half of the semester we relied heavily on what we learned the first half and that made a lot of sense to me. I thought the use of visual aids was great and the incorporation of cultural material. I mean I guess you can't really separate culture from a language So that part was really interesting too. I thought that was a bonus learning all about Gwich'in culture So overall I'm very pleased. I feel like I've got well over my money's worth out of the class.

[EI]

Excerpt 51

S3: It was great. I'm loving it. I like playing with languages. I like learning languages but I haven't studied anything since Spanish in college and so I love having the excuse to take Gwich'in because I'm an [major and type of student] student and I'm going to be working in the flats so I'm enjoying it quite a bit. I think it's been a great class. I've learned a ton. It's been a while since my college Spanish courses but I feel like I've learned a lot more in a semester comparatively with this than I did in a semester's worth of Spanish.

[EI]

Excerpt 52

S4: I think it's an excellent class. It's probably the best language class I've taken, and I've taken Spanish, Latin, and German. I think teaching wise Kathy is really engaging. The activities she brings to class I think really help reinforce using the language.

[EI]

In the above excerpts from the students, many of these points are addressed which meld with the instructor's expectations and goals for the class.

Each and every class of language students is different. Initially, some desire more translations than the instructor deems necessary, but then students quickly realize that I would rather not provide their L1 translations but would rather act it out or draw for them on the whiteboard. Acting is not a problem; however, sometimes I need to draw a picture for them on the board. This is definitely a huge problem for me because I can not even draw stick figure people, apparently even stick men. Once I made stick men for elementary students, and one child asked me "Why do the men have three legs?" This astounded me until I heard one of the other students say in a little voice, "It looks like they're sitting on a stool." "Àahà' . (yes)" That was my answer to that student. From elementary to university students, this horrible drawing ability that I share with the students comes through as a form of entertainment for them because we have this reciprocal and teasing relationship. At the university level, students know my weakness is to draw, and sometimes teasingly request that I "draw" on the board. The very first university class I had asked me if I could draw "trees" again, and then they would grin and laugh. That does not mean that I do not get them back with their pronunciation mistakes, but definitely not in a mean way. Once, very

seriously, I emphasized the importance of using a glottal as part of a word because if it is used in the wrong way, it changes the meaning of a word. A male student did not use it correctly for saying “shaghò” (my teeth), and instead said “shaghoo” (my testicles). This sent a fluent speaker almost rolling on the floor in hysterical laughter. While everyone was laughing so hard, the student asked me in a state of confusion and horror, “what did I say?” I told him in a low voice what he had said and he also began to laugh. From that moment on that particular student used it correctly and expressed this thought through his student journal entry. There are so many laughing moments in the class that a number could not be assigned, but there are other moments that the class seems serious, as when there are “grammar days.”

Role of grammar. “Grammar days” consists of one day per week over the five day period of the Gwich’in language class, if even that. This is a philosophy which I have learned from my own experience as a language learner. This philosophy is that if one is focusing on speaking, then those points of speaking should be the grammar focus which is aimed at non-linguists because many language learners are not linguistic majors, and for the most part, many language learners find this aspect of language learning quite weariful. The reasons I wanted the grammar to make sense to non-linguistic students was because when I was learning about the structure of my own language, it was very confusing. However, taking copious notes did help me to eventually understand the grammar, and apply it to grammar worksheets for the students. Grammar is certainly one way to “turn off” students to language learning.

One way to teach grammar is to use target language vocabulary with which the students were familiar as grammar examples without reverting to their L1.

A few students disagreed with this practice, especially if they were linguistics students; however, many students thought the combination of speaking and grammar learning were just enough for being able to communicate at the end of the semester. This combination of being able to communicate at the end of the semester and having enough knowledge of the grammar is something that language instructors must balance. One of the first things I did after the first week of teaching in 2002 was to inventory the vocabulary, word order, and morphology of the language. This was then the focus of the grammar lesson; however, as one of the students pointed out, grammar was not “belabored.” Within this web of knowledge of theories of SLL, SLA, group formation, and emergent grammar, the instructor also needs to push the students to the limits of their learning, yet bring them back in when s/he sees that it is beyond what the students can handle.

Students and learning. Learning a second language *is* definitely hard work, and requires hours of practice not only in the classroom, but especially outside of the class. The instructor can only provide so much in the way of language, encouragement, patience, scaffolding, engaging the students or providing worksheets. The rest of the time, the students also have to be motivated on their own, and think of reasons why they are in the class. If their main reason is to learn to speak the language, then their focus should be on practicing the language through context with others outside of class. This can be accomplished by actively seeking speakers of the

language by attending events where there are large concentrations of speakers. These places include dances, potlatches, or the church. Some of the Native students also have fluent speakers as relatives. Sometimes when the fluent relatives find out the student is in a language class, they try to “teach” the student but because they are not aware of how languages are learned, almost always overwhelm the student. A student conveyed this to me about her grandmother, who is a fluent Gwich’in speaker. She found it frustrating when her grandmother would begin by saying very long sentences to her and expect her to repeat it after her, all without context. When she was unable to repeat the long sentences, the grandmother gave up on her.

At the age that I learned my ancestral language, I did not receive a lot of support, but it is evident that those students in their 20’s who are learning their ancestral language receive a lot of support from fluent speakers. The reasons for this are unclear but the support for the younger generation is evidenced when one of the Native students used Gwich’in to address people at a Gwich’in Gathering, which is a yearly event held in different Gwich’in villages in Alaska and Canada. After various speakers heard her, they expressed to her how proud and happy they felt for her. When she revealed this to me, she was absolutely glowing with happiness and pride.

In the Gwich’in language classroom, non-Native students seem to have empathy for Native students. They seem concerned if Native students do not attend on a regular basis. This was voiced in the student journal by a non-Native student who said that she really values the presence of the Native students in the class because of the different perspectives they contribute. There is a higher absence rate for the Native

students than for the non-Native students, and this is a concern as to what societal pressures these students may feel about learning a Native language. Those Native students, who do attend on a regular basis, and take the language learning seriously, are rewarded as they learn and use the language with fluent speakers. It is these types of students who “pull their own weight” in the process of language learning.

The preference for experiential language learning for Indigenous cultures is not always feasible. Sometimes one is in a city or in this case, a university, and as a result, the only option is a language classroom. In a language classroom, it does not matter if the students are children or adults. The major need is to create a foundation of expectations for the students and for them to be intensely engaged for social interaction to occur. This social interaction, in turn, will lead to speaking the language after only a short period of time if the students are also motivated to learn the language. During this particular study, only four out of the original eight students finished the class. They were all non-Native students whose motivation came in the form of attending class on a daily basis, and if it was impossible, they made sure that other students could take notes for them. They rewrote their notes and organized them so that they could use them in a way that made sense to them. Although they were limited outside of class for practice, it was always apparent that they were prepared when class began. In light of the fact that these non-Native students complete the class, it is clear that research is much needed as to why some Native students embrace learning their Native language, while obstacles are a deterrent for others.

The instructor, for her part, was obsessed with creating language materials which could be used in the classroom; however, since she is definitely not an artist, lacks authentic materials to use in the classroom.

Ancestral language learning support. Once I had a Native student who told me that her grandfather told her that the generations after him will never be able to learn their Native language because they no longer live on the land. Right away, this student's mindset was that she would never learn the language. As a result, even though this student was very good at learning the language and using props to tell her stories, she did not continue on in the class after the first academic year. Elders need to be very careful what they say to the generations that follow them. As it is, the egos of these generations are very frail because they are trying to negotiate living in two worlds.

Another student that I know from another group in Alaska said something very similar, in which the elder wanted to know why she would bother to learn her ancestral language. The student felt heartbroken and devastated. The quote from this student reveals her innermost thoughts about learning her ancestral language.

...trying to preserve and reawaken our language I face animosity everyday. People don't see or understand why we want to save it. They are crushed because of the pain they have faced in the past. Getting hit, chastized [sic], embarrassed of who they are. I understand that they have endured hardship and pain but do [they] understand what my generation has faced? We struggle everyday to find ourselves and our identity. I want so bad to be able to speak [Native language] fluently and teach, in my language, the wealth of cultural knowledge I've already learned from my elders. How can I explain to them that I'm embarrassed that I can't speak my language and would they understand? I'm so tired of these issues being dictated by our relationship with non-Native people. When will our people see that by learning our language and cultural traditions, we are putting the power back in our own hands? That is the best revenge -- to not be defeated by what they always wanted in the first place: for the [Native language] to die."

Problem and Need

Videotaping proved to be a challenge for this researcher. Although the author respects this type of data collection because of the rich data generated, it proved to be a problem for this researcher because it was difficult to find people who could find the time to videotape the class. If a professional were hired, the cost would have been beyond the monetary level of the researcher.

If I were to videotape for any further research, I would keep a roster of people and a schedule of when videotaping needs to be implemented. That way, if people have other plans, another person could be available for this important job. I would also pay the videographers a nominal fee for every time they worked.

Authentic materials. There is a need for authentic Indigenous language materials. In the Alaska context, there are two main groups of Indigenous peoples--the Eskimos and the Indians. These two groups have totally different cultures, looks,

animals, and ways of living. There are presently dictionaries at the Alaska Native Language Center of Athabascan groups, in which the illustrations depict Eskimo groups. Two of these Athabascan dictionaries are the Central Koyukon Junior Dictionary (Jones, 1983) and the Gwich'in Junior Dictionary (Peter, 1979). By rubberstamping these illustrations, it connotes that Eskimo and Athabascan groups look the same, when in reality, it is far from the truth.

In the Gwich'in language classroom, there are certain games that I have the students play, such as Guess Who?. One of the students complained that although the concept of playing the game to learn and practice the language was great, she was disappointed that the pictures depicted "White" people, especially since she was learning Gwich'in!

Clearly, there is much work that needs to be done in this realm in order to support language instructors as they go about teaching students. Native students need to see their own cultures depicted. Appropriate depictions need to be made in stories, pedagogical materials, and tangible, authentic materials. In this way, Native instructors and students may possess a sense of appropriate representation. Even if language instructors have authentic pedagogical materials, there is still the need for them to believe that Native languages can be learned as a second language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that Indigenous people want to learn their ancestral languages but learners and teachers need support from those who are fluent speakers. Teachers also need to apply techniques of second language theories and have a strong

Indigenous language teaching philosophy. Barring the fact that learning can not take place experientially, the classroom provides an alternative option. Knowledge of group formation which is positive from the first day of class may be conducive to language learning.

This thesis has shown one way in which a positive classroom culture can be created which does allow learners to develop fluency in the classroom. It has validated the point that Indigenous languages can be learned. For learning Indigenous languages then, time is of essence in these matters of second language learning.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval



(907) 474-7800
 (907) 474-5444 fax
 fyirb@uaf.edu
 www.uaf.edu/irb

Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

November 28, 2006

To: Sabine Siekmann, PhD
 Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Stockdale, Research Integrity Administrator
 Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Modification Request

Thank you for submitting the modification request for the protocol identified below. It has been reviewed and approved by members of the IRB. On behalf of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that your request has been granted.

Protocol #: 03-51

Title: *An Indigenous Classroom: Assisting and Provoking Language Performance*

Modification: This modification is to advise the IRB that my new co-chairs are now Dr. Sabine Siekmann from the Linguistics and Foreign Languages Departments and Dr. Patrick Marlow from the School of Education and Alaska Native Language Center. They will replace Dr. Joan P. Webster from the School of Education (SOE). Beth Leonard (SOE) is a committee member.

Since the proposal was qualitative in nature, and therefore open-ended, the process has become more focused by identifying specific research questions; however, the data collection has not changed.

No more participants will be enrolled for this study. The main reason for the modifications are a change in the advisory committee and a restructuring of the research questions.

Level: Expedited

Received: November 22, 2006

Approved: November 28, 2006

Any modification or change to this protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Modification Request Forms are available on the IRB website (<http://www.uaf.edu/irb/Forms.htm>). Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.



Appendix B
Informed Consent Form

Classroom Culture and Indigenous Classrooms

IRB # 03-51

Date Approved: 9-17-03

Description of the Study:

You are being asked to take part in a research study about learning an Athabascan language. The goal of this study is to determine what steps are taken to learn Gwich'in and how well you use the language. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are beginning UAF students in the Gwich'in language class. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to complete a journal that indicates your thoughts on the Gwich'in class regarding vocabulary acquisition, worksheets, games, activities, CD, and my explanations in the classroom. You will be given time at the end of each class period to provide your thoughts and comments. These journals will not be graded. If you agree, you will also be videotaped on three different occasions for a period of one week each for a total of fifteen class periods: 1) sometime during the first three weeks of class; 2) sometime during the middle of the semester, and 3) sometime during the last three weeks of the semester. These videotapes will enable me to review the sequence of events of what actually occurred in the classroom. Videotapes of students who are not a part of the study will not be analyzed. Additionally, your work, as part of the class, will be collected and may help me to determine if you have acquired the language through context. At the end of the semester, you will be asked if you would like to participate in a short interview which will be given by a third party. This interview will address such questions as to what helped you the most (or least) in speaking and learning Gwich'in. Interview data will not be reviewed until after grades are posted.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

This study may be beneficial to Athabascan language revitalization, language learners, and language teachers. If you would like to review the project in its entirety, it will be housed at the School of Education offices on the 7th floor of the Gruening Building and also the Alaska Native Language Center archives library on the 4th floor of the Brooks Building. Since this research is not a thesis, it will not be housed at the Rasmuson Library.

Confidentiality:

In order to provide anonymity, I will request that you do not place your name on the journals or worksheets. Any information with your name attached will not be shared with anyone. This data will be used as part of my analysis to determine your quality of speaking and your development in the class over time. The data derived from this study could be used in reports, presentations, and publications but you will not be individually identified. All data, including the videotapes will be stored and locked at 423 Brooks Building. All data will be used for educational purposes only. The only people who will view the videotapes will be myself and my graduate committee, consisting of Dr. Joan P. Webster, Chair, Dr. Raymond Barnhardt, Beth Leonard, and Dr. Patrick Marlow, and of course you if you so wish. After a five-year period, the videotapes will be erased and the worksheets and journals will be destroyed in a paper shredder. For graded coursework, I will assign a number to the graded coursework so that your name will not be revealed to anyone.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time without any penalty to you. Since I am the instructor in the class, and so that you do not feel pressured to participate in the research, I will ask a third party (my advisor) to ask you if you would like to take part in this study. I will not know who is part of the study and will not see the videotapes until after grades have been turned in during the month of December.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have questions later, you may contact Kathy R. Sikorski (researcher), Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, P. O. Box 757680, Fairbanks, AK 99775-7680. Phone (907) 474-7875 or e-mail fnkrs@uaf.edu or Dr. Joan P. Webster (faculty sponsor), School of Education, University of Alaska Fairbanks, P. O. Box 756480, Fairbanks, AK 99775-6480. Phone (907) 474-6133 or e-mail ffjp1@uaf.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact Karin Davidson in the Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyori@uaf.edu.

Statement of Consent:

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.

Signature: UAF Gwich'in Language Student Date

Signature: Kathy R. Sikorski, Researcher Date

Appendix C

Transcription Codes

This glossary of transcription symbols are taken, in part, from research done by Lepper (1999).

Sequencing

- [A single left bracket indicates the point of overlap onset.
-] A single right bracket indicates the point at which an utterance or utterance-part terminates vis-à-vis another.

Timed Intervals

- (0.0) Numbers in parentheses indicated elapsed time in silence by tenth of second, so (3.1) is a pause for 3 second and 1 tenth of a second.
- (.) A dot in parentheses indicated a tiny 'gap' within or between utterances.

Characteristics of speech production

- word* An italicized word indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude.
- :: Colons indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a more prolonged sound.
- A dash indicates a cut-off.
- ` This symbol over a vowel indicates a low tone.
- ^ The caret symbol over a vowel indicates a rising-falling tone.
- ˘ This symbol over a vowel indicates a falling-rising tone.
- <◇ Right/left carets bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate speeding up.
- ˙hhh A dot-prefixed row of hs indicates an inbreath. Without the dot, the hs indicate an outbreath.

Transcriber's doubts and comments

- () Empty parentheses indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said. The length of the parenthesized space indicates the length of the untranscribed talk. In the speaker designation column, the empty parenthesis indicate inability to identify a speaker.
- (()) Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions rather than, or in addition to, transcriptions.

Appendix D

Verbs taught in ANL 141 (First part of Beginning Gwich'in language class)

to be	to be bad
to be big	to boil/cook O
to chop wood	to be cold
to comb, brush O	to cook O, plus unspecified
to cook/fry sth.	to be crazy, silly
to cry	to cut O
to dance	to do
to drink O, but not liquor	to eat O, plus unspecified
to be entertained	to feed human or dog
to fish with hook	to go, walk somewhere (present tense)
to be happy	to become happy
to have O	to holler, shout
to be hot	to hunt
to know sth.	to laugh
to like (verb, noun, person)	to live reside somewhere
to make sth.	to need, use sth.
to play	to run
to be sad	to be scared
to see sth.	to sew sth., plus unspecified
to be sick	to sing
to sit, visit (dual)	to sleep (dual)
to be sleepy to be small	to snore
to talk	to tan hide, plus unspecified
to be tired	to want sth.
to wash O	to wear clothing (in general)
to wear specific clothing (6 verbs)	went and returned (dual)
will go and return (dual)	to work (short and long forms)

Appendix E

Vocabulary Learned over One Semester (amount in parentheses)

1. Pronouns (6 prefixes)
2. Kinship Terms (36)
3. Body Parts (40)
4. Animals (42), plus where they live (9), what they look like, what they eat, what eats them
5. Weather (9)
6. Colors (8)
7. Feelings/Emotions (6)
8. Foods (20), plus dishes and cooking utensils
9. Clothing (22), plus sewing terms and descriptors (10)
10. Tanning (9)
11. Time (33)
12. Adjectives (14) in three environments
13. Postpositions (11) in three environments
14. Numbers (10)
15. Placenames (28)

Appendix F

Examples of Games, Activities, Worksheets

Games

- Guess Who? for use of adjectives
- Various homemade games without words with culturally appropriate drawings, such as one that says: Start, 1, 2, 3, and at the end it says “akò’ t’ee”. Students have colored item, and there are three spots for cards. If they land on the number one, they pick cards from the #1 stack and must answer or ask a question. The same goes for if they land on number 2 which is harder. Number three is the most challenging. This game can be used for any of the thematic units.

Activities

- Pizza Boards with spinners for feelings, emotions, weather
- Pictures of various people for feelings, emotions, adjectives, colors, kinship terms
- Various cards for vocabulary, sentences, questions
- Family Tree
- Little log house for use with learning postpositions (prepositions), and verbs such as sitting, sleeping, or household activities, etc.

Worksheets

- practice sentences and questions that are relevant to students’ s lives: to go, adjectives
- fill in the blanks
- word order practice

Appendix G

Traditional Stories and Cultural Artifacts, Fieldtrips

- Annotated booklets
- Traditional clothing
- Tanning tools
- Historical pictures
- Animal furs, bones, skin
- Foods
- Fieldtrips: outdoors, museum, Fish & Game

Appendix H

Thematic Units

- Greetings
- Weather
- Family
- Family Roles
- Kinship
- Commands
- Clothing
- Body Parts
- Cooking
- Emotions
- Food Preparation & Preservation
- Traditional Stories
- Postpositions
- Animals
- Hunting/Fishing

Appendix I

Class Syllabus

Syllabus: SEP 4-DEC 17, 2003

Instructor: Hishinlai' "Kathy R. Sikorski"
 University of Alaska Fairbanks
 Alaska Native Language Center
Phone: (907) 474-7875
e-mail: fnkrs@uaf.edu

ANL 141: Beginning Athabascan
 Gwich'in

Office: Brooks Bldg., Room 306C

Office Hours: TR 10:30am-11:30am
 or by appointment

Class Times: MTWRF 2:15P - 3:15P
 BRKS 104B

Credits: 5

Course: Beginning Athabascan Gwich'in will focus on the practical use of the Gwich'in language by going through thematic units, and will include Gwich'in culture. We will have one hour of grammar once per week, based on what was learned throughout the week. Translations into english are discouraged in this class. Class will be based on an immersion style of teaching with a large variety of other language acquisition tools.

Journal: All students must keep a personal journal that will be collected weekly at the end of class. This journal will not be graded and should include your thoughts on the class, what you want to learn, what you liked or did not like.

Expectations of Students: Since this is an oral language class, all students must participate in discussions and interactions where appropriate. Students are encouraged to record the class. The written part of the final will be based on the grammar classes. All students will give a small presentation every Thursday (except Thanksgiving!).

Grading: Participation & Attendance - 30%
 Class Presentations/Homework - 25%, using gestures, pictures, props, etc.
 to convey what you are saying to non-speakers/speakers
 Mid-Term - 20% - **WED, OCT 29, 2003**
 Final - 25%: 1/2 hour oral, 1 1/2 hour written - **WED, DEC 17, 2002,**
1-3PM

Rules: BE ON TIME

- Participate. No headsets.
- Help one another. No chewing gum.
- Don't worry about mistakes. Please turn off cell phones.
- Questions may be asked in english before or after class.

CD Rom - ANL 141 with booklet: Recommended. Available from the Alaska Native Language Center, 4th floor Brooks.

Thematic Units:

- Greetings
- Weather
- Family
- Family Roles
- Kinship
- Commands
- Clothing
- Body Parts
- Cooking
- Emotions
- Food Preparation & Preservation
- Traditional Stories
- Postpositions
- Animals
- Hunting/Fishing

Appendix J

Kinship Terms

1. shakajj' (my husband)
2. shitseii (my grandchild (said by grandmother))
3. shidinjih (my son, said by father)
4. sha'oodee (my boyfriend/girlfriend)
5. shitseii (my daughter-in-law, said by mother-in-law)
6. shiyèets'i' (my daughter, said by mother)
7. tsyaa tsal (little boy)
8. shichiikajj' (my son-in-law, said by father-in-law)
9. diigii najj (our children)
10. shahan (my mother)
11. shijùu (my younger sister)
12. tsyaa ch'ok (young man)
13. dyahch'i' (old man)
14. khaiints'à' (youngest one (in the family))
15. nich'it tsal (little girl)
16. shichi' (my daughter (said by father))
17. shiti' (my father)
18. sha'at (my wife)
19. tr'injaa (woman)
20. sheejii (my older sister)
21. tr'iinin tsal *or* beebii tsal (infant)
22. dinjii (man)
23. shoondee (my older brother)
24. shyaaghan (old woman)
25. nich'it ch'ok (young woman)
26. shachaa (my younger brother)
27. shakhoo (my nephew/niece)
28. shizhuu (my son, said by mother)

29. shikyuii (my grandchild, said by grandfather)
30. sheedeenyaa (my son-in-law, said by mother-in-law)
31. shiyeh'at (my daughter-in-law, said by father-in-law)

Appendix K

Resources

- Elders
- Fluent speakers
- Local businesses
- Government agencies: U.S., State, Local
- Museums
- Thrift stores
- Yard sales
- Toy stores
- Libraries
- Own regalia

Appendix L

Language Verifications

- Elders
- Fluent speakers
- Linguists
- Dictionaries (if available)
- Traditional stories (if available)
- Alaska Native Language Center archives

Appendix M

Student Presentation

Time: 4 mins. 45 sec.
Clothing presentation

S2 = Student
F = Facilitator

Gwich'in	English
S2: Jii t'ee kwaiitryaa Gwich'in. Dai' <i>this is boots Gwich'in. when</i>	These are Gwich'in boots.
Gwich'in naïï. <i>Gwich'in (human pl. marker)</i>	Gwich'in (people)
I'm sorry I'm a little nervous. I always forget and	
dai' <i>when</i>	when
Gwich'in naïï kwaiitryaa vaa <i>Gwich'in (pl.) boots with (non-human postposition)</i> dinjik dhaa, vadzaii dhaa gaadii. <i>moose skin caribou skin they sit (2 people)</i>	with Gwich'in boots they sit moose skin, caribou skin.
Jùk drin canvas, wool, gortex, <i>today canvas wool gortex</i> vadzaii dhaa, dinjik dhaa t'agaahch'yaa. <i>caribou skin, moose skin they use</i>	Today they use canvas, wool, gortex, caribou skin, and moose skin.
Dzaa hee geetak kwaiitryaa <i>Right here sometimes boots</i> vakat geh dhaa? tsee dhaa t'agaahch'yaa. <i>on it rabbit skin? beaver skin they use</i>	Sometimes right here on the boots they use rabbit skin <i>or</i> beaver skin.
geetak kwaiitryaa gwakat naagaiï leïï <i>sometimes boots on it beads lots (areal postposition)</i> t'agaahch'yaa. <i>they use</i>	Sometimes they use a lot of beads on the boots.
Gwich'in naïï kwaiitryaa zhagaa'yuu. <i>Gwich'in pl. marker boots to wear</i>	Gwich'in people wear boots.

Dinjii najii, tr'injaa najii, <i>men pl. marker women pl. marker</i> googii najii. <i>their children pl. marker</i>	Men, women, and their children.
F: Aahà'. <i>yes</i>	Yes.
S2: kwaiitryaa zhagaa'yuu. <i>boots they wear</i>	They wear boots.
Gwich'in najii <i>Gwich'in pl. marker</i>	Gwich'in people
All the time dai'?' <i>when or past tense indicator</i>	Student is asking how to say "all the time"
F: hm. Khit. <i>always</i>	Always.
S2: Dai' khit? Khit dai' Gwich'in najii <i>when always? Always when Gwich'in</i> <i>(pl.)</i> zhagaa'yuu. <i>they wear.</i>	Always when? Gwich'in people always wear (boots).
Jùk drin chiitaii gwiink'oo dai' ts'a' <i>today outside it is cold when and</i> khaii dai', kwaiitryah zhagaa'yuu. <i>winter when boots they wear.</i>	These days, in the winter when it is cold outside, they wear boots.
ch'agaadzaa dai' kwaiitryah <i>they dance when boots</i> nidiiltsii? zhagaa'yuu? <i>fancy they wear</i>	When they dance, they wear fancy boots.
nats'ahts'aa kwaiitryaa gahkhii? <i>how boots they tan</i>	How do they tan boots (skin)?
tr'ookit tr'injaa najii ch'adhaa <i>first woman pl. marker sth. skin</i> gahkhii. OK? <i>they tan.</i>	First, the women tan the hide.
neekwaii, tr'injaa najii ch'adhaa <i>two woman pl. marker sth. skin</i> khaiindoo tthah tsal k'agahkaii. <i>thread needle small they sew.</i>	Secondly, the women sew the skin (with) thread and a small needle.
Dzaa hee khaiindoo t'agaahch'yaa. <i>Right here thread they use</i>	Right here they use thread.
F: (inaudible) Vashraj K'oo gwats'an. <i>Arctic Village from</i> <i>(areal)</i>	From Arctic Village.

S2: Aahaa. Dzaa hee aak'ii dhaa <i>Yes. Right here cow skin</i> t'agaahch'yaa? <i>they use</i>	Right here they use cow hide.
F: Ohh. Old Crow. Àahà'. <i>Placename Yes.</i>	Oh! Old Crow. Yes.
S2: Geetak kwaiitryaa gwakat <i>sometimes boots on</i> <i>(areal postposition)</i> naagajj lejij gwanlii. <i>bead a lot</i> (inaudible question)	Sometimes there are a lot of beads on the boots.
F: Ohh. Kwaiitryah ch'ok. <i>boots pointed</i>	Oh. Pointed boots.
S2: Aahaa. <i>Yes.</i>	Yes.
F: Ajj k'it'inch'yaa shahan sheenjit <i>that like sth. my mother for me</i> yiltsaii. Gàa let's see, sheek'aai <i>made (it)? But aunt (mo. side)</i> nindhat. Right? Kwaiitryah kwaa. <i>died. boots neg.</i> So, she has it.	My mother made some boots like that for me but when my aunt (mother's side) died [we put them on her]. So (now), no boots.
S2: Aaa.	
F: Under the ground.	[Use of gesture to indicate burial.]
S2: Jii t'ee kwaiitryaa Gwich'in, <i>these are boots Gwich'in</i> kwaiitryaa Gwich'in eet'ihthan. <i>boots Gwich'in I like</i>	These are Gwich'in boots and I like them.
Ako' t'ee. <i>That's all.</i>	That's it. That's all. Enough.