

The orthography or spelling system used in this grammar is known as the standard orthography (SO) and is based upon the system outlined in Mr. R.C. Gagné's booklet, Tentative Standard Orthography For Canadian Eskimos. It is, without doubt, the best -- because scientifically accurate--writing system ever devised for the Eskimo language bar none, and, if the Eskimo language were to grow and flourish, it would be done most fruitfully by means of this system.

The alphabet or list of single graphemes are as follows: a, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ng, p, q, r, rng, s, t, u, v.

There are three vowels or vocalic graphemes: a, i, and u. Besides these three, there is also a grapheme representing the phoneme of vocalic length which, in the T.S.O. booklet, is realized as the three allographs aa, ii, and uu. I prefer, here, to label these three allographs as vocalic geminate clusters, treating them in the manner of consonantal geminate clusters, and thus preserve the simplicity of the three-vowel system.

The grapheme g ordinarily occurs only intervocalically except word-initially in such loan words as gavama--"government."

The grapheme h, representing the voiceless glottal continuant phoneme in such native Eskimo expressions as hii?--"Is that so?", hai?--"What did you say?", tavvahaak!--"Right here!", and in such loan words as haalitiirtuq--"He's on holidays," is either word-initial or intervocalic and is of high through limited frequency.

The grapheme j ordinarily occurs only intervocalically except word-initially in a few loan words such as Jaaki--"Jackie", and Jiisusi--"Jesus."

The grapheme l ordinarily occurs only intervocalically except word-initially in a few loan words such as lutta--"doctor", or laija--"lion."

The digraph ng and the trigraph rng stand for single consonants only. Although written with more than one symbol, they are single graphemes representing one phonemic reality. They occur only intervocalically.

The grapheme r only occurs intervocalically.

The grapheme y ordinarily occurs only intervocalically except word-initially in a few loan words such as via--"beer", Viannaa--Vietnam, and Viivuari--"February."

In summary then, there are three vowels, a, i, u, and three vocalic geminate clusters, aa, ii, and uu. There are fifteen single consonants -- I have included h as a consonant -- as follows: g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ng, p, q, r, rng, s, t, and v. There are twelve consonantal geminate clusters as follows: gg, jj, kk, ll, mm, nn, nng, pp, rr, ss, tt, and vv. For reasons of economy, the gemination of the ng phoneme is realized as nng rather than ngng. There are also ten uvular - or r-clusters as follows: ri, rl, rm, rn, rp, rq, rr, rs, rt, and rv. Except for a few loan words such as jjapa -- "parka," jjaaama -- "German," jjannuari -- "January," and so forth, all consonant clusters occur only intervocalically.