



Multilingual Europe – Iceland

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Hrafnhildur Ragnarsdóttir

University of Iceland, School of Education

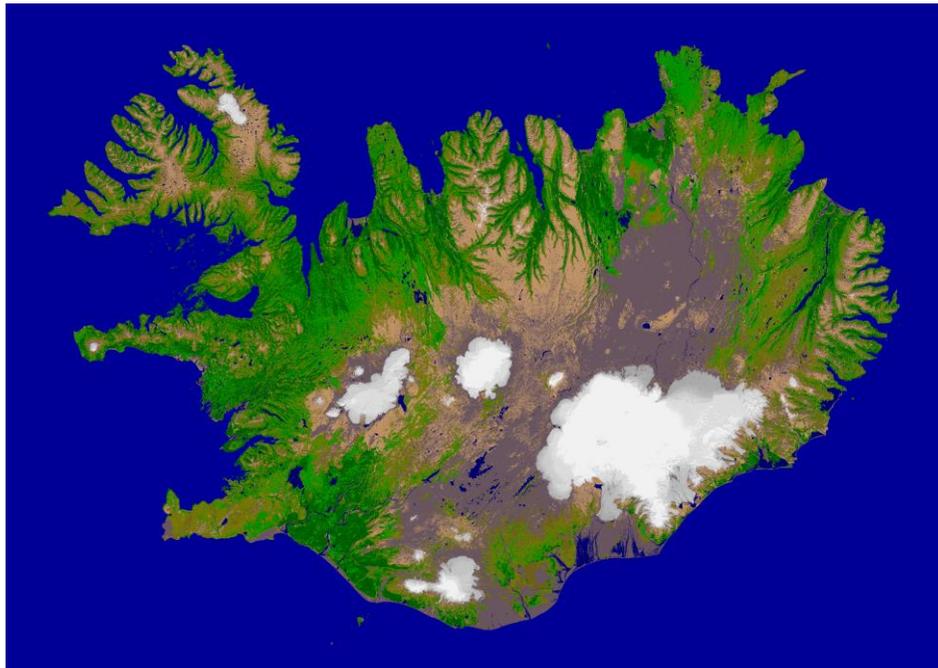
Reykjavík (hragnars@hi.is)



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



Background on Iceland



- Size 100.000 Km² (5 x Wales)
- Population: 325.000
- 1st + 2nd gen immigrants: 10%
- Official language: Icelandic. No dialects.
- Icelandic children all attend similar municipal preschools from 18 – 30 months of age. Affordable for all.
- Compulsory school age 6 – 16
- Teacher education, pre- and compulsory school: M.Ed.; since 2011





Geographical differences in distribution of 1st and 2nd generation immigrants in Iceland

- Reykjavík area: 10%
- South-West and the North-West : 13%
- West and the East : 9%
- North and North-East : 5%.

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Majority languages

What proportion of the population speak more than one major language for your country fluently

- Most Icelanders speak and read English fluently.
 - English is 2nd language in school from 5th grade on.
 - English is ubiquitous in Iceland. Children and adults are constantly exposed to English on TV, in films, music, Internet, games... Only material for young children is dubbed in Icelandic media. The rest is subtitled.
 - Readings and study material at university level are predominantly in English





Linguistic features of Icelandic

Depth of orthography

Table 1. Hypothetical classification of 12 languages in COST Action 8 relative of the dimensions of syllabic complexity (simple, complex) and orthographic depth (shallow to deep). (Seymour et al., 2003)

		Orthographic depth				
		Shallow			Deep	
Syllabic structure	Simple	Finnish	Greek Italian Spanish	Portuguese	French	
	Complex		German Norwegian Icelandic	Dutch Swedish	Danish	English





Linguistic features of Icelandic

Morphological richness and grammatical complexity :

- Very rich and complex morphology with lots of irregularities.
 - **Case-marking**: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, articles and numbers (1 to 4) are inflected in four cases: Nominative, accusative, dative, genitive; singular and plural
 - **Gender-marking** (masc., fem., neut.) of adjectives, pronouns, articles, and the numbers 1 to 4.
 - **Verbal paradigm: verbs are inflected for** person, number, mood, tense and voice.
 - Minimum number of forms: 18
 - Max: > 40 forms of the same verb.





Examples of case, number and gender marking on nouns, numbers and adjectives

	Singular				Plural		
	Masc: One black cat				Masc. Two black cats		
Nom.	Einn	svartur	köttur		tveir	svartir	kettir
Acc	einn	svartan	kött		tvo	svarta	ketti
Dat	Einum	svörtum	ketti		tveimur	svörtum	köttum
Gen	Eins	svars	kattar		tveggja	vartra	katta
	Fem.: One black book				Fem.: Two black books		
Nom	Ein	svört	bók		tvær	svartar	bækur
Acc	Eina	svarta	bók		tvær	svartar	bækur
Dat	Einni	svartri	bók		tveimur	svörtum	bókum
Gen	einnar	svartrar	bókar		tveggja	svartra	bóka
	Neut.: One black paper				Neut.: Two black papers		
Nom	Eitt	Svart	blað		Tvö	svört	blöð
Acc	Eitt	Svart	blað		Tvö	svört	blöð
Dat	Einu	Svörtu	blaði		Tveimur	svörtum	blöðum
Gen	Eins	Svarts	blaðs		Tveggja	svartra	blaða



Example of Icelandic verb inflection: koma = come

	Present Singular Indicative	Past Singular Indicative	Present, Singular Subjunctive	Past, Singular Subjunctive	Present, Plural Indicative	Past Plural Indicative	Pres. Plural Subjunctive	Past, Plural, Subjunctive
1. pers.	Ég kem	Ég kom	Ég komi	Ég kæmi	Við komum	Við komum	Við komum	Við kæmum
2. pers.	Þú kemur	Þú komst	Þú komir	Þú kæmir	Þið komið	Þið komuð	Þið komið	Þið kæmuð
3. pers	Hún kemur	Hún kom	Hún komi	Hún kæmi	Þeir koma	Þeir komu	Þeir komi	Þeir kæmu
	Infinitive	Present participle	Past participle	Imperative singular	Imperative plural	Passive, indicative sing/plural	Passive subjunctive sing/plural	
	koma	komandi	Komið/in/in	komdu	komið	komast	komist	





Linguistic features of Icelandic

Written orthography

- Complex syllable structure
 - Spelling of each morpheme remains stable – not constant – even if pronunciation may vary.
 - Frequent – and long – consonant clusters at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of words
 - strjúka, öskra, kaldavermsl...
 - Certain spelling rules for, e.g.
 - same sound – two spellings:
 - i/y, í/ý (based on etymological origin of the word or morphological rules)
 - In stressless syllables at the end of words n/nn...
- See Baldur Sigurðsson, 2010.





Linguistic features of Icelandic

Are there particular features of the language that make it more/less challenging to learn? Some examples.

- **Pronunciation** of consonant clusters
- The inflectional **morphology** is very complex and irregular
- **Vocabulary**: A conservative/“Icelandic-etymology” policy vis-à-vis coining new words. E.g.:
 - **Common words**: television = sjónvarp, telephone=sími, computer=tölva
 - **Academic vocabulary**: Words of Greek and Latin origin in the academic vocabulary of many other languages (such as psychology, cognition, pedagogy, logic...) are translated/new words created according to Icelandic etymology.





Is there explicit teaching in reading and writing for more than one language in your schools

- **English** as a 2nd language is obligatory from 5th grade (many schools start earlier) and **Danish** from 7th grade. Both continue throughout compulsory school and in secondary school as well.
- A 3rd language is obligatory (in rare cases optional) in secondary school.
- A 4th language is optional in some parts of secondary school.





Non-native speakers of majority language

Proportion of population

In all of Iceland

- In 2014, 1st and 2nd generation immigrants (n = 30.979) comprised **9.5%** of the Icelandic population (n = 325.671).
- In 2013, the share of non-native **children in compulsory schools** (n = 2.775) all over Iceland was **6.5%** (of total n = 42.734).
- In 2013, the share of non-native **children in preschools** (n = 2.181) was **11%** (of total n = 19.713)

The largest immigrant group is Polish speaking.





What are the demographic features of this group

Immigrants to Iceland have a very short history

- In 1996 people of foreign origin were a little over **2%** of the population
- Children and young people **age 22 or less were < 1%**
- Since 2005, Iceland has had similar % as Denmark and Norway, i.e. Around **10%**
- However, in Iceland the great majority is 1st generation immigrants; the % of 2nd generation is five times bigger in Norway and Denmark.





The age distribution has also been changing

- Earlier, immigrants were mostly adults who came to work in Iceland – almost exclusively Northern Europeans. They spoke English or Danish with the natives.
- Non-native children were extremely few.
- This is no longer the case. Over the last decade or so the number of children has been growing very rapidly.





Rapid growth in number of non-native children in Icelandic schools over the last two decades

- Preschool (1½ – to 6-years-old)
 - 1998: 572 children
 - 2011: 1900 (600 Polish speaking)
- Compulsory school (6 to 16 years-old)
 - 1997: 377
 - 2011: 2417 (800 Polish speaking)
- Great increase in number of languages – now over 100.





Non-native speakers of majority language

Number and % of children in Reykjavík in 2014 (one or both foreign parents)

Preschool (Age 1½ to 6)

- N= 1325 (19%)
(350 with one Icelandic parent)
 - Polish: 329
 - English: 137
 - Filipino: 91
 - Spanish: 78
 - Lithuanian: 65
 - Vietnamese: 50
 - Russian: 49
 - Tai : 47

Compulsory school (6 to 16)

- N= approx. 1800 (13%)
 - Polish : 288
 - Filipino: 126
 - English: 102
 - Vietnamese: 64
 - Lithuanian: 63
 - Albanian: 55





How do the children fare at school

Not well enough, e.g.:

- The % of non-native children among **weak readers (11,6%)** was almost three times higher than in the population of their Icelandic-born peers **(4,5%)** in PISA 2009. (Egelund, 2012)
- Lower enrolment and higher drop-out rates in secondary school.
- 22-year-old immigrants in Iceland are almost two times less likely to have finished secondary education than their Icelandic born peers. (Garðarsdóttir & Hauksson, 2011)
- Non-native children make limited progress in the acquisition of Icelandic vocabulary throughout their compulsory education. (Thordardottir & Juliusdottir, 2012; Ólafsdóttir & Ragnarsdóttir, 2010)
- According to a test of academic vocabulary (2014), 60% of non-native students needed extensive support to be able to follow school instruction - 20% need no support.
- Non-native 4 and 5-year-olds are far behind their Icelandic-born peers in vocabulary and even more so in morphology. (Haraldsdóttir, 2013)





Support for non-native speakers

Strategic attempts through education to reduce the impact of language barriers

The State:

- Ministry of Education, Science and Culture: New Whitebook for national literacy reform and a multicultural centre with information and assistance for immigrants.

Reykjavík

- Multicultural policy for preschools, compulsory schools and after school activities in Reykjavík.
- Multicultural approach in preschools, teaching consultant and project coordinator available for parents and teachers.
- Specialized teaching consultant for multicultural education in compulsory schools. Polish speaking teaching consultant.
- Bilingual Polish/Icelandic speaking language facilitator in preschools in Reykjavík
- Interpreters for all parents of preschool children in need for the service free of charge for parents.
- Multicultural projects at the City Library available to all preschools and primary school. Also home study support at the libraries.





In your country what are the major challenges for a multilingual Europe?

- **Living in a multilingual society is a new experience in Iceland.** The recent and rapid increase in the number and variety of immigrants and, in particular, of non-native children in Icelandic schools constitutes a real challenge.
- **Critical lack in expertise in bi-/multilingualism.**
 - Very little specific training for teachers in the instruction of non-native students
 - No mandatory courses in subjects such as Icelandic as a 2nd language, bilingual education or multicultural education for students graduating with M.Ed. as preschool or compulsory school teachers.
 - However, schools and politicians are finally waking up – there are changes in the air 😊
- Urgent need for **research-informed methods and structured materials both for instruction in Icelandic as an L2 and for supporting children's heritage language.** The fact that non-native children are distributed all over Iceland constitutes a further challenge.





- In order for non-native children to profit from education in Icelandic schools we need to to teach/support their oral language and other crucial skills – not only for oral communication, but for **reading comprehension** and written and spoken **text production**, e.g. academic/content **vocabulary** (as well as vocabulary in general) and proficiency in the understanding and use of **extended discourse and academic language** – spoken and written
- Lack of appropriate **assessment tools** for language and literacy development of non-native children from early childhood onwards.





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