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## The language situation in Iceland

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Purist language policies in Iceland have preserved and modernized Icelandic up until the present time. However, the impact of globalization and global English has led to the perception that the language is less secure than in the past and has prompted efforts by policy makers towards greater protection of Icelandic. This monograph presents the current language profile of Iceland, along with the history of Icelandic and the language ideologies underpinning it, which have led up to present day language planning efforts: in corpus planning and some domains of status planning such as education and the media. The monograph discusses the impact of supranational language policies upon Iceland's language planning, the role of the media in language spread, as well as current trends in the domain of higher education. Furthermore, the authors explore whether Icelandic can be maintained as the sole language of Iceland.

**Keywords:** Icelandic; Iceland; language policy and planning; global English; language legislation; higher education

### Introduction

Iceland has often been presented as being the only country within Europe which is monolingual because it has no indigenous minorities, nor has it had any sizeable immigrant communities. However, the number of immigrants has increased greatly in recent years, making the country less linguistically and ethnically homogenous now than at any other time in its 1000-year history. Iceland has a small population of about 320,000. It has a strong literary tradition and a conservative and protectionist language policy, which is supported by the majority of the population. It is isolated geographically, a factor which has assured its language greater protection from outside influence in the past, relative to the other Nordic countries. Icelanders are pragmatic, however, and understand that, in order to communicate with other people outside its borders, they need to learn other languages. Hence, there is a great emphasis on foreign language learning, which means that most Icelanders can communicate in more than one language.

This monograph aims to show how robust purist language policies in Iceland have preserved and modernized Icelandic up until the present time. However, the impact of globalization and global English has led to the perception that the language is less secure than in the past and has prompted efforts by policy-makers towards greater protection of Icelandic, particularly in the domains of education and the media; i.e. those domains that have a

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great impact upon the younger generation. There exists a conflict in Iceland between the necessity of having a population educated in English, in order to communicate in the wider world, and the desire to keep the indigenous language intact and fully functioning.

- *Part I* of this monograph presents the language profile of Iceland.
- *Part II* describes the history of Icelandic, the ideologies underpinning the language, and Iceland's first corpus language planning, as well as taking account of the current role of the main language planning agencies.
- *Part III* describes language policy for foreign language education, Icelandic language education, and language policy for immigrants at compulsory and upper secondary levels, along with discussing the methods of assessment of language education, as well as providing a brief outline of language requirements for citizenship.
- *Part IV* gives an overview of traditional Icelandic language policy and current language legislation and describes the role of the media in language spread as well as looking at current literacy policy and planning, and the impact of supranational language policies.
- Finally, *Part V* considers current trends in the domain of higher education and explores whether Icelandic can be maintained as the sole language of Iceland.

## **Part I**

### ***The language profile of Iceland***

The constitution of the Republic of Iceland does not specify an official or national/main language in Iceland. However, Icelandic is *de facto* the only official language of Iceland – a principle supported by various legislative acts, e.g. laws for the education system, the courts, Icelandic cultural institutions, the Icelandic Language Council, and other domains, as will subsequently be shown. Moreover, the legal status of Icelandic as the only official language of the republic is traditional and uncontested.

Icelandic, which is the majority language in Iceland, belongs to the North branch of the Germanic group of the Indo-European language family. The closest relatives of Icelandic are Faroese and Norwegian (specifically, West Norwegian dialects). A unique characteristic of Icelandic is that, despite being spoken by relatively few people (c. 300,000) spread over a relatively large island (more than 100,000 km<sup>2</sup>), it has not developed any distinct geographical or social dialects. There are some pronunciation variants, traditionally governed by geography, but these are not significant, not deserving to be designated as a dialect and do not impede communication. Therefore, the Icelandic language, and also its population, has been described as homogeneous (Vikør, 2001, p. 60).<sup>1</sup> That said, it must be noted that the majority of Icelandic residents, 62% in 1999, 63% in 2009, now live in the capital and the surrounding area (Statistics Iceland, 2010). Most, however, have a rural family background as, around a century ago, Iceland was largely a rural country, and Reykjavík was only a small town (Figure 1).

Most of the c. 300,000 speakers of Icelandic live in Iceland itself; outside Iceland, Icelandic is spoken almost exclusively by Icelanders living abroad. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many Icelanders emigrated to Canada and some to the USA. Some of their descendants still speak a little Icelandic, but generally it is no longer their first language. In addition to Icelandic citizens living in Iceland, there are a number of Icelanders (i.e. native speakers of Icelandic) who live in other countries for varying periods of time: it is thought that there are around 20,000 Icelanders living abroad at the time of writing. About 50% of them are living (working and/or studying) in the other



Figure 1. Map of Iceland showing main centres of population. About half of Iceland’s population lives in the capital Rejkjavik and surroundings. The largest town outside that area is Akureyri in Northern Iceland, with a population of 17,200. The middle of the country is not habitable, only the coastal areas.

Nordic countries, mainly Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Many Icelanders also live and/or study in the USA, the UK, and elsewhere in the European Economic Area. Icelanders tend to be mobile, moving away for reasons of work or study, but most return to Iceland at a later time. According to Statistics Iceland (2010), 1.8% of Icelanders (5285 people ‘of Icelandic origin’) living in Iceland in 2009 had been born in countries other than Iceland.

The only indigenous minority language in Iceland is Icelandic Sign Language (ISL). Most current estimates suggest that there are about 250 first-language users of ISL, as statistics show that deaf people generally constitute about 1 per 1000 persons of a population (Valgerður Stefánsdóttir,<sup>2</sup> Head of The Communication Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, personal communication, 2010). There are 150–200 active users of the interpretation services at The Communication Centre in Iceland. In addition to these first-language users of ISL, there are a few thousand people in Iceland who have mastered the language to some extent (Valgerður Stefánsdóttir, personal communication, 2010), primarily those within the social network of ISL first-language users, e.g. parents, siblings, grandparents. Other ISL second-language users include interpreters, researchers, and support personnel.

As of 1 January 2009, there were 319,368 residents in Iceland. Of these, 24,379 were citizens of other countries, i.e. 7.6% of the total population. This proportion has been rising very rapidly in recent years, as shown in Table 1.

The figures in Table 1 show that not only has there been a substantial increase in the indigenous population over the past 50 years – due to increases in birth rate, higher

Table 1. Population between 1960 and 2009.

	Residents in Iceland	Icelandic citizens	%	Foreign citizens	%
1960	173,855	171,317	98.5	2538	1.5
1989	251,919	247,145	98.1	4774	1.9
1999	275,712	269,191	97.6	6521	2.4
2009	319,368	294,989	92.4	24,379	7.6

Source: Statistics Iceland (2010).

expected lifetime, and extremely low infant mortality – but also that Iceland has attracted many more immigrants in the last decade than in the more distant past. After a relatively slow increase in immigrant numbers in the period 1960–1989, the numbers rose rapidly, and the period between 1999 and 2009 shows a clear change in the demographics of Iceland. The population has thus changed from being homogeneous, where almost all citizens shared the same first language, to being multinational and multilingual. The 24,379 citizens of other countries living in Iceland in 2009 held citizenship from one of 131 other countries (Statistics Iceland, 2010).

Since there are no statistics available at Statistics Iceland (2010) about the first languages of those immigrants, their ‘first language’ has to be deduced from their citizenship – a method that can never be considered totally accurate. Therefore, Polish citizens are for the present purposes counted as ‘Polish speakers’; Lithuanian citizens are counted as ‘Lithuanian speakers’, and citizens of Australia, New Zealand, UK, USA, Ireland, Canada, and South Africa are counted as ‘English speakers’. Since the immigrants are citizens of 131 different countries, it can be estimated that there are speakers of about 100 languages other than Icelandic and ISL living in Iceland at present.

The three largest immigrant language groups in Iceland as of 1 January 2009 were:

- (1) Poles, consisting of 11,003 people (compared to 347 Poles in 1996);
- (2) Lithuanians, consisting of 1679 people – not necessarily all first-language speakers of Lithuanian (according to Hogan-Brun, Ozolins, Ramonienė, & Rannut [2008, p. 67], 83.5% of citizens in Lithuania were ethnic Lithuanians in 2000/2001);
- (3) first-language English speakers, estimated at 1285 people.

The estimated number of speakers of these five different languages in Iceland as of 1 January 2009 is shown in Table 2.

There are in fact more speakers of Polish and other languages in Iceland than that shown in the table, because some Poles, Lithuanians, and others have acquired Icelandic citizenship in recent years (for instance, in 2008, 134 Poles achieved Icelandic citizenship).

Other significant immigrant groups (i.e. consisting of more than 1000 people) in recent years include those from the Philippines and Thailand. Women are in the majority in these groups (67% and 72%, respectively). Citizens of the other Nordic countries (Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Norway, Sweden) living in Iceland in 2009 made up less than 0.5% of the population of Iceland (1511 people, about one-third of them being Danes).

## Part II

### *The history of Icelandic and of Icelandic language policies*

In order to understand language policies, language planning, and language spread in Iceland, it is important to be acquainted with Iceland’s history and the development of

Table 2. Figures for five language groups in Iceland.

	Indigenous languages		Immigrants’ languages		
	Icelandic	ISL	Polish	Lithuanian	English
Year 2009	295,000	250	11,000	1700	1300

Source: Statistics Iceland (2010).

its language. This is so because underlying Iceland's language policies is a strong traditional ideology, intimately related to the literature surrounding the early period of settlement and the fact that Iceland was under foreign rule for hundreds of years.

### *Early settlers: language and literature*

The settlement of Iceland began in the last decades of the ninth century CE; early written sources in Icelandic describe the history of the settlement and the settlers. Most of the early settlers came from southern and western Norway or from other neighbouring Nordic colonies, such as the Orkneys, the Faroes, Shetland, the Hebrides, and Scotland (Figure 2). The settlers spoke one of the Nordic languages – languages that shared features with Old English and Old High German. Most scholars believe that there must have been some dialect differences between settlers coming to Iceland from different parts of the Nordic language region and that as a consequence the language in Iceland was a mixture of Nordic dialects (Guðmundsson, 1977, p. 316). However, there is evidence 'that one variety, spoken by a special group or elite, was adopted as the basis for the Icelandic standard' and it seems that 'the Icelandic literary language was based on a norm that already had a history in Norway and the Scottish Isles' (Árnason, 2003, p. 249) (Figure 3). Apart from Gaelic-speaking slaves brought to Iceland during the settlement period, Iceland has, up to the present, been linguistically homogeneous, which is quite unique for a nation state (Vikør, 2000, p. 60; 2001, p. 125). Remnants of Gaelic language influence are found in some Gaelic borrowings in Icelandic (Karlsson, 2004, pp. 8–9).



Figure 2. Origins of the settlers of Iceland, and their voyages. Most of the settlers of Iceland came from Southern and Western Norway, or from other neighbouring colonies, such as the Orkneys, Shetland and the Hebrides, Scotland and the Faroes. Later, some headed further west, to Greenland and Newfoundland. A few of the numerous voyages in c. 870–1000 AD are marked here. The common Nordic language of the time is shown in the shaded areas.



Figure 3. Examples of place-names of Nordic origin in the UK and Ireland. A number of place-names in the United Kingdom and Ireland are of Nordic origin.

The Icelandic settlers created their own political structure and their parliament – the *Alþingi*, which was established in 930 CE. The contemporary Icelandic parliament still bears the same name. Furthermore, some parts of current Icelandic legislation were inscribed in the Law Book, *Jónsbók*, dating from 1281 CE. This continuous legal tradition has helped to preserve traditional legal language up to modern times (Ottosson, 1990, pp. 25–26). After an early period of independence, Iceland came under the control of the Norwegian king in 1262. Subsequently, Norway, and therefore Iceland, became part of Denmark in 1380. Icelanders remained under Danish rule until they regained sovereignty in 1918. The present republic was founded in 1944. According to Ottosson (2005, p. 1999), despite nearly five centuries of Danish rule:

[n]o efforts can be discerned on behalf of the Danish authorities [...] to impose the Danish language on Iceland as an official language in the sense that Icelanders in general would be required to use that language in their dealings with the authorities.

The Icelandic language, from the earliest written records until the mid-fourteenth century, is often referred to as Old Norse, or as Old Icelandic, in the international literature (Ottosson, 2002, p. 787). Icelandic has largely retained the basic vocabulary and grammar from the earliest period into the present (Karlsson, 2004, p. 64), in contrast to other Nordic languages, such as Norwegian, and the more remote Danish and Swedish, in which the vocabulary and structure have undergone far greater changes (Jónsson, 1997, p. 164).

Icelandic has not been mutually intelligible with mainland Scandinavian languages for about half a millennium. Friðriksson (2009, p. 32) claims that ‘Icelandic certainly has a long tradition of relative linguistic stability’ and that ‘Iceland is generally taken as an example of a highly stable language community’ (Friðriksson, 2009, p. 39).

In contrast to the stability in grammar and vocabulary, the pronunciation of Icelandic has undergone dramatic changes, especially during the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Despite these pronunciation changes, the written language from the earliest period is still accessible to modern speakers of Icelandic (Jónsson, 1997, p. 164; Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2001, p. 12).

The oldest Icelandic written texts (not always in their original form, however) – e.g. the ‘Book of Icelanders’ (*Íslendingabók*) by the priest Ari Þorgilsson, and the ‘Book of Settlements’ (*Landnámabók*), as well as some legal texts, various pieces of religious literature and historical accounts – can be dated from shortly after 1100 CE. The learned Icelanders of the time, who could (and sometimes did) write in Latin, chose to write these texts in the vernacular.

A linguistic treatise on Icelandic was written in Icelandic in the middle of the twelfth century. It is preserved in a fourteenth-century manuscript (the *Codex Wormianus*, Benediktsson, 1972, p. 13) and is referred to as ‘The First Grammatical Treatise’ (*Fyrsta málfraeðiritgerðin*) by scholars.<sup>3</sup> The treatise describes the pronunciation of Icelandic as it existed in the twelfth century. The author, who evidently knew other languages as well as the works of Latin grammarians, prescribed systematic and detailed spelling rules for written Icelandic. These rules constitute the earliest recorded example of overt Icelandic language corpus planning as well as the first recorded example of unsuccessful Icelandic language planning, as few of the author’s contemporaries seem to have followed those spelling rules; neither have later writers.<sup>4</sup>

The First Grammatical Treatise, which contains a number of linguistic terms, is also an example of a tradition which has remained alive in Iceland up to the present time, that is, a tradition preferring the coining of neologisms rather than adapting borrowings from the international literature (from Latin to begin with, later from French or German, at present from English). An example from the twelfth-century Icelandic text on linguistics illustrates that, instead of adapting the Latin word *vocalis* (‘vowel’) to the native language (*vokal* in modern Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish), the author used *raddarstafr* (lit. ‘voice letter’), a compound created from the Icelandic words *rödd* (‘voice’) and *stafr* (‘letter’). Modern Icelandic corpus planners, similarly, prefer a native compound to denote ‘vowel’, i.e. *sérhljóð* (lit. ‘by-itself sound’).

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are referred to as the Golden Age of Icelandic literature, for example, the ‘Sagas of Icelanders’ (*Íslendingasögur*), the ‘Sagas of Kings’ (*Konungasögur*), especially the ones by Snorri Sturluson in the thirteenth century, and the anonymous poetic *Edda*, which contains myths of the Nordic pagan gods and ancient heroes, were all produced at that time and have been preserved in Icelandic manuscripts. Vikør (2001, p. 58) claims: ‘In fact, scarcely any linguistic community in Europe at that time produced such a vast amount of high-quality literature in the native language as Iceland’.

This literary heritage, along with the archaic characteristics of the language itself, contributed to a widespread consciousness among the Icelandic population about what they believed – and still believe – to be a unique language culture. This belief underlies the centuries old ideology that Icelandic needs to be preserved and nurtured. The Icelanders’ admiration of their linguistic heritage is shared by many others; Icelandic literature has been translated into many languages and is a subject of international research. On 31 July 2009, UNESCO added ‘The Arnarnaganaean Manuscript collection’, housed in Reykjavík and Copenhagen, to its



‘Memory of the World Register’. This collection contains about 3000 items, the earliest dating from the twelfth century, and ‘provides invaluable sources on the history and culture of medieval, renaissance and early-modern Scandinavia and much of Europe’, featuring ‘the uniquely Icelandic narrative genre known as the saga, landmarks of world literature still widely translated and read today’ (UNESCO News Archives Website, 2010).

The ancient literature, both in its written and oral forms, seems to have contributed significantly to the cultural life of ordinary Icelanders. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the scholar and poet, Eggert Ólafsson, claimed that common people completely understood the language of the ancient Sagas (Ottosson, 1990, p. 30). Reading aloud poetry and stories from the sagas provided a much needed form of entertainment after the harsh hard days working on the farms. This was known as the *kvöldvaka* (evening watch), and a love of literature became part of the culture. This literary tradition has contributed to the preservation of ancient vocabulary, expressions and forms in the living language over the centuries (Guðmundsson, 1977, pp. 322–323; Karlsson, 2004, p. 64).

#### *Sixteenth through nineteenth centuries: purism and nationalism*

Arngrímur Jónsson ‘the Learned’s’ book *Crymogæa* (lit. Ice-land), an account of Iceland and its inhabitants published in 1609, promoted linguistic purism in Icelandic for the first time (Benediktsson, 1987, p. 47). According to Jónsson, Icelanders had been able to retain their language partly because their old manuscripts preserved the purity of the language and its elegant style and partly because they had had very limited communication with foreigners. He claimed that the Icelandic language of the period around 1600 was almost identical to the language that was used all over the Nordic region in ancient times – a similar observation had been made by Bishop Oddur Einarsson in 1589 (Karlsson, 2004, p. 36). In his book, Jónsson expressed his wish that his contemporaries avoid Danish and German influence on their spoken and written language, but instead use the ‘richness and genius’ of their own native language as their model (Benediktsson, 1987, p. 47). Jónsson was inspired by the humanist antiquarians in Northern Europe who were writing at the time. His argumentation is very similar to modern Icelandic language policy discourse.

There have been other recorded examples of overtly expressed purist views in the writings of Icelandic scholars and clergymen since the sixteenth century; for example, in relation to Bishop Guðbrandur Þorláksson’s translation of the Bible (1584) and in his comments on hymns in Icelandic (1589) (Ottosson, 1990, pp. 17–18). In the preface to his Hymn Book (1589), Þorláksson explained that there was a need to improve Icelandic hymns because there were some earlier hymn translations that were of poor quality. He explained his intention to improve the language of the hymns: ‘... for the honour and beauty of our native language which is clear and beautiful by nature and does not need borrowings from other languages ...’ (authors’ translation from the original as cited in Ottosson, 1990, p. 18).

Icelanders had converted to Christianity around 1000 CE, and during the first centuries of Christianity, many religious texts were written in the vernacular, along with Latin. Since the Lutheran Reformation (c. 1541–1550), however, Icelandic has been the sole language of religion in Iceland. While the Faroese and the Norwegians had no Bible translation in the vernacular until modern times, the Bible was translated into Icelandic in the sixteenth century (as previously noted), while some parts existed in even earlier translations. Considerable influence from German syntax and vocabulary is found in Icelandic religious texts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but Ottosson (1990, p. 20) claimed that this influence had little effect on the everyday language of the general public.

According to Ottosson (1990, p. 32), the vocabulary and style of the language spoken by officials in Iceland, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, revealed a great deal of Danish and Low-German influence. Until the late eighteenth century, Danish merchants and their employees normally stayed in Iceland for only a few months each year (Ottosson, 1990, pp. 27, 32). Ottosson (1990, p. 27) assumed that the language of ordinary people, contrary to the language of officials, was not exposed to Danish influence to any significant extent until the eighteenth century. Eggert Ólafsson, who travelled around Iceland with his colleague, Bjarni Pálsson, from 1752 through 1757, was sponsored by the Danish Science Academy to carry out research on the country and its people. He observed that people in the countryside spoke the purest Icelandic, but that there was some mixing with Danish and German near the trading harbours (Ottosson, 1990, p. 27).

As in other European countries in the eighteenth century, the educational ideology of the Enlightenment had its impact in Iceland. Inspired by such philosophers as Rousseau (1712–1778) and Diderot (1713–1784), editor-in-chief of the first encyclopaedia, Danish and Icelandic intellectuals advocated that ordinary people should be given the opportunity to access contemporary knowledge of science, inventions and medicine so they could lead a better and more prosperous life. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Icelandic Society for the Learned Arts (*Hið íslenska lærdomslistafélag*) produced a series of publications in the spirit of the Enlightenment. The society enacted bylaws in 1780 (Halldórsson, 1979, p. 78), in which the language policy of its publications was expressed in the following manner:

Also, the Society shall keep and preserve the Nordic tongue<sup>5</sup> as a beautiful major language, which for a long time has been spoken in the Nordic countries, and try to purify it of foreign words and idioms, which now have begun to spoil it. Therefore, foreign words should not be used in the Society's Journal to denote crafts or tools and other things, as long as old or middle aged [sic.] Nordic terms are to be found. (English translation by Arnason, 2003, p. 272)

The preceding passage reveals that not only did the Icelandic scholars of the Enlightenment acknowledge the usefulness of publishing books and periodicals in the vernacular for the education of lay people, but also that they adhered to linguistic purism. In this, they followed the example of the contemporary purist philosophy of the Danish language movement in Denmark in which 'prestigious' French and Latin words were the main target. For example, Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), the Danish essayist, philosopher, historian, and playwright, ridiculed the use of foreign languages as a prestige symbol in his works (Vikør, 2000, p. 110). The Danes had, in turn, followed the example of contemporary German philosophers of the Enlightenment (Ottosson, 1990, pp. 34–35; Sigmundsson, 2003, p. 71) who insisted on using words of German origin instead of Latin and French words, not least in order that the general public would understand them better. Geers (2005, p. 102) wrote: 'In Germany the idea of the enlightenment of the masses was often the dominant one among the purists, although it was frequently mixed with their patriotic views'. In a discussion about educational publications for the general public by Icelandic scholars of the Enlightenment, Ottosson (2005) struck a similar note, stating that even if the 'practical aim' of using native Icelandic words instead of borrowings was 'probably shared to some degree' by most Icelandic writers at the time, it 'was outweighed for many of them by more patriotic considerations' (p. 1999).

The purist sentiment was not shared by all scholars of the Enlightenment. For example, it does not seem to have been prevalent in eighteenth-century England, although there was much talk from writers and scholars on the deficiencies present in English grammar and spelling and how they ought to be improved. For example, Jonathan Swift wrote a 'Proposal

for correcting, improving and ascertaining the English tongue' in a letter addressed to the Earl of Oxford in 1711. England never established a language academy, despite calls by eminent writers to do so.<sup>6</sup>

According to Milroy (2005), 'the eighteenth-century standardizers of English were not Anglo-Saxon purists' (p. 329). However, as early as the sixteenth century, English language purists, advocating neologisms such as 'touch lyne' instead of 'tangent', had attempted to:

'translate' unintelligible scientific terminology (usually of Latin or Greek origin) and replace it with native English terms, so that the thoughts and achievements of the world of science would be comprehensible to the growing reading masses. (Geers, 2005, p. 101)

The following passage from the 1780 bylaws of The Icelandic Society for the Learned Arts describes the traditional Icelandic preference for native neologisms instead of borrowings as a part of its language policy:

Therefore, instead of such foreign words, new words can also be made, compounds of other Nordic words, explaining the nature of the thing that they are supposed to denote. Here, the rules of the language must be carefully kept in mind, such as they are used in the structure of good old words. (Authors' translation from the original, as cited in Ottosson, 1990, p. 42)

In this 1780 text, the preference for neologisms is described explicitly for the first time as a systematic language corpus-planning programme, which echoes the general purist language policy advocated by Jónsson in 1609.

The twofold argumentation for the coining of neologisms expressed in the preceding citations, i.e. the arguments in favour of preservation of the language on the one hand and the argument in favour of language transparency ('explaining the nature of the thing') on the other hand, are still very much alive in modern language planning discourse in Iceland; e.g. the semantic transparency of native neologisms was repeatedly advocated in the twentieth century with reference to democracy and equal opportunities in Icelandic society (Kristinsson, 1994, p. 2; Ottosson, 1997, pp. 31–32).

The following citation from the 1780 bylaws of The Icelandic Society for the Learned Arts acknowledges that there is a need to borrow from other languages, but only if these borrowings had been used in the Golden Age, i.e. in the literature of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and only if native words are not available:

Yet, such words may be kept that were used in the writings of the 13th or 14th century, even if they are not of Nordic origin, but are originally from other nations, when other words are not available which are more common, or better or more beautiful in another sense. (Authors' translation from the original, as cited in Ottosson, 1990, p. 42)

The publications of another society, *Hið íslenska landsuppræðingarfélag* (The Icelandic Society for National Enlightenment), chaired by Judge Magnús Stephensen, founded in 1794 also strove to use native words and neologisms (Sigmundsson, 2003, p. 71).

In the nineteenth century, prominent Icelandic scholars, writers, and politicians were, in general, language enthusiasts. Their interest in preserving and cultivating Icelandic was shared by a number of prominent foreign scholars, most notably by the famous Danish linguist Rasmus Rask, who had learned Icelandic. In 1811, Rask expressed his view that Icelandic was a 'pure' and 'original' language and that its 'richness' and structural characteristics made it 'well suited' for the production of new words (Helgason, 1954, p. 99). In 1816,

The Icelandic Literary Society (*Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag*) was founded at Rask's initiative (Ottosson, 2005, p. 2001); in 1818, it merged with the earlier Society for the Learned Arts. The enlarged society is still quite active in Icelandic cultural life. Since 1827, it has published the literary magazine, *Skirnir*, which the society claims is the oldest periodical in the Nordic countries (Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag [The Icelandic Literature Society], 2010). The Literary Society also publishes a number of other titles each year, not least among them works on Icelandic literature and history as well as a series of Icelandic translations of world literature and philosophy (e.g. works by Aristotle, Cicero, Voltaire, Descartes, and Sartre). The early publications of the Literary Society constituted important contributions to the history of Icelandic language planning, as they not only contained a number of neologisms, but also helped to consolidate the standard for modern written Icelandic. Icelandic continued to expand into new domains in the first half of the nineteenth century; there were, for example, published textbooks containing Icelandic terms in geography in 1821–1827, in astronomy in 1842, and in physics in 1852 (Helgason, 1954, p. 100).

A Latin school was established at Bessastaðir near Reykjavík in 1805 for the education of clergymen and officials. While the students only had limited lessons in Icelandic, they learned more Icelandic language usage by translating from the Greek, under the supervision of Rector Sveinbjörn Egilsson<sup>7</sup> and from the Latin under the supervision of Hallgrímur Scheving. These teachers were prominent scholars and language enthusiasts. Egilsson was inspired by the classical Icelandic Saga style: 'He made an effort to keep the syntax simple and popular [...] and foreign loanwords were kept to a minimum' (Ottosson, 2005, p. 2001). Scheving was also an ardent language purist (Sigmundsson, 2003, p. 71). The students at Bessastaðir, who later became priests, officials, judges, writers, etc., and who were to have considerable influence on Icelandic culture, were indoctrinated with a love of and respect for their native language and with the desire to keep it as free of Danish borrowings as possible.

Among these students were a group of four intellectuals who launched the periodical *Fjölñir* (1835–1847). Inspired by nationalism and romantic ideals, they advocated the popular language style of contemporary oral literature and the old sagas, instead of the more Latin and German influenced officialese style, and they adhered to strict lexical purism. One of these intellectuals was the national poet and natural scientist Jónas Hallgrímsson (1807–1845), who is greatly revered today:

[his] work transformed the literary sensibility of his countrymen, reshaped the language of their poetry and prose, opened their eyes to the beauty of their land and its natural features, and accelerated their determination to achieve political independence. (Ringler, 1996–1998)

In 1995, the Government of Iceland decided to commemorate Hallgrímsson's birthday, 16 November each year in celebration of the Icelandic language, thus launching the official project 'The Icelandic Language Day', *Dagur íslenskrar tungu* (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010a). Since 1996, there have been annual festivities in November, in schools, libraries, and other institutions, and on 16 November the Minister of Education and Culture presents the annual Jónas Hallgrímsson Prize (worth about 6000€) to an individual who has made a special contribution to the preservation or cultivation of the Icelandic language.

Another member of the *Fjölñir* group was Konráð Gíslason, who became professor of Nordic philology at the University of Copenhagen. He exerted great influence on language ideals through his reviews of books in *Fjölñir* (1843–1845), where he demanded stricter adherence to the standards of the language than any earlier critics (Ottosson, 2005,

p. 2002). Despite the fact that Icelandic grammar had largely retained its forms since the time of the sagas, some changes had taken place. Gíslason advocated morphological preservation of archaic forms in some of these cases, of which the most noteworthy was the revival of a particular ancient subclass in the masculine noun declension (Ottosson, 1987). Other linguists and teachers besides Gíslason were involved, including the influential Halldór Kr. Friðriksson who taught Icelandic at the Reykjavik Latin School from 1848 until 1895. Following a campaign conducted in schools and in publications, the efforts of these linguists were successful, and the subclass of masculine nouns, which had in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries merged with a superordinate masculine declension class (Karlsson, 2004, p. 24), is now part of everyday modern usage, spoken and written. Table 3 provides examples of the structures: the word *hellir*, ‘cave’, had merged with a superordinate masculine declension class, exemplified by *bikar(r)* ‘cup’. Thus, the separate subclass paradigm was reintroduced in modern Icelandic by the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries corpus planning.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, romantic and nationalist ideologies had a significant influence on Icelandic scholars, language enthusiasts, and politicians struggling for Iceland’s independence from Denmark. Iceland’s national, cultural, and linguistic heritage constituted one of their primary arguments for political independence.

The period of social and political unrest in the lead up to independence was characterized by increased linguistic awareness in Iceland and by a general consensus in the speech community that Danish borrowings were undesirable. Friðriksson (2009, pp. 58–59) claimed that, while the linguistic stability of Icelandic can be explained with reference to tightly knit and stable social networks in Iceland until the nineteenth century, the stabilizing role of these networks was overtaken in the nineteenth century by more systematic language planning efforts based on nationalism. According to Thomas (1991, pp. 43–44), it is widely acknowledged that ‘periods of strong national sentiment tend to co-occur with purism’; for example, the nationalist period in Norway and the start of language planning was a consequence of the events of 1814 when Norway gained its independence from Denmark after a union of 400 years (Jahr, 2010, p. 140). The written standard had been Danish but the nationalists wanted their own Norwegian written standard. Two different approaches for forming a standard led to two different varieties of Norwegian: one was developed by Ivar Aasen, who wished to build a new standard Norwegian based on the rural dialects of the peasantry, which he believed represented the true national linguistic core upon which to build the Norwegian language; the other was a more ‘Danish’ version, a ‘Dano-Norwegian creoloid’ favoured by Knud Knudsen (Jahr, 2010, pp. 142–143).

Purist language attitudes, as previously noted, had been an underlying element in Icelandic linguistic culture long before the onset of nineteenth-century nationalist ideologies (Kristinsson, 2004; Wahl, 2008). It is clear that, even if linguistic purism in Iceland was

Table 3. Icelandic masculine noun declension paradigms.<sup>a</sup>

	Old Icelandic		Around 1800		Modern Icelandic	
	Separate paradigms		Paradigms merged		Separate paradigms	
Nominative	bikar(r)	hellir	bikar	hellir	bikar	hellir
Accusative	bikar	helli	bikar	hellir	bikar	helli
Dative	bikar	helli	bikar	hellir	bikar	helli
Genitive	bikars	hellis	bikars	hellirs	bikars	hellis

<sup>a</sup>Due to limitations of space, Table 3 only shows the words in the singular.

given an additional stimulus by the political situation in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the reluctance to borrow lexical items from other languages seems to have been a deep-rooted phenomenon. Present-day scholars classifying different aims of purist activities globally into ‘reformist’, ‘protective’, ‘traditional’, ‘nationalist’, ‘pedagogical’, or ‘playful’ have labelled the aims of linguistic purism practiced in Iceland for centuries as ‘traditional’ (Geers, 2005, p. 98). In a similar vein, Thomas (1991, p. 159) classified Icelandic (along with Arabic and Tamil) purist attitudes and behaviour as ‘[s]table, consistent purism’ with ‘no discernible interruption or fluctuation in puristic attitudes either in intensity or orientation. They are a constant value-feature of the speech community’.

From the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries in Europe, the process of nation-building and the standardization of national languages went hand-in-hand. According to Barbour (2000, p. 14), the ideal of a nation closely identified with a particular language is ‘chiefly European, and little more than two centuries old’:

While certain languages, particularly those like Basque or Hungarian that are very clearly different from their neighbours, were doubtless easy to conceptualize in earlier times, it is arguable that many languages, such as the Scandinavian or Slavonic languages, were probably very vague entities when they were simply a group of dialects within a fluid, much larger dialect continuum, with a literary language that may have been scarcely used. A codified standard language, however, clearly differentiated from others, gives the language itself a kind of focus and identity that it may have not possessed before. We can hence see that the growth of nations and the sharp demarcation of languages are actually related processes. (Barbour, 2000, p. 13)

Before the advent of European nation-states, there were a number of dialect continua in Europe, such as the Scandinavian and Slavonic ones mentioned previously by Barbour (2000). The cultural artefacts we call national languages (e.g. Swedish, Norwegian, German, Dutch, or Letzebuergisch) were superimposed official standards, each associated with a nation-state. They enjoy the support of political and educational institutions, information technology, and the like. In fact, the ideology of one-language/one-nation has been naturalized to such an extent that the populations of nation-states have come to regard the national languages as in need of protection and preservation. As noted by Gal and Irvine (1995): ‘our conceptual tools for understanding linguistic differences still derive from [the] massive scholarly attempt to create the political differentiation of Europe’ (p. 968).

We may conclude, however, that the modernization and standardization of Icelandic, as well as the relationship between the speakers of Icelandic and the concept of an Icelandic nation, was partly different from the contemporary development in the three Scandinavian languages; i.e. standard Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish, as cited by Barbour (2000). Since at least the sixteenth century, Icelandic was no longer part of a Nordic dialect continuum but was clearly differentiated both structurally and lexically.

### *Twentieth century to present*

It is evident from the outline that, long before the rise of political nationalism and nation-building, the Icelanders had a common literary language with which all members of the emerging nation could identify. Furthermore, there is no convincing evidence that the Icelandic authorities ever intended to impose language policies that were in contradiction to the attitudes of the general public. The purist language policy was ‘widely supported, both officially and among the general public’ (Svavarsdóttir, 2008, p. 455). Friðriksson (2009) claimed that it is:

noteworthy that language planning and even its underlying policy can by no means be said to belong solely to the official sphere of Icelandic society; rather, a side-effect of basing the

standard largely on the spoken vernacular appears to be a general interest in linguistic matters. Icelandic appears, in other words, to have been viewed as common property. (p. 86)

A poll undertaken by Gallup in 1989 showed that 75% of the general population in Iceland believed that a language cultivation campaign launched by the government was necessary and important for the Icelandic language. There were no differences in views according to age, gender, or place of residence (cited in Óladóttir, 2009, pp. 10–11).

During the twentieth century, and at the beginning of the twenty-first, the Icelandic authorities have gradually taken more steps towards systematically formulating and implementing language policy and planning. The following list represents the areas of society that might be considered basic in any serious undertaking at language planning:<sup>8</sup>

- curricula, schools, and textbooks (public education became compulsory in Iceland in 1907),
- the University of Iceland (established 1911),
- the State Broadcasting Service (established 1930),
- the National Theatre (established 1950),
- legislation on personal names (1913), place names (1913), and company names (1903),
- regulations on Icelandic orthography (1918, 1929, 1974/1977),
- some financial support for neologisms projects since the 1950s,
- the Icelandic Language Council (established 1964),
- various other bits of legislation on matters concerning the Icelandic language (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 49).

One twentieth-century project of note serves as an example of a successful language-planning campaign at the phonological level. During the first half of the twentieth century, some Icelandic linguists and educators became increasingly concerned about a development in Icelandic pronunciation, namely a vowel merger that could result in the disappearance of a distinction between vowels denoted by the letters *i* and *e*; for example, *viður* ‘wood’ sounded the same as *veður* ‘weather’. The merger process could also result in the disappearance of a distinction between vowels denoted by the letters *u* and *ö*. These vowel merger variants were known as *flámæli*. Teachers at the elementary school level were particularly concerned that *flámæli* could make teaching correct orthography increasingly difficult. Between about 1930 and 1950, the merging pronunciation became ‘heavily stigmatized, and the social pressure [i.e. to abolish it] must have been quite strong’ (Þráinsson & Árnason, 1992, p. 121). In its report on pronunciation standardization in 1951, the Philosophy faculty of the University of Iceland expressed the opinion that people who used this particular vowel merger pronunciation must not be permitted to speak on the State Broadcasting Service, nor to work as actors in Iceland’s National Theatre (Jónsson, 1998, p. 235). When ‘My Fair Lady’ (a musical adaptation of Bernard Shaw’s play, ‘Pygmalion’) was translated into Icelandic, Eliza Doolittle spoke *flámæli* to indicate her lower social class.

In the 1940s, a professor of linguistics, Björn Guðfinnsson, received a government research grant to investigate Icelandic pronunciation. In accordance with his reports and recommendations, a vigorous campaign against *flámæli* was launched in schools and on the radio. The result was that the emerging pronunciation change was eradicated in the course of a few decades. At the present time, the vowel merger variants are very rarely heard, occurring only sporadically in the speech of very old people. Guðfinnsson also proposed that a few other pronunciation variants should be declared undesirable and that

schools, the national radio, and the theatre should adopt and teach a standardized Icelandic pronunciation; however, the proposals received limited support, and they were never systematically implemented by schools (Ottosson, 1990, pp. 137–138).

From the late eighteenth until the latter half of the twentieth century, debates about Icelandic orthography have periodically erupted. Two principal and conflicting views have emerged: on the one hand, a traditional or etymological position and, on the other hand, the position that current orthography should be simplified in order to reflect the pronunciation of the language more accurately. The first view has emerged as the guiding principle. For instance, Icelandic orthography continues to use both *y* and *í*, both *y* and *i*, and both *ey* and *ei*, for what have been the same sounds, respectively, since the seventeenth century. Thus, Icelandic has two different written forms for the verbs *neita* ‘deny’ and *neyta* ‘consume’ even if the diphthongs (*ei* and *ey*) have been pronounced exactly alike for about four centuries. The verb *neita* is related to the word *nei* ‘no’, while *neyta* is related to the verb *njóta* ‘enjoy’.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Rask, the Danish linguist, proposed a spelling for Icelandic that was etymologically based, and which he claimed could serve both for the old texts and for modern texts (Karlsson, 2004, p. 59). Another aforementioned linguist and teacher, Friðriksson, made a few adjustments to Rask’s rules towards the end of the nineteenth century, maintaining in general, however, his etymological principles (Karlsson, 2004, pp. 61–62). The opponents of such etymologically based rules included Björn M. Ólsen, the first professor of Icelandic at the University of Iceland, who wished to simplify the spelling so that it would better reflect modern pronunciation (Karlsson, 2004, p. 63), e.g. by abolishing the characters *y*, *ý*, and *ey*. However, the spirit of Rask, Friðriksson, and their followers has prevailed in Icelandic orthographic rules. The first official spelling regulation was issued by the government in 1918, replaced in 1929 with an amended version bringing the spelling even closer to that proposed by Rask. One of those amendments was that the letter *z* be written for *s* where a preceding *t*, *d*, and *ð* had been dropped. The letter *z* expresses the same phonetic quality as *s*. The application of this rule requires quite a thorough knowledge of the etymology of a number of words, and the then Minister of Education and Culture issued a new spelling regulation in 1974 (slightly amended in 1977) abolishing the *z* rules, thereby giving in to pressure from teachers and others who had claimed that Icelandic pupils should use the time they spent in schools for better purposes than learning the (allegedly) complicated rules for writing the *z*.

From about 1770 to the present, the vocabulary has increased enormously as Icelandic has extended more and more into domains such as science, technology, and sports. This increase in vocabulary has been mainly characterized by the use of neologisms; i.e. words made up of morphemes that already existed in the language, as had been incorporated in the bylaws of the Icelandic Society for Learned Arts. New words are most commonly created by word compounding and/or derivation by means of affixation. Friðriksson (2009) claimed ‘the coining of new Icelandic words, rather than directly borrowing foreign ones, has been [...] the main concern of 20th century language planners in Iceland’ (p. 86).

For instance, instead of the international term *psychiatry*, Icelanders use the native word *geðlæknisfræði*, a neologism made from the ancient Icelandic words *geð* ‘mind’, *læknir* ‘doctor’, and *fræði* ‘science’. However, such neologisms, while using native morphemes, sometimes reflect foreign models more or less directly; i.e. as calques – an example is the word *gagnagrunnur*, ‘database’, from *gögn*, ‘data’ and *grunnur*, ‘base’. It is quite common for old words to be assigned new meaning in addition to or instead of their old meaning. An example is *vél*, which originally meant ‘deceit’, but since the nineteenth century has come to mean ‘engine’. A number of such examples have originated as



semantic loans; e.g. the word *vefur* ‘web’, originally meaning ‘something woven’, has currently acquired the additional meaning ‘world wide web’, cf. the semantic development of its English counterpart *web*. Finally, despite purist efforts, a great number of foreign words have been borrowed, even if their frequency is lower than in most of the neighbouring languages. Such borrowings are generally adjusted to Icelandic phonology, orthography, and morphology. Thus, *coffee*, *banana*, and *cigarette* are rendered in written Icelandic as *kaffi*, *banani*, and *sigaretta*. The spelling reflects exactly how Icelandic speakers pronounce these borrowings (see the appendix). Grammatical inflections apply to borrowings to a considerable extent; e.g. the genitive singular definite forms of the above examples are *kaffisins*, *bananans*, and *sigarettunnar*.

A recent comparative study of borrowed words in newspapers in the languages of the Nordic region between 1975 and 2000 revealed that Icelandic texts had the fewest borrowings per 10,000 words of newspaper text; i.e. 33 borrowings on average, while Norwegian newspaper texts contained 119 borrowings (Jarvad, 2009, p. 124). Finnish texts had 44 borrowings per 10,000 words (similar to numbers in Icelandic texts), while Danish and Swedish texts had similar numbers of borrowings to Norwegian texts (both languages had 111 borrowings per 10,000 words) (Jarvad, 2009, p. 124). Most of the borrowings came from English (c. 85%) and the rest were ‘internationalisms’ (Jarvad’s term) or borrowings from other languages such as French, German, and a number of other languages spoken in the European Economic Area (EEA). Among the most common examples of borrowings in the Icelandic sample were *fax* (English *telefax*), *grill* (English *grill*), and *jeppi* (English *jeep*) (Jarvad, 2009, p. 125).

This Nordic comparative study also investigated attitudes towards borrowings, particularly English borrowings, in the Nordic region speech communities. Again, Icelanders were at the extreme end compared with their Nordic neighbours, having the highest score for negative attitudes towards borrowings from English (Kristiansen & Vikør, 2006, p. 211) (see also Kristiansen, 2010, p. 169).

There is a tendency in Icelandic toward a higher frequency of borrowings in informal texts and speech, compared to more formal, especially written, texts. That tendency has been evident in the Icelandic language since at least about 1700 (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 55), and it is a salient characteristic of modern Icelandic register variation (Karlsson, 2004, p. 38; Kristiansen & Vikør, 2006, p. 56; Svavarsdóttir, 2008, p. 456). The tendency occurs not only in the language use of the general public, but also in the language use of professionals in various special fields of expertise (Sigmundsson, 2005, p. 1837).

Rather than resorting to borrowings, many neologisms are coined on a daily basis, as the need arises, in particular, for use in formal registers. For example, importers of goods, advertisers, scientists, journalists, and especially translators and copy writers of television and film subtitles are often faced with the challenge of finding or inventing new Icelandic words for new things and concepts – generally for foreign (usually English) terms. In Iceland, there are at present a number of terminology groups of professionals in various fields of science, technology, business, and culture. The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies lists 30 such terminology committees on its website [www.arnastofnun.is](http://www.arnastofnun.is) (The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, 2010). These committees usually work on a totally voluntary basis, although some enjoy some support from their respective branches. Direct financial support from the authorities is only occasionally granted.

Systematic terminology projects began in Iceland in 1919 when the Engineering Association appointed a terminology committee. That committee published its terms and translations in the Association’s periodical, and in 1927/1928, it published special issues listing machine and ship terms, as well as trade and business terms. Since 1919 and up

to the present, the Engineering Association has been working on terminology projects; for example, the Association's division of electrical engineers has translated about 20 volumes of the International Electrotechnical Vocabulary into Icelandic, and in 2007 the Association's division of civil engineers published an environment terminology (see Kristinsson (2004, pp. 52–54) for further discussion and examples). Aviation terminology has been systematically dealt with in Iceland since 1956, by terminology groups appointed and financed jointly by the Icelandic aviation administration, the Ministry of Transportation, the University of Iceland Dictionary Committee, and (since 1964) the Icelandic Language Council (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 52), computer terminology since 1968, by the Icelandic Society for Information Processing, an economics terminology was published in 2000, jointly by the Icelandic Economics Association and the Icelandic Language Council, and a statistics glossary in 1990, by the Icelandic Society for Biostatistics (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 55). Most of these undertakings have been launched through the initiative of specialists. Government support has mainly consisted of consultation services and in providing access to an Internet terminology publications portal (The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, 2010).

Apart from a few projects, especially in the 1950s and 1990s, direct public financial support for terminological activities has been quite limited – at least in comparison to the output delivered by individual specialists and their organizations. In 1991, the Icelandic Language Council founded the Language Cultivation Fund, co-founded with individuals, companies, and organizations, in order to be able to support terminology activities financially (Jónsson, 1997, p. 176) and it has been able to offer a few minor grants. In 1994, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Icelandic Republic, the Icelandic government established a fund, with an intended duration of 5 years, to contribute to Icelandic language research and publications. That fund was able to support a few Icelandic terminology glossaries between 1995 and 1999 (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 55).

New words can spread through many different channels; e.g. published translations, textbooks, technical specifications, instructions of various kinds, television subtitles, and advertisements in newspapers and magazines, as well as through television and radio programmes and the Internet. Neologisms also spread by word of mouth, in articles in the newsletters and journals of professional associations, and through special terminology publications and glossaries which are available in print as well as on the Internet. They also spread when new Icelandic standards, regulations and directives are produced, as well as new legislation from the Icelandic parliament, such as the Icelandic translations of EU directives applicable in Iceland – as Iceland is part of the EEA (Kristinsson, 2004, p. 41).

In 1984, the then Minister of Education and Culture appointed a committee which was asked to produce a special report with recommendations for strengthening language cultivation in elementary schools. The subsequent report and recommendations were supported by the Minister and published in a textbook (Gíslason, Jónsson, Kristmundsson, & Þráinsson, 1988), which was used, for example, in the teacher education college in Iceland, as well as in a number of upper secondary schools. In this report, the two principal elements of Icelandic language policy – the *preservation* and the *cultivation* of Icelandic – were outlined and explained (Gíslason et al., 1988, p. 53). The report stressed that these two central elements:

are not in contradiction with one another; the nature of the Icelandic language, its structure and its special characteristics are to be maintained while the language keeps growing, like a tree that continues to be the same tree even if it keeps developing and thriving (Gíslason et al., 1988, p. 53).<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, Gíslason et al. (1988, p. 79) stressed their view that the traditional Icelandic neologism policy is one of the basic principles in protecting the Icelandic language.

The effort to create neologisms, rather than to borrow lexicon, seems to contradict the international effort to define the functions and semantic boundaries of terms (particularly scientific and technological terms) in standardized and unified agreement across geographic areas and languages to facilitate discussion of technologies held in common in Medicine, Chemistry, Pharmacy, Fisheries, Maritime Navigation, Aviation, Law Enforcement, and other international endeavours. However, Icelandic language enthusiasts seem to have largely disregarded these efforts, as they have striven instead to invent native lexicon in various expanding fields of expertise.<sup>10</sup> Through almost the whole of the twentieth century, there was little acknowledgement of any difference between language for general purposes and language for specific purposes. Since the 1980s, however, more professional terminological methods have been gradually introduced in Iceland, and at the time of writing, there is increasing support for treating specialized terminology differently from general language use.

The image of the Icelandic language as a thriving tree that produces new leaves and branches every year was a particularly popular one among Icelandic language enthusiasts in the last three decades of the twentieth century. It is reminiscent of the popular image 'in the apologetics of purism' of language 'as a garden in need of careful cultivation' (Thomas, 1991, p. 21).

### ***Two Icelandic language planning agencies***

#### *The Icelandic Language Council*

The Icelandic Language Council was founded by the then Minister of Education and Culture on 30 July 1964. Icelandic philologists had been invited to the annual conferences of the other Nordic language councils before the Icelandic Language Council was founded and these language councils provided the model for the Icelandic counterpart. The Council consisted originally of three specialists in Icelandic language and history, two of whom were university professors and one was from the National Archives (Halldórsson & Jónsson, 1993, p. 36). The first regulation on the Council's role and operation was issued by the Ministry in 1965, asserting that the main role of the Council was:

- to serve as a consultative body for public institutions and the general public,
- to collect and publish neologisms and to assist those involved in coining new words, and
- to cooperate with the language councils of the other Nordic countries (Halldórsson & Jónsson, 1993, p. 41).

Since lexical purism had always been an essential element of Icelandic language policy, neologisms were specifically mentioned in the regulation. The Icelandic government had given some financial support, albeit modest, to the collecting of new words since the 1950s. In the period from 1953 to 1959, the Ministry of Education and Culture either published, or supported the publication of, five glossaries, containing neologisms in fields such as physics, chemistry, biology, navigation, fisheries, and agriculture. The University of Iceland Dictionary Committee was responsible for compiling those glossaries. In 1962, the committee that organized the neologism projects was designated the Neologism Committee (Halldórsson & Jónsson, 1993, p. 25). In 1964, the chair of that committee was appointed as the first chair of the Icelandic Language Council, which replaced the earlier Neologism Committee. This appointment indicates that lexical control played a central role in the founding of the Icelandic Language Council, while some other important language planning issues (e.g. school curricula) are not specified among the tasks of the Council.

The then Minister of Education and Trade had, as early as 1950, proposed the enactment in law of an ‘Icelandic Academy’, modelled after the *Académie française* (French Academy, founded in 1635) and the *Svenska Akademien* (Swedish Academy, founded in 1786) whose programmes emphasize the protection, cultivation and enhancement of the national language (Halldórsson & Jónsson, 1993, p. 15). The Minister pointed out particularly, in his argument for the bill, that the Icelandic academy must publish a dictionary of international vocabulary with Icelandic translations, because he believed that a great many neologisms had been coined in the last three decades, some of which were not fully compatible with the Icelandic language and were used uncritically by the public (Halldórsson & Jónsson, 1993, p. 16). This bill was never fully discussed in parliament, however, and there were no subsequent suggestions for an Icelandic academy.

It could be argued that the Icelandic Language Council, founded in 1964, was intended to serve as an Icelandic language academy, in the sense suggested in the context of the *Académie française*. It is evident that there were concerns in Icelandic society – on the one hand, about the threat of some internationalization of the vocabulary, and on the other hand, about the standardization of the more genuine Icelandic terms. The presence of the British and US armed forces in Iceland, from 1940 onwards, as well as the operation of the NATO base there both contributed to the underlying fear about an impending loss of purity in the vocabulary of Icelandic (Kvaran & Svavarsdóttir, 2002, p. 86).

The Icelandic Language Council was not a strong force in Icelandic culture and in the debate for the first decade and a half of its existence (c. 1964–1978). Its influence, however, increased in the 1980s when university professor Baldur Jónsson became chair of the Council (1978–1988). During this period, governmental funding was increased; the Icelandic parliament passed a special law concerning the Council in 1984, in which the role and main projects of the Council were described and its permanent secretariat, the Icelandic Language Institute (*Íslensk málstöð*), was established on 1 January 1985.

The Language Institute, on behalf of the Language Council, offered language consultation and advice through daily telephone services, published spelling dictionaries (also containing recommended inflection forms and other usage tips), and other reference material on language and usage. Not least, it took steps to encourage and help specialists who were keen to create and standardize the terminologies in their fields in such different fields of expertise as aviation, computing, economics, engineering, and medicine. The Institute started a publication series that produced 15 titles during the period from 1983 to 2006, including various terminological glossaries and two spelling dictionaries. Iceland has no separate terminology institution, as terminological activities are traditionally regarded as part of language cultivation. There has often been less focus in Iceland on an analysis of the conceptual systems than on the creation of new terms. In the other Nordic countries, there are specific terminological institutes, partly or wholly publicly funded. Their work is in general much less neologism-oriented than has traditionally been the case among Icelandic terminologists.

The role of the Icelandic Language Council (*Íslensk málnefnd*) was completely revised in 2006, when Article 9 of the Law on The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies (no. 40/2006) eliminated a previous separate law on the Language Council. Through this modification of the legislation, a clearer agenda for the Icelandic Language Council as an agency for language policy proposals has been articulated. There are at present 15 members in the Council, who are appointed by institutions, agencies, and organizations such as universities, teachers of Icelandic, and the writers’ association. The Council is expected to advise the Icelandic government on matters concerning Icelandic language policy and to prepare and submit a draft language policy document to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture. The first submission of this kind was delivered on the

Icelandic Language Day, 16 November 2008, under the heading *Íslenska til alls* (Icelandic for everything). The emphasis in that document is that Icelandic must be used in all domains of Icelandic society (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 11). The Minister of Education, Science and Culture subsequently formally presented this submission to the Parliament, where it was approved on 12 March 2009.

*The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies*

Since 2006, while the Language Council arguably has gained higher status as policy-maker than it previously had, the recently established (2006) Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies (*Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í íslenskum fræðum*) is responsible for various practical language cultivation and preservation tasks which had previously resided in the Icelandic Language Institute, the former secretariat of the Language Council. In 2006, the Icelandic Language Institute was merged with four other institutes (the University of Iceland Institute of Lexicography, the Árni Magnússon Institute, the Sigurður Nordal Institute, and the Place Name Institute of Iceland) to form the present Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. It is an academic research institute operating in close cooperation with the University of Iceland. The Institute operates on an independent budget and answers directly to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. The Institute is responsible for:

- conducting research on Icelandic studies and related scholarly topics, especially in the field of Icelandic language and literature,
- disseminating knowledge in these fields,
- preserving and augmenting the collections in its care.

Of its collections, the best known is the Árni Magnússon Manuscript collection, containing many medieval parchments written in Icelandic.

The institute is expected to ‘contribute to the enhancement and preservation of the Icelandic language, and [to] provide consultation and advice on matters of language use, including neologisms and terminology’ (Law on The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies, no. 40/2006). Accordingly, the duties of the Institute are:

- to provide information to the general public on matters of language use,
- to operate a word bank for the publication of terminology glossaries, and to provide other services and advice to terminologists,
- to publish spelling dictionaries and handbooks on usage.

Prior to the merger in 2006, the permanent staff of the Language Institute consisted of four people. At present, all the services are still managed by four people in the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies. In the period from 1988 to 1989, the Language Institute received about 400 questions each year, while in 2006 the annual number of questions had increased to around 2600, demonstrating an increase in people’s awareness of its services. Since then, however, the number of telephone calls and e-mails has decreased. The institute’s staff assert that the diminished number of transactions does not indicate a diminished interest in language usage, as many people obtain the information they are seeking on words and usage directly from the institute’s open web data base. In recent years, and especially since 2002, the language consultants have published greater quantities of advice and responses to Frequently Asked Questions on their website, in addition to the institute’s word bank (The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, 2009). Since

the institute merger in 2006, the general public has had easier access than before, not only to these databases but to others on the same website (e.g. the files of the historical university dictionary project, a list of place names, and an emerging description of Icelandic inflections).

Generally speaking, the tasks of the Icelandic Language Council are concerned with status planning while the duties of its secretariat, The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, are concerned with corpus planning. For instance, while publishing and collecting, neologisms had been specifically mentioned in the first regulation of the Icelandic Language Council in 1964, such tasks are now carried out by the Institute. The Icelandic Language Council is, however, responsible for formulating and circulating Icelandic rules on orthography and punctuation.

### ***On the legal status of Icelandic as the official language in Iceland***

The *de facto* status of Icelandic as the only official language in Iceland is supported by various legislative acts (see Parts I and IV). While most European countries have either a separate law on language, or constitutional language provisions, or both, Iceland has neither. Neither the Icelandic constitution, nor any specific language legislation, explicitly declares Icelandic as the only official language of Iceland. Finland is actually the only country in the Nordic region that has constitutional provisions on language. In addition, it has separate language laws. Neighbouring Norway and Sweden have separate legislation on official and minority languages, while lacking constitutional provisions on language (for information on language policy in Sweden and Finland, see Kaplan and Baldauf [2005]).

Icelandic has, from the beginning, been the only widely used language in Iceland, while the only traditional language minority in the country are users of ISL. Thus, there has been no perceived need to specify the language(s) of Iceland in the constitution or in other language legislation.

Some prominent Icelandic attorneys, for example, believe that the fact that Icelandic is the only official language in Iceland is too obvious to be mentioned in the constitution and that its status is ensured by uncontested tradition. Others believe, however, that there is a need for more specific legislative provisions because of the impact of globalization, specifically, the increase in migration, and the impact of English in the domains of science, technology, and entertainment. Since the year 2000, a few linguists, parliamentarians and others, have advocated that, in order to ensure the status of Icelandic, either a constitutional provision or separate language legislation be enacted. In accordance with a parliamentary resolution of 12 March 2009, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture appointed a committee to submit a proposal designed to 'ensure the legal status of the Icelandic language, as well as of the ISL, in Icelandic society'. The primary assignment given to the Minister's committee was to determine whether indeed there was a need to mention the Icelandic language specifically in the constitution or whether the *de facto* status of Icelandic as the only official language is already, or could be, sufficiently safeguarded by other legal measures.

The committee submitted its proposal in 2010 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010b). While the committee came to the conclusion that it is 'natural and in accordance with constitutional development in other European countries in recent decades' that the Icelandic constitution should stipulate that Icelandic is the national language, such a change should be undertaken in conjunction with a more extensive revision of the constitution in the future (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010b, p. 70). Meanwhile, the committee has urged the Icelandic parliament to pass separate language legislation containing provisions on the responsibility of the Icelandic

government and municipalities concerning the preservation, cultivation, and acquisition of Icelandic and the use of Icelandic in the system of government, in parliament, in the courts, and in state and municipal administration. In addition, the proposed legislation should contain provisions that strengthen the legal status of ISL and its users.

### **Part III**

#### ***Language spread***

As has been previously described, for centuries, Iceland's close-knit social networks had contributed to a linguistically conservative and stable speech community. In the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the Icelandic movement for political independence from Denmark emphasized linguistic nationalism, accompanied by lexical purism which aimed against borrowings from Danish in Icelandic. Official language policy discourse, based on traditional ideologies about the language, however, seems to be in conflict with modern practices in Iceland, which are underpinned by different ideologies such as, for example, the belief in the necessity to compete in the modern world. The present global mobility of peoples, the global impact on the media, and the explosion in information technologies and in business have transformed linguistic practice in Iceland, and linguistic nationalism is not perceived as important by young Icelanders as previous generations had perceived it.

These modern practices have resulted in an increase in the use of one of the global languages, English. Since the 1980s, therefore, Icelandic language policy-makers have deemed it necessary to strengthen official language-planning measures, urging schools, universities, and the media to increase their teaching and use of Icelandic to counteract the influence of English. Other language policy-makers in Europe and elsewhere have also sought to reduce the impact of English on domains such as higher education and the media through language-planning measures. For example, in Sweden in 1997, the Swedish Language Council was requested by the state to work out some directives for the protection of Swedish 'to counterbalance the Anglification of Swedish society' (Winsa, 2005, p. 302). The Swedes introduced such a language policy in 2005. Possibly the best known example of language legislation is the *Loi Toubon* (Toubon's Law) in France, a law which was passed in 1994 to make the use of French compulsory in several domains, including consumer information such as 'advertising, work contracts and information etc., education at all levels and the language use of politicians and anyone who officially represents the Republic' (Bakmand, 2000). According to Oakes (2001, p. 160) the *Loi Toubon* appears to have the support of the majority of the general public. The dominance of English in the domain of information technology also 'led the French government to mandate that all web sites in France must provide their content in French' (Nunberg, 2002). The former French President, Jacques Chirac, described the prevalence of English on the Internet as 'a major risk for humanity' (Nunberg, 2002). Following the French example, Hungarian purists also proposed a language law in the mid 1990s 'to combat the expansion of English', although others, such as academics and linguists argued against this (Medgyes & Miklósy, 2005, p. 30) and no such law was enacted.

Increased use of English in Iceland went hand-in-hand with the meteoric expansion of Iceland's financial sector in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Indeed, some Icelandic companies had advocated the use of English only, or, at the very least, a bilingual Icelandic/English language policy. The collapse of Iceland's banks in 2008/2009, associated with global English, has led some language policy-makers to believe that it is necessary to revert to Icelandic-centric policies and that it was not necessary to use only English to the detriment

of Icelandic in business. In 2009, the Icelandic parliament approved a new language policy, *Íslenska til alls* (Icelandic for everything), stressing the need for Icelandic to be used in 11 different domains in Iceland, including business. It remains to be seen whether the measures recommended (elaborated upon in the following sections) will be implemented and, if so, whether they will effectively modify current language practices. Adopting Spolsky's (2004) definition of language policies, we acknowledge that in addition to language management, other crucial components are language beliefs and language practices.

### **Compulsory education**

The first school for children in Iceland was founded in Vestmannaeyjar (The Westman Islands) in 1745. The number of primary schools increased slowly at first because the Icelandic home education system, in which children were educated by parents or guardians at home, prevailed throughout rural Iceland well into the twentieth century. This education was supervised by local priests visiting each farm. Barrow (1835, p. 237), author and traveller in the Nordic region, in his travels around Iceland in 1834, observed that 'by the almost universality of this system of domestic education, there is not probably, in any part of the world, an agricultural or rather pastoral peasantry so well informed and enlightened as those of Iceland'. He continued that 'it is no uncommon thing to meet with men labouring in the fields, mowing hay, digging turf . . . performing every kind of menial labour, who will write Latin, not merely with grammatical accuracy, but even with elegance', as well as their own language. Until the home education act of 1790, there was no legislation requiring that children should learn to read (Ólafsson, 2001, p. 4). Similarly from 1880 children were not only required to learn to read but also to learn to write (Ólafsson, 2001, p. 7).

At present there are laws concerning the language to be used in education. The Icelandic Law on Compulsory Schools (no. 91/2008, Article 16) states that 'instruction in compulsory schools shall take place in Icelandic'. In addition, it should be the responsibility of all teachers – not only teachers of the actual subject of Icelandic – to be teachers of Icelandic. Languages other than Icelandic are only used according to the nature of the subject; i.e. foreign language lessons as stipulated in The National Curriculum Guide for Compulsory School, General Section (2004). At present, there are no bilingual content and language integrated learning (CLIL) programmes in Iceland at compulsory level.

Compulsory education in Iceland, which normally takes place between the ages of 6 and 16 – lasts for 10 years. Compulsory education falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, which issues the national curriculum for schools. The Minister reports to the Icelandic Parliament (the *Alþingi*) on the implementation of the official curriculum every 3 years, based on reports from the municipalities (Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008: Article 4). By law, pupils may be exempt from compulsory education providing that they are subject to regular evaluation and monitoring (Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008: Article 46). Only three students were being home schooled in Iceland in 2009.

Most compulsory schools are community schools run by the municipalities. There are very few schools that are privately operated, and these are located only in the capital, Reykjavík. Such schools are operated by non-profit organizations – for instance Landakotsskóli, founded in 1896, which was operated until 2005 by the Catholic Church of Iceland, and independently since then. Such schools may be accredited by the Ministry. About 75% of the school fees must be paid by the municipalities and 25% by the parents (Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008: Article 43). Teaching in these schools follows The



National Curriculum Guide for compulsory education. There is only one foreign international school in Iceland: the school operated by the Embassy of the USA.

Article 25 of the Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008, states that The National Curriculum Guide shall stipulate the content and organization of study in Icelandic, Icelandic as a second language or ISL,<sup>11</sup> English, Danish, or other Nordic languages, as well as other subjects such as mathematics (Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008). School curriculum guides are in fact more detailed versions of The National Curriculum Guide.

### *Teaching Icelandic in compulsory schools*

The new language policy for Icelandic, *Íslenska til alls*, previously outlined (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009), includes recommendations on the teaching of Icelandic at pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary levels.

According to Kvaran, the Chairman of the Icelandic Language Council, (in an interview in 2009) the new language policy for Icelandic was partly written before the financial crisis in 2008 but was subsequently revised. The first draft recognized that there were so many foreign students and foreign workers in Iceland that there should be more English teaching – in the universities as well as in schools. Since the new language policy was accepted by the Icelandic parliament, however, according to Kvaran, there is a more widespread belief that the teaching of Icelandic should be strengthened, rather than the teaching of English. The language policy document argues that Icelandic should be strengthened for the following reasons:

- more and more children talk largely with their peer group rather than with the older generation than ever before;
- the Icelandic community has become more international;
- English usage has increased as a result of widespread use of the Internet at home and at schools.

The document emphasizes the fact that changes in some language domains are happening faster than ever before, and as a consequence, it is important for the school system to emphasize the importance of Icelandic to ensure its status (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, pp. 30–40).

The Law on Compulsory Schools, no. 91/2008, Article 2, first and foremost requires that pupils ‘should strengthen their skills in the Icelandic language’. The curriculum guide avows that teaching of Icelandic shall be a significant segment of instructional time for all compulsory school pupils, whatever their first languages; that is, it should amount to at least 960 min per week in years 1–4 and 600 min per week in years 5–10 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 33).

However, in view of the ideologies underpinning Icelandic language policies, as expressed in Part II, it may seem surprising that teaching of the first language as a percentage of instructional time is lower in Iceland than it is in the other Nordic countries. Icelandic pupils receive 16.1% of time devoted to the first language compared with 23% in Norway and 28.7% in Denmark. In other words, Danish pupils receive 78% more time devoted to teaching Danish (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 34). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) figures show that Icelandic pupils, especially boys, lack good reading skills when compared with their peers in those countries in Europe with which the Ministry likes to compare itself, i.e. the Nordic countries and other states in Western Europe. Thus, the new language policy states that teaching

Icelandic in compulsory school should be strengthened and that the proportion of time devoted to teaching Icelandic should be similar to that of teaching Danish in Denmark, Norwegian in Norway, etc. (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 34).

### *Teaching foreign languages in compulsory schools*

Guttormsson (2008, p. 185) reported that foreign language teaching in primary school was not compulsory until the curriculum guide of 1960 stipulated that Danish was a compulsory subject. However, Danish had been taught quite widely since the first primary schools were founded. The rules for the Reykjavik primary school in 1862 stipulated teaching both Danish and English (Guttormsson, 2008, p. 166). In the winter of 1903–1904, Danish was taught in four town schools in Iceland and in 13 of the 32 schools that received government grants. Instead of regular schools in the countryside at that time, teachers were sent by the government to a particular district where they lived on farms. Children from the surrounding farms would visit the teacher for their education in specific subjects. In the winter of 1907–1908, about half of the teachers in the countryside taught Danish, while English was also taught by a handful of teachers. Danish was taught in many primary schools after 1907, as was English, although English was not taught so widely. In the winter of 1924–1925, pupils in the seventh grade in primary schools in Reykjavik were taught 3 h of Danish and 2 h of English per week (Guttormsson, 2008, p. 168). In 1936, a law was promulgated to the effect that teaching foreign languages was prohibited except to those pupils who had a good command of Icelandic (Guttormsson, 2008, p. 166). The 1946 law permitted teaching older children one foreign language. Finally, in the 1960 primary school curriculum, as previously noted, a foreign language (first only Danish, later also English) became a compulsory subject. Latin was not taught to children in general; sometimes, priests taught Latin at home to some promising young boys in order to ease their access to the Reykjavik Latin school (earlier the Bessastaðir Latin School – see Part II).

Current policy for foreign language teaching follows EU policy to the effect that every child should learn two foreign languages at compulsory level along with their first language, although Icelanders, as has been shown, have been learning two foreign languages for many decades. Support for foreign language learning within Europe comes primarily from the Council of Europe (COE), which commits member states<sup>12</sup> to promote the reciprocal teaching and learning of their languages and to encourage students and staff to learn a variety of languages including less widely used and taught languages (LWUTLs.) One of the COE's main objectives is to raise awareness of the value of being plurilingual in a multilingual European society (Council of Europe, 2006). Strategies include promotion of mobility, such as exchanges between nation states for teachers, students, and researchers. Language proficiency can be assessed by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages, devised by the COE, which facilitates the mutual recognition of language qualifications learned in different countries.

In Iceland, the foreign languages taught at compulsory level are currently English from age 10 and Danish from age 12. For those pupils who have a parent of Norwegian, Swedish, or Polish origin, it has been possible for some years to take Norwegian, Swedish, or Polish instead of Danish in some municipalities (Gunnlaugsdóttir, 2005a, p. 2).

Until 1999, Danish was the first foreign language taught in Iceland, because of tradition and because it was considered necessary for communication with the other Nordic countries. However, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture then decided to change the law making English the first foreign language taught instead of Danish. The reasons for this change were due to the dominance of English in everyday life, partly in communications

with other countries such as the USA, but also through the daily contact with English through the media and the Internet (Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2009, p. 49). This daily contact resulted in the fact that many children knew English before they learned it formally at school, as they were highly motivated to learn it. Thus, Icelanders found it natural that English should be taught first because they use it much more than Danish. According to an adviser in the department of education at the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, in an interview in 2009, Danish teachers were also supportive of this change because they found it difficult to motivate Icelandic pupils to learn Danish before the law was modified in 1999. It was thought that it would be better to teach English first so that young Icelanders could be more motivated to learn Danish afterwards.

Iceland is not alone in introducing English as the first foreign language taught in schools; many countries in Europe have adopted such a policy, e.g. Germany, The Netherlands and all the Nordic countries, because English is increasing in use in Europe, despite the EU policy of plurilingualism. Choice of foreign languages to teach is also dependent on the availability of teachers. A study commissioned by the EU Directorate General for Education and Culture in 2002, which investigated the provision of language teacher training in Europe, showed that, although there is provision in some countries for other languages, most concentrate on teaching English, French, and German, and of these, English is most often the first foreign language taught (Kelly, Grenfell, Jones, Gallagher-Brett, & Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2002). Only about half the countries surveyed provided training in at least one LWUTL (Grenfell, Kelly, & Jones, 2003, p. 58), e.g. the provision of Danish in Iceland. Special Eurobarometer (2006, p. 9) reports that 77% of EU citizens consider that English should be the first foreign language taught in schools. Thus, while, on the one hand, the COE promotes teaching of LWUTLs and linguistic diversity, on the other hand, language learners in most nations, if they want to learn a foreign language, choose to learn English.

Teaching Danish in Iceland is also in line with the language policy of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, since it is a policy intended to promote inter-Nordic understanding. There is official agreement among the Nordic countries that 'the Nordic linguistic community is of such importance that it must continue to form the basis of all Nordic cooperation' (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2005). The Nordic Language Declaration (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2006, p. 92) states that all Nordic citizens have the right to 'acquire an understanding of and skills in a Scandinavian language and an understanding of the other Scandinavian languages so that they can take part in the Nordic language community'. It is a priority in the Nordic Council of Ministers to consider the comprehension of each other's languages.

The Scandinavian languages – Danish, Norwegian and Swedish – are supposed to be mutually comprehensible, so the fact that Icelanders learn Danish implies that they should also understand the other Scandinavian languages. However, a survey of young people's (from Denmark, the Faroese, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) comprehension of Scandinavian languages, instigated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, showed that their comprehension of other Scandinavian languages was not very great; it was in fact weaker than their understanding of English (Delsing, 2006). The parents of these young people understand the Scandinavian languages better, which shows that inter-language comprehension among speakers of the Nordic languages has diminished over the last 30 years (Delsing, 2006; see also Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2009, p. 46).

According to the results of two surveys undertaken by Hilmarsson-Dunn in an upper secondary school in Selfoss, Iceland, in 2005 and 2009,<sup>13</sup> most students consider English to be 'cool' and to be a useful language. Danish, on the other hand, is studied reluctantly by the majority of Icelandic pupils, who do not consider it a necessary or a relevant language.

However, Icelanders can be quick to adopt Danish when they do realize the benefits it provides; for example, if they attend higher education courses in Denmark. Although the number of hours dedicated to teaching Danish has not been reduced since the transition to English as the first foreign language, less emphasis is currently placed on learning Danish than was the case in previous years. As English becomes more widely spoken, particularly among young people in Iceland, the policy regarding the learning of Danish may change, although, according to an adviser in the Ministry of Education, there has been no discussion in the Ministry of taking Danish off the list of compulsory subjects (interview in the Ministry, 2009). However, even within the Ministry itself, many Icelanders, especially younger persons, would prefer to conduct business in English when a Nordic meeting takes place.

About 100 students were studying Norwegian or Swedish at compulsory level in 2009; they appeared to be well motivated, and they achieved good grades for achievement (interview with an adviser in the Ministry, 2009). The courses had been developed for pupils who had some connection with Norway or Sweden and who already had a reasonable proficiency in those languages. Those pupils were permitted to study those languages instead of Danish. Since the beginning of 2009, Polish language instruction has also been offered (instead of Danish) for pupils of Polish origin. These languages are taught to the 12–14-year-old group in three schools in Reykjavik and to the 14–15-year-old group through online courses developed by specialists in distance learning at the Language Centre, Laugalækjarskóli, in Reykjavik. In more remote areas of Iceland, where appropriately trained classroom teachers may not be available, Norwegian, Swedish and Polish are only available online (Tungumálaver, 2009). The Language Centre has also instigated distance learning courses in Danish and English for students in the upper years of compulsory education who have a good understanding of the spoken language in question and who can read and understand written texts at a proficiency level comparable to their peers in the countries where the languages are spoken (Tungumálaver, 2009). These students may have an English- or Danish-speaking parent, or they may have lived in the UK (or another English-speaking polity) or in Denmark. In online study, the course work is individualized to each student, so that each receives study material appropriate to his or her level of ability and maturity. The students are expected to work with a considerable degree of independence. The Language Centre is responsible for formative assessment of students' work, but students also carry out self-assessments.

It is common for language instructors, especially those who are simultaneously candidates in teacher training colleges, to go abroad as part of their training, particularly instructors of Scandinavian languages or of English; i.e. those seeking immersion in English may go to the UK or to the USA (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 41). In-service training of language teachers is provided by the continuing-education mechanisms of the teacher-training institutions, in many cases in cooperation with the teachers' associations, which also organize in-service training courses abroad for groups of foreign language teachers (Gunnlaugsdóttir, 2005a, p. 4). There are many opportunities to study courses abroad, but work abroad is not compulsory, and no official policy regarding such training exists. As Iceland is a member of the EEA, Icelanders are eligible to participate in European programmes such as Erasmus, a student and staff mobility programme available for teacher trainees and others to undertake study abroad for varying periods at partner institutions in Europe.

### *Upper secondary education*

According to Icelandic Law on Upper Secondary Schools (no. 92/2008, Article 35) 'instruction in upper secondary schools shall take place in Icelandic'. Instruction in other languages is, however, permitted if the content of the study requires it (e.g. in foreign

language study), or if the content is specifically meant for students who are not proficient in Icelandic or for students who intend to study, or have studied, abroad for some significant segment of their education.

Upper secondary education in Iceland is longer than that in other Nordic countries; it implicates 4 years of study (i.e. from age 16 to 20), as opposed to 3 years in other countries such as Denmark. The school year is 9 months long, divided into two terms. According to the latest school act for upper secondary education, pupils' in-school days must amount to at least 180 per year. The Ministry would like to bring upper secondary education in line with that of the other Nordic countries; however, the teachers' union opposes the idea, as does the students' union. A module system has been put in place, so that students may finish their upper secondary education in 3 or 3.5 years if they wish. One school, Menntaskólinn Hraðbraut, also offers a 2-year programme. In practice, individual schools have the option to decide on length of programme, in consultation with the Ministry.

Since the financial crisis of 2008/2009, and the fall of Iceland's three largest banks, the country faces serious economic challenges and increasing unemployment (after having had one of the lowest unemployment rates in Europe). The Ministry has realized, therefore, that there is no need to rush students through upper secondary education. Every student is encouraged to stay in school rather than to face unemployment (interview with an adviser in the Ministry, 2009).

As previously noted, the Icelandic National Curriculum Guide for Upper Secondary Schools is issued by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture; it specifies the objectives and the organization of school activities. In addition, each school is responsible for issuing its own curriculum guide. Article 2 of the Law on Upper Secondary Schools (no. 92/2008) states that the upper secondary school 'shall strive to strengthen its pupils' skills in the Icelandic language, both spoken and written'. Other core subjects include foreign languages, as well as subjects such as Science, Mathematics, and History.

The Minister of Education, Science, and Culture is authorized to provide schools with accreditation to carry out instruction at upper secondary level. Accredited schools can be operated as non-profit organizations, as limited public companies or as other types of accepted legal entities. The European Commission Action Plan for language learning and linguistic diversity in Europe includes, *inter alia*, that there should be provision of good quality CLIL in a variety of languages in schools in Europe (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p. 8). There is one CLIL programme at upper secondary level in Iceland in one institution, Hamrahlíð College, which offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) using English as the language of instruction. That school is a member of the International Baccalaureate Organisation, a group of 1000 schools in more than 100 countries. The IB constitutes a 2-year course, intended for 16–19-year olds, partly funded by the State. The College also offers a 1 year pre-IB course serving as a bridge between compulsory schooling and the IB (Menntaskólinn við Hamrahlíð, 2009).

The Ministry does not conduct a formal evaluation of the IB programme. In a 2009 interview, the Ministry reported that there are fewer and fewer Icelandic students undertaking this programme. Most of the students who do undertake it are either the children of foreign embassy employees or are children whose parents hold foreign citizenship (e.g. employees of foreign companies operating in Iceland). Before the financial crisis, large numbers of foreign students attended the college because there were large numbers of foreign workers; one of the consequences of the financial crisis, however, has been that many of the foreign workers and their offspring have returned to their home countries.

According to an adviser in the Ministry, most Icelanders, including the students themselves, are opposed to teaching through the medium of English, even though attitudes

towards learning English are very positive. According to García and Baetens Beardsmore (2007, p. 3) bilingual (CLIL) programmes are not taught in Iceland, for ‘fear that they would promote English and might in the long run threaten the Icelandic language’ (cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2009, p. 51). In Hilmarsson-Dunn’s March, 2009 survey of students’ use of, and attitudes towards, English, conducted with students in an upper secondary school in Selfoss, there was a question asking whether students would like to be taught through English. On a four-point scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, most students strongly disagreed with this idea. Denmark, like Iceland, does not participate in CLIL, but the reasons for not providing CLIL courses in Denmark result from the high costs of introducing them; e.g. teacher-training costs as well as the development of appropriate teaching materials (Eurydice, 2006, p. 53).

#### *Teaching Icelandic in upper secondary schools*

In upper secondary schools, as in compulsory schools, teaching Icelandic occupies fewer instructional hours than, for example teaching Danish in Denmark and Norwegian in Norway. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2009, p. 36), teaching Icelandic constitutes 15 units out of the 140 units required for the matriculation exam. The Icelandic Language Council reports that some pupils leave school without being able to express themselves clearly in written or spoken Icelandic and also lack a basic knowledge of the grammar. Reading skills also are not as well developed as they should be (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 36). Therefore, the Council proposes in the new language policy that the number of hours teaching Icelandic should be increased – at both compulsory and upper secondary school levels. Furthermore, pupils should receive increased instruction in diction, written language, and grammar. Knowledge of Icelandic grammar, the Council argues, constitutes good preparation for learning other languages (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 36).

#### *Teaching foreign languages in upper secondary schools*

Policy for foreign language teaching at upper secondary level requires instruction in three compulsory languages for at least 1 year:

- English is compulsory for between 2 and 4 years, depending on whether a student opts for the language stream or the science stream.
- Danish is compulsory for 1–2 years, and students may choose a third language (French, German or Spanish).
- Language stream students are also required to choose a fourth language; some schools offer Polish, Russian, and Italian to meet the fourth option (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 47).

The total number of students learning one or more foreign languages in 2008–2009 was 18,699. Figures from Statistics Iceland (2010) show that:

15,607 were learning English,  
9132 were learning Danish,  
4519 were learning German,  
4052 were learning Spanish and  
2403 were learning French.

Other languages, e.g. Russian, involved only a few students.

***New language policy for Icelandic at pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary levels***

According to the Icelandic Language Council, teachers who have completed their teaching examinations have not had the necessary preparation to serve as good models for children in language acquisition (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 34). Therefore, the new language policy (from 2009) recommends that the Icelandic teaching segment of the teaching programme should be increased, and it emphasizes the importance of teacher training in Icelandic for teachers at all levels. Teacher trainees at all levels attend the teaching faculties of two universities in Iceland: University of Iceland, School of Education; University of Akureyri, Department of Education, School of Humanities and Social Sciences. At present, during their first year, trainees undertake a compulsory course in Icelandic, the only training in Icelandic that they receive unless they have specifically chosen to teach Icelandic as their chosen field. In the last few years, a large part of the Icelandic training that constituted part of the 3 year Bachelor of Arts (BA) course has been removed. Completion of the BA course qualifies teachers to teach any course at any level of compulsory schooling. Furthermore, the training of teachers to teach Icelandic has changed, as teachers now have to be able to teach both Icelandic as a first language and Icelandic as a second language as well as teaching those children of Icelandic parents who have been brought up abroad.

Young Icelanders between the ages of 2 and 6 are entitled to attend pre-schools. The language policy of 2009 states that it is important that pre-school teachers provide good role models in speaking and reading aloud from Icelandic texts because the early years are the most important in terms of acquiring the language, and these teachers are the first teachers that Icelandic pupils encounter (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 33).

Currently, however, the situation is that many pre-school staff are of foreign origin, speaking languages other than Icelandic as their first language, which they use with young Icelanders. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2009) believes that it is important and necessary that pre-school teachers themselves have Icelandic as their first language, and that they have good knowledge of the Icelandic language in order that they can strengthen the development of Icelandic among their pupils. Unlike the laws for compulsory and upper secondary school, however, there is no law that teaching in pre-schools should be carried out in Icelandic (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 33).

Similarly, in the view<sup>14</sup> of the Icelandic Language Council, all teachers in compulsory schools should be appropriate language role models. Teachers also have to be able to provide instruction to pupils in literature and grammar, recitals and essay writing, as well as cultural heritage, such as ancient and contemporary literature and poetry (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 35).

Furthermore, the new language policy for compulsory and upper secondary schools states that it is necessary to ensure that Icelandic is used in all fields, especially in domains that influence the teenage cohort, namely information technology and computer use. It is recommended therefore that computer systems and software in schools should be in Icelandic, since it is believed that the universal use of Icelandic would help to increase computer literacy and prevent Icelandic from giving way to English in this rapidly increasing area of national life (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 37). At present, Microsoft software is translated into Icelandic by authorized translators hired by Microsoft. However, many schools use both English and Icelandic versions of the software on their computers (see Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009, p. 371).

The main goal of language policy for compulsory and upper secondary school pupils is that these pupils should be on an equal footing with their peer group elsewhere in Europe in

first language skills (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 37). The goals for Icelandic at schools as stipulated in the new Icelandic language policy are set out thus as follows:

- Icelandic students in compulsory and upper secondary schools shall be on an equal footing with their peers elsewhere in Europe in first language skills (including reading comprehension).
- Icelandic teachers, at all school levels, shall be trained in language use. They must be capable of strengthening their pupils' feeling for language and their language development.
- Teachers of Icelandic as a subject in compulsory schools should be specially qualified in that subject.
- The training of first language teachers, at all levels, to teach Icelandic as a second language should be strengthened.
- It must be ensured by regulation that the teaching and care of children in pre-schools is mainly in Icelandic.
- All computer user interfaces in Icelandic pre-schools, compulsory schools, and upper secondary schools, shall be in Icelandic (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, pp. 37–39).

### ***Methods of assessment***

All evaluation and monitoring of education in Iceland falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. Every school is expected to implement methods to evaluate pupils. The national curriculum states that assessment should vary, according to the stipulated written and oral goals and ongoing formative assessment.

School curriculum guides contain objectives, evaluation methods, and quality control as per Article 29 of the Law on Compulsory Schools (no. 91/2008). External evaluation is carried out by the municipalities and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture.

Article 39 of the Law on Compulsory Schools (no. 91/2008) specifies that all pupils in the 4th and 7th grades of compulsory school shall undergo national examinations in Icelandic and mathematics and that all pupils, in the 10th grade (i.e. all 15-year-old pupils) shall undergo national examinations in both subjects plus English. Before 2008, there had been six tests for 10th grade students, that battery of tests serving as the entrance examination for upper secondary level. Those six tests have since been reduced to the three tests taken at the beginning of upper secondary level; i.e. those tests intended to inform the students of their relative proficiency, rather than to constitute an entrance exam. One of the subjects no longer tested is Danish, an area that had hitherto been tested for about 80 years because Danish had been the first foreign language taught. This revision in education policy resulted in a complaint from the Danish teachers' union in Iceland, who believed the changed policy to be an indication that Icelanders felt Danish no longer to be of any importance.

A new language curriculum was articulated in 2006, making greater use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP), a document launched by the COE in 2000 to provide a means for recording the way young learners acquired language skills. Iceland's ELP model has been accredited by the COE. The ELP is connected to the CEFR for languages, which provides evidence of pupils' communicative proficiency in foreign languages across six levels of competence (i.e. A1–A2 basic user, B1–B2 independent user and C1–C2 proficient user). According to a 2009 interview conducted in the Ministry with an education adviser, who was involved in developing language portfolios, among other things,



Icelanders do not achieve the same proficiency levels in Danish as they do in English; while many individuals are capable of achieving level ‘C’ on the Common European Framework in English, few manage to do as well in Danish. The education adviser believed that this phenomenon may be partially due to the fact that upper secondary students can choose a third language and that Spanish has become more popular than Danish in that context. This observation may seem surprising considering that Icelanders are eligible to receive free tuition at higher education level in Denmark and need to demonstrate high proficiency in Danish to take advantage of this benefit.

Pupils’ work in upper secondary school is evaluated in standardized credit units (Law on Upper Secondary Schools, no. 92/2008: Article 15). The aim of upper secondary education is to educate the students to a level whereby they can pass matriculation examinations, attesting to their preparation for study at the higher education level (Law on Upper Secondary Schools, no. 92/2008: Article 18). Study programmes are submitted by individual upper secondary schools to the Ministry for approval (Law on Upper Secondary Schools, no. 92/2008: Article 23). Pupil evaluation is carried out by continuous assessment during each semester and by final assessment at the end of each semester. Although testing is the main method of assessment in the Icelandic school system, written assignments and course work also contribute (i.e. formative assessment). The more traditional grammar schools, however, have more extensive matriculation assessment at the end of studies based on examinations in the core subjects: Icelandic, English, and Mathematics (Foreign Ministry, 2009, pp. 8–9).

### *Icelandic sign language*

As noted earlier, ISL is the only minority language recognized in Iceland.

The Icelandic government recognized its responsibilities towards the users of ISL when it founded, in 1990, ‘The Communication Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’ (*Samskiptamiðstöð fyrir heyrnarlausá og heyrnarskerta*), an agency answering directly to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture. The agency’s mission is to guarantee equal rights for deaf people (The Communication Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, 2010). The primary goal of the ‘Law on the Communication Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’, no. 129/1990, is ‘to contribute to equal rights for deaf people to enjoy service in as many fields in society as possible, based on the use of Sign Language’ (Article 1). The Communication Centre also conducts research on ISL, offers courses in ISL, and provides interpreting services for deaf people, as well as counselling to their families. The objective aims to assure that ISL users may come to enjoy the same respect and status as users of any other languages and that deaf citizens may come to be able to participate fully in society by means of ISL. Icelandic ‘Law on Patients’ Rights’, no. 74/1997, states that Sign Language users should enjoy the same rights to interpretation as are guaranteed to speakers of foreign languages. The State Broadcasting Service has already been offering daily television news broadcasts in ISL for about two decades.

In 2010, a committee appointed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture submitted a proposal on ways to ‘ensure the legal status of the Icelandic language, as well as of the Icelandic Sign Language, in Icelandic society’. The proposal recommends legislation that would, among other things, contain provisions in support of ISL users, notably that the Icelandic state and municipalities should be responsible for ensuring ‘access’ to ISL for all individuals who need it; i.e. the right to acquire it and use it (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010b, pp. 11–12, 173).

### *Language policy for immigrants*

In the last 10 years, immigration to Iceland has increased greatly (see Table 1 and discussion in Part I). The first policy document dealing with the integration of immigrants was published in January 2007. That document states that immigrants should make an effort to undertake a course in Icelandic for foreigners:

It is the policy of the Icelandic government, approved by the entire nation, to protect the Icelandic language. It is the shared property of the Icelandic nation and contains its history, culture, and self-awareness. It is also a tool for social interaction and a key to participation in the nation's life. Powerful support of Icelandic language education for immigrants serves the dual purpose of speeding up their integration into society and strengthening the position of the Icelandic language (Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, 2007, p. 6).

In 2007, the Immigration Council, which has been charged to create a national policy concerning immigrants, published a booklet for immigrants planning to settle in Iceland (translated into nine languages: English, German, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese). The booklet covers the rights and obligations of immigrants entering Icelandic society as well as providing information regarding, among other things, learning Icelandic. Schools currently teaching Icelandic for immigrants are listed, and immigrants are urged to learn Icelandic:

In order to take an active role in your new society it is important to learn Icelandic. Icelandic language skills will make getting important information about your rights and obligations, meeting new people and getting involved easier (The Immigration Council, 2007, p. 35).

The new school acts for pre-schools and for compulsory and upper secondary schools in Iceland provide for the increased assistance to non-Icelandic speaking pupils and students. The legislation accords with the Salamanca Declaration of the United Nations and with established policy in Iceland. Essentially, pupils whose first language is not Icelandic are entitled to subsidized instruction in Icelandic as a second language (Law on Compulsory Schools, 91/2008: Article 16; Law on Upper Secondary Schools 92/2008: Article 35).

Schools are required to have a reception plan for all students, especially for immigrant students, in which there should be a statement on how to move immigrants into the mainstream. Pre-schools policy states that immigrants under the age of 6 should go directly into classes in order to play with other children, according to an adviser in the Ministry (2009). In compulsory schools, provision varies from region to region and from one compulsory school to another. For example, in some schools pupils are taken out of class to be taught Icelandic as a second language, among other things, for one or two lessons a week, while in other schools, students are placed in a reception department for immigrants for their first 2 weeks or longer, until they are ready to enter a mainstream class. Some children of immigrants can spend up to 1 year in a language and reception class (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 32). Immigrants who have lived in Iceland for some years may receive extra support in content-based Icelandic on a weekly basis (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 63). In some schools in Reykjavik, whole classes may be devoted to the service of immigrants. The time allocated to teaching Icelandic to immigrants is not always sufficient, but this depends on the age of the immigrants on arrival. If a child arrives in Iceland at the age of 14–15, for example, the 1 or 2 years of Icelandic at compulsory school is insufficient, especially for speakers of languages that are radically different from Icelandic, such as Thai. The younger the child is on arrival in Iceland, the more Icelandic teaching he/she will receive.

Article 16 of the Law on Compulsory Schools, 91/2008, states that the objective is to encourage immigrant pupils 'to become actively bilingual, enabling them to study at compulsory school and thus become active participants in Icelandic society'. The language of instruction in upper secondary schools is Icelandic, except in courses in foreign languages or 'when the study programme in question is intended for pupils that do not have command of the Icelandic language or must carry out, or have carried out, part of their studies abroad'. No mention is made as to the language to be used in such cases. All students:

who do not have Icelandic as their native language have the right for instruction in Icelandic as second language. The same applies to pupils that have stayed for a long time abroad and have little knowledge of Icelandic. (Law on Compulsory Schools, 91/2008: Article 16)

The three largest immigrant groups in Iceland in 2009 consisted of speakers of Polish, Lithuanian, and English (see Table 2 and discussion in Part I). Other immigrant groups come primarily from the Philippines, Portugal, Thailand, Vietnam, countries of the former Yugoslavia, and from the other Nordic countries. The increase in the number of immigrants is not expected to continue because of the economic difficulties in Iceland and decreasing work opportunities (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 96).

According to an adviser at the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2009), it has been challenging for Iceland to adapt education policies for immigrants deriving from so many different cultures and languages. When the first immigrants came to Icelandic schools, there was no policy specifying how to deal with them. Teachers were ill-prepared to teach Icelandic as a second language because their teacher-training had only taught them to teach Icelandic as a first language, including substantial amounts of instruction in grammar. Furthermore, the adviser claims that the theory of teaching Icelandic as a second language has been evolving and that evaluating the relative rate of success is difficult because research has been limited. The policy papers and legal framework for the education of immigrants were produced after the immigrants had arrived. Thus, although the curriculum for Icelandic as a second language has existed for 10 years in both compulsory and upper secondary schools, the Ministry has not yet developed appropriate teacher education.

Immigrants do not have the right to first language teaching. Even before the financial crisis, when Iceland's economy was strong, the Ministry did not think resources could be made available to provide instruction in the more than 100 languages spoken by the various immigrant groups. In some cases, there may be an optional course in an immigrant language (e.g. Polish) but there is no valid language teaching available for all immigrant first languages. It has been left to these groups to use their languages within the family, to organize the learning of their languages through Saturday schools, and/or to muster Internet-based materials and/or distance learning courses from their countries or elsewhere, as is the practice among immigrant groups in the UK and elsewhere. If Saturday schooling, or other such teaching, requires significant resources, this policy might favour those groups who have the ability to pay. However, the Ministry believes that the first language is important, that it is useful for individuals to be actively bilingual, that immigrants should use their own language, and that their first languages should be acknowledged and accepted as having the right to be used freely. The policy document for the integration of immigrants states that:

[s]tudents in preschools, elementary schools and secondary schools whose native language is not Icelandic shall have the opportunity, as far as possible, to maintain their native language. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, 2007, p. 4)

It is a strange policy, according to education advisers at the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2009), because they admit that the policy simultaneously accepts

the first language but also denies it since the Ministry neither endorses the training of teachers of those languages nor pursues the development of teaching materials appropriate for those languages. Moreover, since the onset of the financial crisis, whatever funding for such activities was available has been reduced as those activities are not perceived to be compulsory. Debate concerning the status of compulsory first language teaching has been going on in many countries, as well as in Iceland.

Some evening schools operated by municipalities offer courses in Icelandic as a second language for adult working immigrants; in addition, some companies and lifelong learning centres also offer courses. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs have provided support for the teaching of Icelandic as a second language to adults since 2006, and it issued a curriculum guide for this teaching in 2008 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2008a).

As many working migrants from different parts of the world know English before their arrival in Iceland, many use English as a means of general communication (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 96). Although many of them would like to learn Icelandic, there are obstacles, according to the new language policy document, for example:

- they are tired after a long working day,
- the courses are too expensive for them,
- the available teachers or teaching materials are not suitable,
- the first languages spoken by some are radically different from Icelandic,
- the practices of language learning and of literacy are likely to differ widely,
- some have little experience of language learning and their literacy skills vary enormously,
- the teachers have to teach basic information about language before undertaking actual language teaching,
- because there is a widespread feeling among Icelanders themselves that Icelandic is a 'little' language with few speakers and that it is a very difficult language for foreigners to learn, many immigrants are not encouraged to learn Icelandic at all (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 96).

Moreover, because English is widely spoken by Icelanders, some migrants believe they can live and work in Iceland without learning Icelandic, communicating entirely in English. This is a mistaken view, according to advisers in the Department of Education, at the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (2009), because Icelandic is the main language of all fields of communication and the most important language by far in Iceland. Without it, the language policy document claims, one cannot participate fully in Icelandic life: 'Icelandic is the key to Icelandic society' (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 97). Furthermore, according to the language policy document, Icelanders need to change their attitude towards their own language, so that foreigners may be more motivated to learn it (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 98).

The goals for an Icelandic language policy for immigrants have been articulated in the new language policy for Icelandic (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 98). First and foremost, the policy states that Icelandic should continue to be the primary language of the multinational society in Iceland. In order to achieve this goal, the following principles are recommended:

- Teachers should acquire theoretical-based knowledge of the acquisition processes and teaching of Icelandic as a second language, of the characteristics of Icelandic as a

second language, and of the ways it varies, depending on the first languages of the speakers;

- Teaching should be carefully prepared and adjusted for different groups of migrants with different backgrounds, different first languages, and different levels of education;
- Materials prepared for second-language instruction should ensure that such materials are suitable for all groups, including the possibility that individuals will have widely differing levels of literacy;
- Tuition should preferably be free of charge; alternatively, it should be affordable;
- Instruction must be easily accessible, arranged preferably during working hours;
- All immigrants should be encouraged to learn Icelandic;
- The attitudes of Icelanders towards the accented Icelandic spoken by foreigners should be positive (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 98).

#### *Rights and requirements of foreign language speakers*

On 1 January 2009, Iceland introduced a compulsory test in Icelandic as a prerequisite for attaining Icelandic citizenship (Law on Icelandic citizenship no. 100/1952, Amendments in Law no. 81/2007 and in Law no. 26/2009). The law states: ‘The applicant shall have passed a test in Icelandic in accordance with standards set by the Minister of Justice in a regulation’. That regulation (Regulation no. 1129/2008) also contains instructions on exemptions from this stipulation for the following groups: people who are 65 years of age or older and who have had lawful domicile in Iceland for at least 7 years; children under 6 years of age and children in compulsory schools; and people who are unable to take a language test because of some serious physical or mental limitation. Iceland is not alone in introducing language tests; a core requirement for citizenship in many EU states depends on demonstrated command of the national language; for example, Germany and the Netherlands have introduced language tests designed to assess proficiency as a requirement for citizenship. This subject has been much debated by scholars (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero, & Stevenson, 2009).

On the other hand, there is no compulsory examination in Icelandic that has to be taken as a prerequisite for attaining permanent residency (i.e. without becoming a citizen of Iceland). However, ‘the conditions for granting permanent residence permits shall include the following: The foreign national has attended a course in Icelandic for foreigners’ (Law on Foreigners no. 96/2002, Article 15). The Minister of Justice has issued a regulation with more detailed instructions, stating that the applicant has to have attended an Icelandic language course for at least a total of 150 h, unless she/he can otherwise demonstrate corresponding skills in the Icelandic language (Regulation no. 53/2003, Article 50).

The Law on Foreigners also addresses language issues in another context; i.e. ‘in cases concerning applications for asylum or for protection against persecution and denial of entry or expulsion, the administrative authority shall, to the extent possible, ensure that the foreigner is granted an opportunity to express his views in a language in which s/he is adequately capable of expression’ is stipulated in Article 24.

## **Part IV**

### ***Language policy and planning***

#### *Traditional Icelandic language policy: an overview of some relevant factors*

In the historical account provided in Part II, a number of factors emerged regarding Icelandic language culture and language policy which underlie current official and explicit

Icelandic language planning and which are reflected in public language policy discourse and ideologies. To recapitulate:

- There have been only minor changes in the structure and the basic vocabulary of Icelandic in its 1100 year history;
- ancient texts are still accessible to common speakers of the language, and this fact is used as a major argument against language change;
- Iceland's literary tradition, written and/or oral, has been nurtured and reproduced by all sections of the population;
- since the earliest written records – drawn from the early twelfth century – there has been a reluctance to borrow foreign lexical items and at the same time a preference for coining neologisms from native elements;
- in addition to using independent arguments in favour of the preservation of the language, neologisms have also been advocated since at least the eighteenth century with respect to the usefulness of their relative semantic transparency for the common speaker;
- Iceland was under foreign rule from the thirteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century, and the Icelandic language, as a cultural artefact, played a major role in the wakening of strong nationalist sentiment as elements in the political struggle for independence during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries;
- the underlying purist tendencies then became the most prominent part of Icelandic language policy, of which Danish borrowings were the main target;
- purist ideologies in Iceland can be traced back to the sixteenth century, when Icelandic scholars promoted pure language use on the basis of the fact that Icelandic used to be the common language of the whole Nordic region;
- these views are also echoed in the writings of Enlightenment scholars in the eighteenth century as well as in the nationalist and political discourse during Iceland's struggle for independence from Denmark. Similar argumentation continues to prevail in modern Icelandic language policy discourse;
- Since shortly after the initial settlement of Iceland around 900 CE, the country has been exceptionally homogeneous in a linguistic sense; i.e. Icelandic has been virtually free of dialects, apart from some rather minor and decreasing pronunciation differences, and native speakers of other languages have been few in number and have lived mostly as scattered units in marginal and mobile speech communities.

In short, Icelandic language policy has been characterized from the beginning by two central elements: on the one hand, the perceived need for continued *preservation* of the language, its form and its central vocabulary, and on the other hand, the perceived need for the *cultivation* and development of the language, largely through the coining of new words, preferably from native elements, in order to adapt the language to new demands as conditions change (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2001, p. 7).

This core ideology has never been seriously threatened or contested in Icelandic cultural debates. Current language legislation and general practices in Iceland in essence reflect the traditional spirit of the Icelandic language policy as briefly outlined. This claim holds for the recent language policy document drafted by the Icelandic Language Council and ratified by parliament and government in 2009 as official Icelandic policy. However, the pressures now placed on Icelandic society, among other things because of the current financial crisis, may impact upon the implementation of these language policies.

*On current language legislation in Iceland*

While, in modern times, English is a necessity for all Icelanders working in international areas of legislation, jurisprudence, commerce, etc., there are various pieces of Icelandic legislation which have been put into effect in order to prioritize the use of the national language, i.e. by specifying the use of Icelandic in particular domains of Icelandic society. As previously noted, however, neither the Icelandic constitution nor any specific language legislation explicitly declares Icelandic as the only official language of Iceland. This might change in the near future since, in 2010, a committee appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture urged parliamentarians to pass separate language legislation containing provisions on Icelandic as the language of state and municipal administration among other things.

*Judiciary institutions.* For judiciary institutions, the most relevant provisions are found in the Icelandic Law on procedure in criminal cases, no. 88/2008, Article 12. The law stipulates: ‘the language of a [judicial] court is Icelandic’. The same article also directs that, should a person giving testimony before a court lack adequate proficiency in Icelandic, the prosecutor must employ a certified court interpreter. In addition, court documents in foreign languages shall be accompanied by an Icelandic translation. In effect, these provisions imply that judges in Icelandic courts need to understand and speak Icelandic (Vilhjálms­son, 2001, p. 647).

In recent years, there has been a huge increase in criminal cases before Icelandic courts; e.g. cases involving narcotics, prostitution, and most recently a large number of financial issues, in which speakers of foreign languages have been involved. Consequently, certified court interpreters and translators specializing in translations into Icelandic have been busy of late, and there have been reports of some instances of procedural delays resulting from the lack of certified interpreters and translators into Icelandic.

Icelandic Law on Execution of Sentences, no. 49/2005, states that, should prison management decide to read letters received by or sent from a prisoner, or audit a prisoner’s telephone calls, a condition may be imposed that the correspondence or conversation must take place in a language understood by a prison warder or, alternatively, that an authorized translator be entrusted with translating/interpreting the letters or conversations. According to the Regulation on Education of Prison Warders, no. 347/2007, one of the conditions for admission into the State Prison Warders’ School is that applicants should have a good command of Icelandic, English, and one of the Scandinavian languages. The same conditions are required of prospective police officers, according to Law on Police, no. 90/1996. This could imply that, in order to save time and translators’ fees, the prison management might be tempted to require non-native Icelandic-speaking prisoners in such situations to write or speak in their L2 Icelandic, or to write or speak in English or in a Scandinavian language, even if these are not their (or their interlocutors’) first languages. Such a practice might be widely criticized as violating a variety of laws and practices intended to guarantee democratic practices.

*Radio, television, and public cultural institutions.* Icelandic has official status as the main medium of communication in public service contracts with radio and TV broadcasters in Iceland. According to Law on Radio and Television, no. 53/2000, radio and television stations must ‘enhance the Icelandic language’, and Law on The State Broadcasting Service (*Ríkisútvarpið*), no. 6/2007, stipulates that *Ríkisútvarpið* shall ‘support the Icelandic language’ (see the ensuing section on the media).

The National Theatre (*Þjóðleikhúsið*) is a public Icelandic cultural institute operating under special legislation. Exemplary use of the Icelandic language is among its obligations, according to the Law on Drama, no. 138/1998.

Law on Public Libraries, no. 36/1997, in Article 1 states that the objective of public libraries 'shall be to promote the Icelandic language, encourage lifelong education and promote interest in reading'.

The roles of the Icelandic Language Council and The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic studies are described in law no. 40/2006 (see the previous section on these language-planning agencies).

The Communication Centre for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing operates in accordance with law no. 129/1990 (see the previous section on ISL).

*Names.* In most Icelandic families, the ancient tradition of patronymics is still in use; i.e. a person uses her/his father's name (usually) or mother's name (increasingly in recent years) in the genitive form followed by the morpheme *-son* ('son') or *dóttir* ('daughter') in lieu of family names. For example, one of the authors of the present monograph was named *Ari Páll*; as his father's first name is *Kristinn*, *Kristinsson* is *Ari Páll's* last name. The children of *Ari Páll*, in turn, have *Aradóttir* and *Arason* as their last names. An Icelandic law on personal names was first passed in 1913 to permit family names in the modern European sense. In 1925, however, the law was amended, to prohibit adoption of new family names. However, a number of European-style family names are in use among Icelandic families, especially in families of mixed Icelandic/foreign origin. The current 'Law on Personal Names', no. 45/1996, introduced a name category not provided for in older Icelandic name legislation; the so-called middle name. In order to encourage people who bear family names to drop these in favour of a patronymic, the middle-name category was invented so that people could change the status of their family name from being the last name to being the middle name. For example, instead of the name *Jón* (first name) *Gröndal* (family name as last name), this person would be called *Jón* (first name) *Gröndal* (earlier family name now used as middle-name) *Gunnarsson* (patronymic as last name). Middle names can be given in addition to a first name, but no traditional first names can be used as middle names (Bernharðsson, 2008). The Icelandic Personal Names Committee, operating under the Personal Names Law, compiles a register of permissible first names and middle names and of rules concerning applications for new personal names, to be added to the personal names register (Law on Personal Names, Article 22).

The Icelandic Place Name Committee, established in 1935, is the national place-name authority; its duties were defined in the 'Law on Names of Settlements', no. 35/1953, revised in 1998. The Department of Name Studies at the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies constitutes the secretariat of the Place Name Committee. The Place Name Committee has supervisory responsibility with respect to deciding on names for new settlements and on the way in which they are written. The law stipulates that established names may not be changed unless there are strong grounds to justify the change (Law on Names of Settlements, Article 5). New names must be compatible with Icelandic place naming traditions (Law on Names of Settlements, Article 5). The Place Name Committee has repeatedly stressed the importance of preserving place names as part of Icelandic cultural heritage. On occasion, the Committee has referred to the guidelines of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in support of its rulings (Kristinsson, 2008, p. 180). The Place Name Committee also rules in disputes about names on maps produced by the national mapping authority (Kristinsson, 2008). In addition, the Committee advises on the validity of suggestions for new municipal names. In Article 4, the Icelandic 'Law on



Municipalities', no. 45/1998, stipulates: 'a municipal name must be compatible with the structure of Icelandic and traditional language use'.

Icelandic 'Law on Store Registers, Firms, and Authority to Sign for a Company', no. 42/1903, Article 8, stipulates that Icelandic companies must bear names compatible with Icelandic language structure. In the event of a dispute, the Icelandic Place Name Committee may be asked for its opinion on the matter ('Law on Store Registers, Firms, and Authority to Sign for a Company', no. 42/1903, Article 8).

*Consumers and related issues.* The Icelandic parliament and government have taken some measures to enhance the status of Icelandic in advertisements and in instructions for consumers. It is not clear that those regulations are rooted solely in the best interests of consumers; a national and cultural element may underlie this legislation. The relevant provisions on the use of Icelandic may be found in Icelandic 'Law on Supervision of Trade Practices and Marketing', no. 57/2005, Articles 6 and 16. The law stipulates: 'advertisements meant to appeal to Icelandic consumers . . . [and] general terms of service providers offering consumers their services in Iceland . . . [and] written liability declarations . . . shall [all] be in Icelandic'. However, language specifications are not limited to Icelandic: 'user instructions shall be in Icelandic or in another Nordic language (not Finnish), or in English'. Evidently, despite the overt policy of using Icelandic when addressing Icelandic-speaking consumers, this provision implies the covert policy that Scandinavian and English are also legitimate communication codes in Icelandic society.

According to Law on Insurance Contracts, no. 30/2004:

. . . terms of coverage offered for an insurance risk in Iceland, shall be in Icelandic or another language to which the policyholder agrees and which enables him to understand the provisions of the terms of coverage of importance for their contents, the protection provided, and the terms offered, before the contract is concluded. (Art. 5)

Similar to the example of user instructions previously mentioned, Icelandic is not mandated as the sole language of Icelandic insurance agreements since the terms might also be specified in 'another language to which the policyholder agrees'.

Regulation no. 310/1997, of the 'Law on Trademarks', no. 45/1997, stipulates that an application submitted to the Icelandic Patent Office to register a trademark must be in Icelandic. The Patent Office may also demand a certified Icelandic translation of documents accompanying the application, should such documents be written in a language other than Icelandic.

Icelandic Law no. 116/1993, on health-care personnel, containing modifications of a previous law on the practices of dentists, medical doctors, midwives, and nurses, contains some provisions on the use of Icelandic; i.e. should dentists, doctors, midwives, or nurses originating from countries outside the EEA and Switzerland wish to practice in Iceland, they must expect to be asked to prove their proficiency in spoken and written Icelandic.

The 'Law on Social Work', no. 95/1990, stipulates that all applicants for certification as social workers in Iceland must expect to be asked to prove their proficiency in spoken and written Icelandic. This provision, contrary to the one on health-care personnel, is not directed only at individuals from outside the EEA and Switzerland.

In addition, the 'Law on Veterinary Surgeons and Animal Health Care', no. 66/1998, stipulates that all veterinary surgeons in Iceland shall 'master the Icelandic language' if they work in the public service. No course in veterinary medicine is currently offered at any university in Iceland. Therefore, it is possible that even native speakers of Icelandic may not be versed in the Icelandic vocabulary in this domain. Despite this restriction, it

is likely that qualified veterinarians would be refused permission to work in Iceland if, for example, they speak only English, but not Icelandic.

Icelandic Law on Patients' Rights, no. 74/1997, stipulates that a patient has the right to be informed about her/his health and any proposed treatment; should the patient not speak Icelandic, or be a Sign Language user, she/he has a right to interpretation (Article 5). Thus, in principle, patients have the right to call in interpreters. In practice, however, Icelandic health-care personnel use English in communication with foreign patients whenever possible.

*Schools.* Icelandic enjoys legal protection as the language of instruction in Icelandic primary schools (i.e. compulsory schools, serving children from 6 to 16 years of age) and in upper secondary schools (see the discussion in the section on education in Part III).

*Foreigners and citizenship.* As mentioned in a previous chapter, in 2009, Iceland introduced tests in the Icelandic language as one of the requirements of foreigners who apply for Icelandic citizenship; Iceland also requires that foreign nationals applying for permanent residency in Iceland attend a course of a minimum of 150 h in Icelandic for foreigners (unless they can verify that they have passed an examination in Icelandic for foreigners).

*Exceptions.* Despite the legal provisions prioritizing Icelandic listed in the sections above, it is evident that the parallel use of Icelandic and English is necessary in a number of domains, particularly in international contexts. This fact is acknowledged in some pieces of Icelandic legislation.

For example, the Icelandic 'Law on Aviation', no. 60/1998, Article 140, stipulates that decisions of the Icelandic Civil Aviation Administration shall be published in the Aeronautical Information Publication, printed 'in Icelandic or in English, depending on which is more appropriate' (Law on Aviation). According to the 'Regulation on Aeronautical Information Publication by the Icelandic Civil Aviation Administration', no. 326/2000, technical standards, information on international flights, and approach maps shall be published only in English.

Other examples of the use of other languages in tandem with Icelandic include the Icelandic 'Law on Standards and Icelandic Standards' (the national standards body of Iceland), no. 36/2003, which permits the publication of an Icelandic standard 'in a language other than Icelandic, given that it does not impede its normal use'. This provision is evidently not limited to English since the specification is 'a language other than Icelandic'. In a parliamentary report accompanying the proposal for this legislation, it was noted that the provision was intended to apply to such content as complex aviation rules, reflecting similar practice in other Nordic countries (Vilhjálmsson, 2001, p. 657).

Agreements between Iceland and other nations are published in the C-series of the *Icelandic Official Gazette*, while Icelandic laws are published in the A-series, and Icelandic regulations in the B-series. The 'Law on Official Gazette and Legal Notice Journal', no. 15/2005, stipulates that such international agreements are authorized to be published only in the original language in the C-series of the Official Gazette, if the agreement in question concerns only a limited number of people. Such originals in other languages will generally be published in English. Iceland and the Nordic countries have sometimes signed mutual agreements in a Scandinavian language, but English is the default language of international agreements, even between close neighbours such as Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

The 'Law on Trademarks', no. 45/1997, stipulates that, should an Icelandic citizen wish to apply for the international registration of a trademark at the World Intellectual Property

Organisation, the application submitted to the Icelandic Patent Office must be written in English (Law on Trademarks, Article 49). Applications for patents in Iceland, submitted to the Icelandic Patent Office, may be in Icelandic, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, or English, but some of the documents (e.g. the patent claims, the abstract, and the text on drawings) must be translated into Icelandic before they can be made public in Iceland (Regulation no. 679/1996).

These are yet other examples of the implicit language policy that languages other than Icelandic (primarily English and to some extent the Scandinavian languages) can be valid languages for Icelandic residents to use in their dealings with the Icelandic authorities in particular spheres of society. Additionally, as noted in previous sections of this monograph (e.g. regarding the Law on Supervision of Trade Practices and Marketing and the Law on Insurance Contracts), the use of languages other than Icelandic in their respective domains in Iceland is also authorized.

### *Language of the media in Iceland*

*Written media.* The primary language of journalism in Iceland is Icelandic. Newspapers have been published in Icelandic in Iceland since 1848. There are currently two national daily newspapers.

- *Morgunblaðið* ('The morning-paper'), founded in 1913, is a daily national conservative newspaper, traditionally right wing.
- *Fréttablaðið* ('The news-paper'), founded in 2001, is a daily newspaper, distributed free of charge across the country; it is free of any clear political leanings.

In addition, *Dagblaðið Vísir*, a weekend tabloid paper, is also available.

For years, *Morgunblaðið* was the leading paper with a circulation of 50,000–55,000, mostly in southwest Iceland. In 2009, there were indications of a sharp decrease in its subscriptions. *Fréttablaðið*, claiming to print 100,000 copies, has emerged as the paper with the largest circulation and readership in Iceland. According to a Gallup poll published in January 2010, readers of *Fréttablaðið* make up 73.8% of the general reading population, while readers of *Morgunblaðið* make up 23.7% of persons 18–49 years of age resident in the Reykjavik capital area. In January 2010, around 6% of Icelandic newspaper readers claimed to read only *Morgunblaðið*, while most subscribers to *Morgunblaðið* now read *Fréttablaðið* as well. *Dagblaðið Vísir* was founded in 1981 following the merger of two independent newspapers – *Dagblaðið* (founded 1975) and *Vísir* (founded 1910). After a period of financial difficulties, *Dagblaðið Vísir* is presently published only on weekends. There are many other local papers and magazines, collectively constituting a large number, considering the size of the population.

The only English-language paper in Iceland is *The Reykjavik Grapevine*, founded in 2003, publishing about 18 issues per year. It promotes itself as an 'essential guide to life, travel and entertainment in Iceland' (*The Reykjavik Grapevine*, 2010); it is targeted at foreigners in Iceland, as well as at the younger generation, including the population of international students at Icelandic universities. However, it is also quite popular among young native Icelandic readers, indicating perhaps that a growing number of Icelanders learn about current affairs in English and not in Icelandic. In addition to this English-language paper, there are other publications in English. One such is *Iceland Review*, a quarterly magazine printing news and features about Iceland. Its market consists primarily of subscribers from over a hundred countries around the world (*Iceland Review Online*, 2008).

*IceNews*, also in English, is another independent online publication dealing with news from Scandinavia and Northern Europe.

*Broadcasting.* Icelandic Law on Radio and Television, no. 53/2000, Article 7, stipulates: 'radio and television stations must support cultural development in general, and enhance the Icelandic language'. However, in special cases, the operation of radio and television stations transmitting in languages other than Icelandic is permitted. For example, a radio station, especially for immigrants, was inaugurated in November 2006 in the municipality of Hafnarfjörður in South West Iceland (Hafnarfjörður Municipality, 2010).

Article 7 of the Law on Radio and Television also stipulates that television stations are urged to do what they can to assure that the majority of transmission time contains 'Icelandic programmes and other European programmes' (Law on Radio and Television, 2000) reflecting the fact that Icelandic media legislation must be compatible with other European nations, as Iceland is part of both the EEA and the COE. The provision is intended to balance the significant amount of US films and television programmes available on the market.

The oldest single media company in Iceland is the State Broadcasting Service (*Ríkisútvarpið*, RÚV), founded in 1930 and owned by the state. The State Broadcasting Service operates according to its charter as stipulated in the Law on The State Broadcasting Service (Law on The State Broadcasting Service, no. 6/2007, Art. 3) 'to support the Icelandic language, Icelandic history and Iceland's cultural heritage'.

*Radio.* In 2008, there were 21 radio stations in Iceland; 15 of them were privately owned (commercial) stations (Statistics Iceland, 2010).

The Icelandic State Broadcasting Service (*Ríkisútvarpið*) started radio transmission in 1930. Since 1983, it has operated two nationwide stations, *Rás 1* and *Rás 2* (Channel 1 and Channel 2), both having the responsibility to nurture the Icelandic language. In addition to *Rás 1* and *Rás 2*, the state broadcasting service operates one small classical music station called *Rondo*, intended for the enjoyment of a limited listener group. In addition, the State Broadcasting Service operates three small local stations located in the West, North, and East of Iceland in the towns of Ísafjörður, Akureyri, and Egilsstaðir, respectively. The stations normally broadcast for 2 h on weekdays but at the time of writing (April 2010), the State Broadcasting Service is planning to merge the three stations and reduce their total broadcasting time by more than 50%. *Rás 1* is the most traditional station, broadcasting essentially spoken language programmes, including literary works and plays – the only station of its type in Iceland. Its audience consists largely of older people, on average 61 years old, according to the Head of Channel 1 and Channel 2, Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, in an interview in 2009. She also reported that listeners to this station are growing older; they are, according to Stefánsdóttir, more likely to speak 'correct Icelandic' than do younger people, who are less likely to tune to this station. Some older people telephone the station if they are upset by the standard of Icelandic broadcast, indicating that this group considers the radio to be an institution through which standards are set and preserved.

On 3 days a week, *Rás 1* broadcasts regular programmes about the Icelandic language. The station also broadcasts discussions of aspects of Icelandic such as words that have fallen out of use; listeners can call in to explain the meanings of such words. In addition, there are discussions about good usage. The programming includes a popular quiz programme on Saturday afternoons, where the participants answer questions about the meaning of uncommon words, find out who is the author of a particular text or a poem, fill in a missing line in a popular song, etc. Thus, radio is used as an instrument to revitalize valuable obsolete words

and enhance the interest for Icelandic literature and lyrics. On *Rás 1*, scripts such as those containing the news are always proofread before they are read on the air. The proofreader's employment has recently been expanded from a part-time to a full-time position, despite a 20% reduction in the public service broadcasters' budget effective on 1 January 2009.

*Rás 2* is a music and current affairs station. The programming is less formal than that of *Rás 1*, and the average listener is 51 years old. Neither of these stations regularly broadcasts programmes in other languages. Hilmarsson-Dunn's surveys of students at an upper secondary school revealed that not one student reported listening to *Rás 1* and very few listened to *Rás 2* (see also Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2010, pp. 12–16). At one time, news in English was broadcast in the summer for tourists, but this practice was discontinued when people began to read the news on the Internet. During the financial crisis in 2008, the news department hired a native speaker of Polish to translate the news, so that the large community of Polish-speaking migrant workers could keep abreast of events.

*Bylgjan*, the first privately owned radio station in Iceland – founded in 1986 and still operating – is a competitor of *Rás 2*. The station appeals to a younger audience (i.e. those on average 30 years of age); it has the largest number of listeners in Iceland.

*Ríkisútvarpið's* two primary stations, *Rás 1* and *Rás 2*, and *Bylgjan* are the only stations capable of reaching all of Iceland.

A privately owned station in Reykjavik is *Útvarp Saga*, designed to appeal to middle-aged persons and senior citizens. It offers spoken language programming as well as phone-in talk programming on which individuals may air their concerns and opinions on current matters of debate.

A radio station, especially for immigrants in Iceland, began operation in November 2006 (Hafnarfjörður Municipality, 2010). When it was launched, the plan was to air 30 min programmes four times a week in 13 languages with English, Polish, Russian, and Thai being the primary languages. The objective of the station was said to be to increase the flow of information to immigrants in Hafnarfjörður and to assist them in their transition into Icelandic society (Hafnarfjörður Municipality, 2010). This station, however, is no longer in operation due to the absence of funding. Funding was originally allocated by the municipality of Hafnarfjörður, but the municipality was unable to sustain support for the station after the financial crisis in 2008, and neighbour municipalities refused to lend their support. However, the organizers hope to resume radio transmission for immigrants at some time in the future, possibly in cooperation with *Ríkisútvarpið* (Amal Tamimi, in an interview, 2010).

In 2010, The Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture proposed a new law for the media in Iceland, permitting broadcasting in languages other than Icelandic:

Media providers shall support as appropriate general cultural development and strengthen the Icelandic language. However, it is allowed to operate media in Iceland in languages other than Icelandic (Proposed Bill on Media, 2010).

In fact, BBC World Service radio broadcasts (with no Icelandic interpretation or speaker comments) have been transmitted in the Reykjavik area via an Icelandic terrestrial radio station transmitter for several years under current legislation without interference from the government. Thus, despite the overt policy still in effect that Icelandic is the language of the media domain in Iceland, covert policy has evidently permitted the use of English as a valid language in the media in Iceland. The new media bill apparently acknowledges this reality.

The stations that particularly appeal to young listeners are the dozen or so commercial stations broadcasting popular music. These stations in general are very informal in

character, and although Icelandic is the language used by the announcers, the language of the pop lyrics is most often English. Student comments in Hilmarsson-Dunn's 2005 survey showed that the students had learned a lot of English through pop lyrics, as well as through other media and computer games. Furthermore, music with English lyrics was generally more popular than music with Icelandic lyrics.

*Television.* Icelandic state television, as a division of *Ríkisútvarpið*, the State Broadcasting Service, began broadcasting in 1966. The US military had operated a TV station, in English, since 1955 from the NATO base in Keflavik. Icelandic policy-makers, concerned about the influence of English and North American culture on Icelandic youth, restricted these transmissions in 1960 after the power of the Keflavik TV transmitter had been significantly increased, thus reaching a far greater sector of the Icelandic public (Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2010, p. 12). The US military TV transmissions provoked strong reactions from the Icelandic cultural elite. The presence of the US broadcaster encouraged the government to open an Icelandic television channel. Initially, it broadcasted only 2 days a week, but subsequently, the broadcast time has gradually increased.

At present, the broadcasting act stipulates that the public service broadcaster (RÚV) has a responsibility to promote Icelandic language, history, and cultural heritage (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture in Iceland, 2002, p. 20). RÚV's only TV channel, *Sjónvarpið*, broadcasts news, cultural affairs programmes, sports, and general entertainment throughout Iceland. Many of these programmes are Icelandic, but a large number of foreign films and other programmes are also broadcast, many of which are in English.

Icelandic film distributors, and television channels, generally show films with Icelandic subtitles. The use of subtitles rather than dubbing is a common practice in all the Nordic countries, including Iceland, and subtitles are normally used in programmes for teenagers and adults. On the other hand, programmes aimed at young children under reading age are normally dubbed on *Sjónvarpið*.

The number of television and radio stations in Iceland rose markedly during the 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium due primarily to the availability of new technologies. A large number of international satellite channels can currently be received in Iceland; many carrying programming without Icelandic subtitles, but many new Icelandic private television and radio channels have been initiated. These TV channels, where the majority of programmes are in English, not Icelandic, are now in competition with RÚV.

In 2010, some 15 terrestrial television stations were in operation in Iceland in contrast to the situation up until 1986 when *Sjónvarpið* had been the only television channel. The state monopoly was then lifted and *Stöð 2* (Channel 2) was founded.

Primarily, *Stöð 2* imports programmes from the USA, Australia, and the UK. As of Autumn 2007, *Stöð 2* was managing to dub between 60% and 70% of children's programmes (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 73), while the remainder carried subtitles.

In the middle of January 1991, when people throughout the world were following the events in the Persian Gulf, *Stöð 2* launched direct news transmission through its Icelandic channel, taken from the CNN television network (in the USA) without Icelandic subtitles or speaker comments (Kristinsson, 1992, p. 20). This practice constituted a violation of Icelandic media regulations at that time. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture reacted by making concessions and changing the regulations on 17 January 1991, legalizing such direct international news transmissions (Kristinsson, 1992). Soon after that, the State Broadcasting Service also launched direct news transmissions from British Sky television – initiating a relationship that lasted until the middle of February 1991. An emotional

newspaper controversy followed this regulatory change. In the summer of 1991, a governmental surveillance body (*Útvarpsréttarnefnd*) ruled that the Icelandic television stations were obliged to delete all foreign commercials in the programmes they were transmitting directly and provide comments on the news material in Icelandic instead (Kristinsson, 1992, p. 21). Except for a few days in August 1991, during a series of dramatic events in the Soviet Union, transmissions from CNN and British Sky were terminated (Kristinsson, 1992).

Another private television station, *SkjárEinn*, was established in 1999. It broadcasts mainly US sitcoms, reality shows, and some Icelandic productions. *SkjárEinn* has become very popular in recent years; the management claims to have received the highest rating from among all television channels when people were asked which media they preferred when they wished to relax (Skjárinn, 2010).

The proportion of Icelandic versus other programmes broadcast on the three largest Icelandic television channels in 2008 is shown in Table 4.

A survey of these three channels in 2007 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 73) not only showed that the two privately owned channels offered relatively less Icelandic material as a percentage of total broadcasting time than *Sjónvarpið* (Table 4), but also showed that *SkjárEinn* rebroadcast its (few) Icelandic programmes much more often than did the other two channels.

Many young people prefer English-language commercial channels than the public service channel. A survey was carried out in 2010 by the Institute for Social Science of the University of Iceland (Dofradóttir, Arnalds, Sturludóttir, & Jónsson, 2010, pp. 38–42) to ascertain consumers' use of the media in Iceland. The survey investigated preferences of television channels for five age groups: 18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, and 60+. In addition, the survey investigated whether responses were differentiated by gender, by rural/urban distribution, by educational attainment, or by employment. The survey showed that 45% of the total number of participants (676) watched *Sjónvarpið* more than other channels. However, when differences in age were taken into account, the results showed that the older the participants were, the more likely they were to watch *Sjónvarpið*. Of the oldest group (i.e. 60+), 74% watch *Sjónvarpið* more than both the other channels, but less than 25% of the youngest group (18–29) watched *Sjónvarpið* more than both the other channels. Moreover, the survey showed that 17% of the total number of respondents preferred to watch material in languages other than Icelandic; this figure rose to 43% among the youngest group (18–29), as Table 5 shows.

These survey data reinforce two small-scale surveys involving 86 and 58 students, respectively (aged 16–20) in an upper secondary school in Selfoss, carried out by Hilmarsson-Dunn in 2005 and 2009. Those surveys showed that, of the three main channels, these students' favourite TV channels were equally first: *SkjárEinn* and *Stöð 2*, but *Sjónvarpið* was far below their favourite channels (Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2010, p. 15). As suggested by

Table 4. The percentages of Icelandic and other programmes on three main Icelandic television channels in 2008.

	<i>Sjónvarpið</i> (RÚV) (public service)	<i>Stöð 2</i> (private)	<i>SkjárEinn</i> (private)
Non-Icelandic programmes:	54%	83%	88%
Icelandic programmes:	46%	17%	12%

Source: Statistics Iceland (2010).

Table 5. Television viewing preferences of the state TV channel versus other channels by age group.

	Watching the state television <i>Sjónvarpið</i>		Prefer Icelandic programmes less than other language programmes
	Watch <i>Sjónvarpið</i> more than the other channels	Watch <i>Sjónvarpið</i> less than the other channels	
Average	45.3%	31.9%	17.2%
Age: 18–29	21.8%	56.4%	43.4%
Age: 30–39	31.3%	38.4%	20.9%
Age: 40–49	41.7%	34.7%	7.1%
Age: 50–59	53.1%	21.7%	6.8%
Age: 60+	74.1%	11.2%	9.4%

these data, it appears that younger Icelanders are hearing more English. In contrast to younger people, 80% of the teachers surveyed by Hilmarsson-Dunn preferred *Sjónvarpið*, the public service channel (a finding confirmed by the official figures in the Institute for Social Science survey) (Dofradóttir et al., 2010, pp. 38–42).

Additional terrestrial television channels include six sports channels – *Stöð 2 Sport*, *Stöð 2 Sport 2*, *3*, *4*, *5*, and *6* – broadcasting both domestic and foreign sports programmes. Channel *Stöð 2 Extra*<sup>15</sup> largely re-broadcasts material originally shown on *Stöð 2*, consisting primarily of the USA and British programmes with Icelandic subtitles. *Stöð 2 Bíó* broadcasts only films. A channel called *INN* broadcasts Icelandic talk programmes, interviews, and debates. Television channel *Omega* broadcasts Christian programmes and interviews, partly produced in Icelandic and partly in English with Icelandic subtitles. There is also a channel broadcasting from *Alþingi*, the Icelandic Parliament, when the body is meeting. *Nova TV* broadcasts music videos around the clock, primarily with musicians singing in other languages. In the municipality of Akureyri in Northern Iceland, a privately operated television channel, *N4*, broadcasts short news and talk programmes at 6.15 p.m. Monday–Friday, re-broadcast on Saturdays and Sundays.

Apart from the terrestrial channels, about 60 other commercial channels – *CNN*, *SKY News*, *Al Jazeera*, *Fox News*, *Bloomberg*, *BBC Entertainment*, *Eurosport*, *Animal Planet*, *Cartoon Network*, etc. – using new communication technologies, broadcast largely English language programmes via satellite. These channels do not provide Icelandic subtitles. In addition, two Danish, two Norwegian, and two Swedish channels are available via satellite for Icelanders who understand those Scandinavian languages. A smaller number of individuals can also enjoy programmes in French, German, Italian, or Spanish. Those channels and many more can be accessed in packages available through Icelandic television distribution companies. In 2008, there were approximately 28,000 subscribers in Iceland, i.e. about 9% of the population, who bought such retransmitted television programmes (Statistics Iceland, 2010).

The Icelandic Language Council and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture consider it essential to support production of Icelandic programmes to counter the influence of Anglo-American programmes (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 79). For example, in 2005, 44% of programmes available in prime time in RÚV were in Icelandic. The Government entered into an agreement with RÚV in 2007 to the effect that the amount of Icelandic programmes shown in prime time should be increased to 65% by 2012 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 72, cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2010, p. 15). However, it costs more to produce programmes in Icelandic than to buy cheaper English programmes, making this goal difficult to attain. Furthermore, such an



undertaking is unlikely to have any effect on the viewing habits of those young Icelanders who currently watch the commercial channels.

RÚV's television channel has played an important role on behalf of the young and rising Icelandic film industry because it has been able to buy the film industry's products over the years. However, the financial crisis has also put pressure on the channel, temporarily at least, to reduce expenditure on Icelandic films. It is much cheaper to buy foreign films, especially those in English. The decision to reduce the number of Icelandic films bought provoked a strong reaction, and a heated media debate ensued in January 2010, in which spokespersons from the Icelandic film industry used the 'collective responsibility for the Icelandic language' as one of their arguments for greater purchases of Icelandic films. Simultaneously, approximately 50 jobs were discontinued at *Ríkisútvarpið* in January 2010, resulting in decreasing domestic radio and television productions, e.g. downsizing of popular daily television debate and the news-related programme *Kastljós* ('Spotlight').

Iceland has implemented the European 'Television Without Frontiers directive', requiring that television channels reserve more than half of their broadcast time for European material. According to Elfa Ýr Gyldadóttir, Head of the Media Division at the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture (email correspondence, 2009), RÚV is probably the only TV channel in Iceland that approaches the European objective. Actually, in practice, *European* implies *English* in Icelandic television. In addition to the European requirement, another 5% of broadcasting time must be devoted to broadcasting in the other Nordic languages, as stipulated by such various Nordic agreements as the Nordic Film and Television Fund and Northvision, whereby the Nordic countries exchange programmes. Hilmarsson-Dunn's survey 2009, however, showed that the subjects in the student sample hardly ever watched programmes in Nordic languages or in European languages other than English. A committee appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Culture delivered a report on the Icelandic media in 2005, in which they commented on the large amount of English speaking programming on Icelandic television compared with programming from other parts of the world:

Since Icelandic television broadcasts started [in 1966], US programmes have always been the most salient foreign material in Icelandic television, and sometimes it has made up the largest part of all television material, including Icelandic programmes. Material from the UK comes second after that from the USA: almost 9 h out of 10 h of foreign programmes are USA and British in origin. Material from other parts of the world, including the Nordic region, is a vanishingly small part of the programmes of all Icelandic television stations. (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2005, p. 55)

*Journalists.* Very few journalists in Iceland speak a first language other than Icelandic, despite the fact that the number of migrants coming into Iceland has increased greatly in recent years – in 2009 over 24,000 people were citizens of other countries. No part of any Icelandic daily newspaper is regularly written in any language other than Icelandic, although sometimes advertisements may appear in English, Polish, or other languages (e.g. a notification on general elections in Poland). However, as mentioned previously, an English-language paper, *The Reykjavik Grapevine*, publishes about 18 issues per year. No part of it is written in languages other than English. Even if Poles are the largest single group of immigrants in Iceland, no papers in Polish are published in Iceland. Education in journalism before 1990 used to be conducted abroad, particularly in Scandinavia, the UK and the USA (S. Stefánsdóttir, personal communication, 2009). Currently, journalism courses are offered at both the University of Iceland and the University of Akureyri.

*Morgunblaðið*, a major newspaper, and *Ríkisútvarpið*, the State Broadcasting Service, have both developed tests for applicants for journalist positions in which proficiency in Icelandic is assessed among other things.

Since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008–2010, many Icelanders working in journalism have lost their jobs; for example, about 40 jobs were lost at *Morgunblaðið* in September 2009.

*New proposals for the media.* As with other domains of use, the media have come under scrutiny by the Icelandic Language Council, because of the fear in the Council that not only is the quality of spoken and written Icelandic deteriorating, but also the use of English is increasing. New language policy proposals for the media were recommended by the Icelandic Language Council at the end of 2008 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, pp. 68–80). In that proposal, the Council emphasized the reality that the media have extensive influence on the development of the Icelandic language. The Council continues to believe that a deterioration of both spoken and written Icelandic has occurred as a result of the influence of other languages arising from the competition involved in being first to broadcast the news and in such genres as the Internet news media.

Thus, the new language policy, *Íslenska til alls* (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, pp. 76–78) recommends that individuals who lack ‘a good command of Icelandic’ should not be employed in the media in Iceland because, in the judgement of the Council, Icelandic is ‘the main working tool’ in the profession of journalism.

The policy document asserts that the media provide important role models for the Icelandic language, not only for children and young people but also for immigrants who need to learn the language (as do schools as well – see discussion in Part III). The Language Council stresses the importance of domestic television and film production. Also, it insists that proofreading and quality control in writing subtitles, as well as in dubbing children’s programmes, are imperative, since subtitles are widely read by those who are literate (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 79). The Council recommends that the Internet should be a place for interactive discussions and instruction in the Icelandic language – for example, in blogs, widely used by young people, and in other web Internet chat sites (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 78). The goal of the Icelandic Language Council proposals is to convince the media and advertising firms to introduce language policies (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 78). The media should protect the Icelandic language and, among other things, ensure that journalists and other reporters’ knowledge of and command of Icelandic is exemplary because, at the moment, too many employees are ‘far from competent’ according to the Language Council (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 78).

In June 2009, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture appointed a committee to design language policy initiatives for the media in Iceland. In November 2009, the committee proposed that each facet of the media in Iceland should be obliged to draft and publish a language policy and that each should have at least one employee who has the responsibility to take the initiative to discuss language and language use at staff meetings and to provide consultation, reference material, etc., to the staff. At the time of writing, April 2010, the Minister had not yet determined how to respond to these proposals.

Although The Icelandic Language Council advocates the use of higher-quality spoken and written Icelandic than it believes is presently the case in the media generally, it does not go so far as to legislate for *only* Icelandic. The French, for example, via the *Loi Toubon* (Toubon Law), have legislated that the media must be conducted only in French. Martin (2006) has shown how the French media have circumvented this legislation by using

other languages, particularly English, in various ways because they wish to appeal to a global audience.

### *Literacy planning and policy*

Most Icelanders would consider the level of literacy in Iceland to be 100%; it is believed that Icelanders were generally literate in the eighteenth century, despite the absence of a public school system (Ólafsson, 2001, p. 4). Prevailing ideology is that their medieval literature, as preserved in manuscripts and sagas, 'define the true essence of their identity as a nation' (Gunnarsdóttir, 2006). The Minister for Education, Science and Culture quotes the Icelandic writer, Halldór Laxness, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1955, to the effect that, while others nations have been builders, Icelanders have always been writers:

Wise men say that no nation, for all we know, has been as absorbed in the art of words from the outset as the inhabitants of this country. It may be said that scholars and laymen, irrespective of their gifts or circumstances, have been united, century after century, in creating literature here. (from Gunnarsdóttir, 2006)

According to Ólafsson (2001, p. 2), many farmers and even servants were lay scholars who copied out and collected the old manuscripts from the Golden Age to preserve them. This manuscript culture began in medieval times and flourished in Iceland long after the advent of printing technology. It was the grassroots means of distributing historical and literary knowledge until the end of the nineteenth century because printed books were too expensive for the common man to buy. For 300 years, from the mid-sixteenth century to the nineteenth century, Iceland had only one printing press which was under control of the church. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that cheap and accessible publications 'seem finally to have made handwriting of the sagas obsolete in Icelandic culture' (Ólafsson, 2004, p. 9). At present, many Icelanders, perhaps a majority, have no problem reading the ancient texts because the written language has changed so little since medieval times. This fact may have reinforced the general belief among Icelanders that the national literacy rate is very high.

The survey carried out in 2010 by the Institute for Social Science of the University of Iceland (Dofradóttir et al., 2010), mentioned previously in the discussions about the media, also investigated the number of books participants had read for pleasure in the last year – not only in Icelandic but in any language. The survey showed that 82% of respondents claimed to have read an Icelandic book for pleasure, although the proportion increased with age (i.e. 70% of the younger age group versus 88% of those who were between 50 and 59 years of age). Additionally, almost half of the respondents claimed to have read a book in another language for pleasure, the highest proportion representing the two youngest groups (Table 6).

The survey in fact seems to support the contention that Icelanders in general are literate. Books are in great demand; indeed, they are the most popular Christmas gifts in Iceland, despite the fact that they are very expensive because of the small market.

Despite general beliefs among the population about their assumed high literacy rate, Icelanders may not be as literate as they think they are, at least in comparison with other countries. In all the major international reading tests, Iceland has scored about the average.

Iceland has participated in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA since its inception in 2000. PISA is a system of international assessments in reading, mathematics, and science focusing on the performance of 15-year-old pupils. PISA tests are administered every 3 years, emphasizing one of the three subjects,

Table 6. Icelanders claiming to have read a book for pleasure in a 12-month period.

	Icelandic books	Books in other languages
Average	82.0%	48.1%
Age: 18–29	69.8%	55.5%
Age: 30–39	78.8%	55.8%
Age: 40–49	84.5%	48.0%
Age: 50–59	88.4%	42.5%
Age: 60+	87.4%	40.6%

Source: Dofradóttir et al. (2010, pp. 33–37).

although all three are assessed in every administration. In 2006, information was also collected about students' familiarity with computers (OECD, 2006, p. 7).

PISA aims to measure the extent to which children have acquired some of the knowledge and skills required for a knowledge based society; the scores provide a picture of development over time – i.e. of the ways in which the skills of 15-year-old pupils have developed since the initial data year, 2000 (OECD, 2007, accessed 16 January 2010, [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)). According to Júlíus Björnsson, Head of the Educational Testing Institute in Iceland (*Námsmatsstofnun*) in an interview in 2009, Iceland participates in PISA because Icelanders want to know how they are progressing, particularly in comparison with the other Nordic countries. Of the Nordic countries (but also across the entire international population), across all assessments, Finland has the highest scores; Sweden is second (of the Nordic countries) – falling somewhere between Finland and the other Nordic countries; the third position is occupied by Iceland, Norway, and Denmark – all three, however, falling below the OECD average in reading, based on results from the test in 2006.

In 2000, Iceland's reading literacy score was above average among the participating countries, while in 2003 and 2006 it was below the group average. While in 2000 eight countries scored higher than Iceland in reading, that number increased to 10 in 2003 and to 15 in 2006. Of the other Nordic countries, both Finland and Sweden have scored higher than Iceland in all three tests, while in 2006 Denmark also overtook Iceland. In all, seven countries have overtaken Iceland since 2000, as shown in Table 7.

Thus, there appears to be an ongoing downward trend in literacy among young Icelanders. In an interview in 2009, Björnsson stated that the cause of this decline is unknown; indeed, most of those involved in the implementation of PISA in Iceland do not understand the decline and are worried about it. Literacy planners for Icelandic are, therefore, focusing on trying to implement a number of different strategies in an attempt to improve literacy in reading.

The definition of literacy, according to reading experts in the participating countries and in the PISA reading advisory group, is:

*Reading literacy* is understanding, using and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and potential and to participate in society. (OECD, 2006, p. 46)

Consequently, in accordance with this definition, schools in Iceland are endeavouring to place greater emphasis on comprehension, on drawing conclusions, and on linking bits of information together. The role of science teachers has, for example, been modified not only to specify the teaching of science, but also to guarantee that pupils can read and write about the subject. This change in emphasis will be reflected in the new curriculum due to be published in 2010 (Björnsson, in an interview, 2009).

Table 7. Countries with a higher average than Iceland for each year that the PISA assessments have taken place.

	PISA 2000	PISA 2003	PISA 2006
Reading skills	8 countries	10 countries	14 countries
	Australia	Australia	Australia
	Finland	Finland	Finland
	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	Hong Kong
	Ireland	Ireland	Ireland
	Canada	Canada	Canada
	Korea	Korea	Korea
	New Zealand	New Zealand	New Zealand
	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
	<i>Iceland</i>	Belgium	Belgium
		Liechtenstein	Liechtenstein
		<i>Iceland</i>	Denmark
			Japan
			Poland
			Switzerland
			<i>Iceland</i>

Taken from Halldórsson, Ólafsson, and Björnsson (2007, p. 23).

The present concept of literacy, however, has expanded beyond print-based literacy: it is changing in Iceland in exactly the same way as it is in other neighbouring countries, constituting one of the major issues in current discussion and debate. In the past decade, computer use has increased significantly in Iceland. Approximately 99% of Icelandic homes have one or two computers, along with connections to the Internet. The impact of electronic material has changed the reading patterns of the teenage cohort, since they choose to do much of their reading via the Internet and computer games. One student, responding to Hilmarsson-Dunn's 2005 survey, wrote '... computer games were my teacher from the seventh grade'.

PISA is trying to identify new ways to meet the changing needs of educational systems by modifying its tests. Part of the PISA 2009 study (OECD, 2010) included an electronic reading assessment for year 10, consisting of a reading test on screen, designed to assess how pupils read, navigate, and understand electronic texts. Iceland's Testing Institute in Reykjavik participated in these tests and aims to move to computer-based testing in response to requests from the school system and stakeholders who are enthusiastic about using the new methods of electronic testing and who believe these methods are more appropriate to contemporary society (Scheuermann & Björnsson, 2009, p. 8).

#### *Regional/international influences on Iceland's language policy and planning*

The impact of global English upon Nordic culture and languages is one of the major preoccupations of the Nordic Council of Ministers. They fear that English may become the language of inter-Nordic communication. The survey by Delsing (2006) – described in Part III – which was instigated by the Nordic Council of Ministers, showed that inter-comprehension of the Scandinavian languages – Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish – was less successful than it had been 30 years ago and that young people in the five major Nordic countries understand English better than they understand any of the other Nordic languages (i.e. except their first language). One of the Nordic Council of Ministers' major priorities, therefore, is to improve the understanding of the neighbouring languages in the Nordic Region. The Nordic Language Declaration of 2006 states that all Nordic citizens have the

right ‘to acquire an understanding of and skills in a Scandinavian language and an understanding of the other Scandinavian languages so that they can take part in the Nordic language community’ (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2006, p. 92). At the same time, the Declaration states that Nordic citizens should have the right ‘to acquire a language of international importance so that they can take part in the development of world society’ (Figure 4).

As noted in the preceding discussion concerning education, Icelandic language policy accords with the Nordic Language Declaration of 2006; that is, children of compulsory school age learn Danish (their Scandinavian language) and English (the international language). The accord accepted at Nordic meetings is that Icelanders speak Danish, Finns speak Swedish (since Finland is statutorily bilingual in Finnish and Swedish), and representatives from Denmark, Norway and Sweden speak their respective languages. However, problems involving inter-language intelligibility often arise, especially with Finns who complain that they cannot understand spoken Danish; consequently, despite the ideal of inter-language intelligibility across the Nordic region, frequently there is a need to resort to English. The option of translation and interpretation into and out of each others’ languages is currently available, although this option has only recently become available since Nordic policy excluded the use of translators. The option only arose when the Finnish delegation complained that they cannot understand spoken Danish.



Figure 4. The Nordic and Baltic countries. The Nordic states Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland, and the Nordic autonomous countries Greenland, the Faroes, and the Åland Islands, operate closely on a number of cultural, scientific and social projects. In recent years, this cooperation has also extended to the Baltic states, i.e. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

A further obstacle to the maintenance of any given Scandinavian language for inter-Nordic communication arises as a result of the increased cooperation with the Baltic States (i.e. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania: see Hogan-Brun et al. (2008) for discussion of language issues in the Baltic States). Since the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, there has been increased cooperation and dialogue between the Nordic countries and the Baltic States which, according to Bergman (2003, p. 2) has inspired the creation of a specific Nordic-Baltic sphere of community. This recent cooperation with the Baltic countries is significant in terms of the increased use of English as a *lingua franca* in the region.

The increased dependence on English suggests that, despite some resistance to English, the development of a need to use English as a *lingua franca* in the Nordic community may be inevitable, unless determined action is taken by all the countries in the region to continue to use a Scandinavian language – i.e. Danish, Norwegian, or Swedish – as a *lingua franca*. As previously noted in Part III, young Icelanders are reluctant to learn Danish, a traditional part of the Icelandic school curriculum at least since the mid-nineteenth century. Younger Icelanders presently working for Nordic institutions would rather speak English than Danish.

To counteract the perceived threat of English, the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers have launched several campaigns to strengthen Nordic cultural and linguistic unity including the designation of an official Nordic language year in 1980 and of an action plan for Nordic language cooperation in 1991. The latter plan aimed, among other things, at promoting inter Nordic exchanges of school pupils, research on the ‘mutual comprehensibility of the Scandinavian languages’ (the survey carried out by Delsing, as previously described above), and the promotion, teaching and learning of additional Nordic languages. The programme was funded cooperatively by all five Nordic governments (Vikør, 2001, pp. 135–137).

Being part of the European community has had consequences for the Swedish, Finnish and Danish languages because the EU language policy of equality among languages has meant that small languages – including those Nordic languages – have achieved greater exposure in EU institutions. Furthermore, the need to translate EU directives and other documents into the national languages of all member states often requires the development of new lexical domains in those languages – e.g. in EU directives on wine – because no lexical tradition for these domains has previously existed in any Nordic language.

On 24 February 2010, the EU Commission recommended to the EU Parliament and COE that negotiations for Iceland’s accession to the European Union should be opened. The Commission stated that Iceland’s accession treaty would involve ‘the recognition of Icelandic as an official language of the EU’ (European Commission Enlargement, 2010, p. 3). Should Iceland become a member of the EU in a few years from the time of writing, then Icelandic may receive greater exposure in the international political arena. Having said that, Melander (2000) reported that, although Swedish has had greater exposure since Sweden joined the EU, the lower-level Swedish representatives, such as civil servants, have increased their use of other languages, primarily English – in speech and writing – followed by French. The experience of the Swedes implies that future Icelandic representatives are also likely to increase their use of English.

Iceland has been a member of the European Free Trade Area since 1970 and of the EEA since 1994. According to Laegreid, Steinthorsson, and Thorhallsson (2002, p. 8), Iceland has adopted approximately 80% of the laws and regulations of the EU as a result of its participation in the EEA agreement. Through such membership it has been able to participate in many European programmes.

Specific policies and/or programmes in the EU which have affected policy in Iceland include the Erasmus exchange programme, a programme that encourages the mobility of students and academic staff within Europe. The growth of student exchanges has further encouraged teaching through the medium of English at higher levels of the educational systems. It has never been policy to use English as the language of academic exchange programmes, but the use of English has increased by default through a laissez-faire approach to the matter. This development has encouraged universities in Iceland to offer more courses in English to attract students to Iceland, as has happened in higher education institutions throughout Europe, e.g. in Germany, in the Netherlands, and Denmark. The Nordic Council of Ministers established its own exchange programme, Nordplus, in 1988 to promote cooperation among Nordic higher education institutions. The programme has now been expanded to include the Baltic States. Nordplus has been successful in promoting Nordic exchanges at this level, particularly sending students from Iceland to Denmark and, to a lesser extent, to Sweden. However, as both these Nordic countries offer courses taught through English, Icelanders going abroad in Nordplus exchange programmes may find themselves attending courses taught in English as well as those taught in Danish or Swedish.

There is also a wide range of cooperative cultural activities within the EU and Nordic countries, e.g. the EU Media 2007 programme, EU 'Television without Frontiers' programme, Nordic Film and Television Fund, which serve to increase the status of and respect for Icelandic language and culture, not only in the consciousness of other cultures in Europe but also for Icelanders abroad. The movement of cultural products promulgates Icelandic language and culture as well as achieving market value. Cooperative programmes and exchanges are, therefore, important aspects of Iceland's language planning and policy.

*International obligations.* Iceland is a signatory to two UN covenants and one convention that prohibit discrimination against people on the basis of language: *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), *Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), and *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

The *European Convention on Human Rights*, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of language, was put into effect in Icelandic legislation in 1994. Iceland is, however, neither a member of the COE's *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (Council of Europe, 2010a), nor of the COE's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Council of Europe, 2010b) as Iceland has only signed (1999) but never ratified these two agreements. The *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* does not apply to languages of migrant workers. It is considered unlikely that any group in Iceland would be classified as a national minority according to the definition used in the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010b, p. 82).

Iceland, along with Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, has signed the *Nordic Language Convention (Språkkonventionen, 2010)*, giving the citizens of these countries mutual rights to use their native languages in communication with the authorities in all those countries, using interpreters as needed. The convention was ratified in 1987 when it became effective (Vikør, 2001, pp. 137–139). As a consequence of this convention, the secondary Nordic language community – i.e. Icelanders and Finns – 'can be more efficiently integrated into the language community without having to resort to a second language in which they are less fluent' (Vikør, 2001, pp. 138–139).<sup>16</sup> The convention implies that interpretation and translation facilities must be provided, if needed, to Finns and Icelanders in the central Nordic countries and vice versa (Vikør, 2001, pp. 138–139). The use of a Nordic language implies that citizens should not need to use English (or any other non-Nordic language).



Likewise, the five Nordic countries have signed the *Convention on Social Help and Services*, ratified by Iceland in 1995. That convention states, in Art. 5, that citizens of the Nordic countries can choose any of the languages – Icelandic, Danish, Finnish, Norwegian, or Swedish – when writing letters to the authorities in another Nordic country if the matter concerns rights to social help or services (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2010b, p. 83). In addition, as mentioned in a previous section, the Nordic Ministers of Culture signed a *Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy* in 2006. The declaration is not legally binding and thus has not been actualized in the legislation of Nordic countries.

## **Part V**

### ***Language maintenance and prospects***

#### *Higher education*

Higher education may be one domain in which the future status of the Icelandic language will be determined. Graddol (2006, pp. 76–80) has shown that many higher education institutions throughout the world are offering more courses taught in English to attract foreign students in order to benefit financially from this expanding market. According to Coleman (2006, p. 10), the use of English in higher education is a ‘prime driver’ of language shift. Not only are many courses being offered using English as the language of instruction in many universities in Europe and elsewhere, but also academic texts are very often written in English, and many journals publish in English rather than in the languages of the countries in which the journals are housed. Ammon (2003, p. 28), for example, reports that some German journals have had to change to publishing in English; as have some Swedish journals (Oakes, 2005, p. 162). Hamel (2007, p. 56) showed that English was used in 64.1% of scientific publications in 1980, while German and Russian declined to between 10% and 15%, and French, Japanese, and all other languages to even lower percentages. This trend has continued since then and English was used in 90% of such publications in 1996, according to figures supplied by Ammon (1998). The fact that academic texts are dominated by English leads to the requirement for schools and universities to ensure that their students’ level of proficiency in English is sufficient to permit those students to follow their courses of study. Doctoral candidates are being obliged to write their theses in English, particularly in the various scientific fields (Ammon, 2003; Carli & Ammon, 2007; Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2009). Moreover, the European student exchange programme, ‘Erasmus’, a part of the Bologna Process, has encouraged students throughout Europe to undertake a course of study in another country, possibly one where the language in which these courses are taught may be English (as previously noted).

According to Icelandic Law on Universities in Iceland, no. 63/2006 and Law on Public Universities, no. 85/2008, Icelandic has no legal status as a medium of instruction at the university level. Neither of these laws mentions the language of instruction. Consequently, it is the responsibility of each university to articulate its own language policy and to specify what status is assigned to Icelandic. Before the financial crisis, universities in Iceland (as elsewhere) were leaning towards greater use of English. In the proposals from the Icelandic Language Council to the Ministry of Education for a new language policy for Icelandic in 2008, the Icelandic Language Council described the tendency of Icelandic universities to become international and to use greater quantities of English (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, pp. 41–50). The Icelandic Language Council has criticized universities for using too much English to the detriment of Icelandic. One of the Council’s recommendations is that there should be a requirement

for every university to create and implement a language policy – such policy to be negotiated between the Ministry and each higher education institution. In the proposed policies, the Ministry expects the institutions to comply with the Ministry's desire to strengthen the role of Icelandic. The primary goal of the new Icelandic language policy (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 48) is that Icelandic should be the official language of all universities in Iceland and that all instruction should, as a rule, be in Icelandic.

There are seven higher education institutions in Iceland, of which four are public, including the University of Iceland in Reykjavik, the largest university in Iceland. Three Icelandic universities are private or self-governing institutions. Four universities offer a wide range of studies, two are agricultural universities, and one is the Iceland Academy of the Arts. The Law on Universities in Iceland implements the Bologna Process which Iceland endorsed in 1999. Each university has an independent budget and enjoys considerable autonomy and academic freedom (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 19). All higher education institutions in recent years 'have placed increasing emphasis on research activities' (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 9). All have been accredited by the Ministry through assessment by external experts and by teams from institutions abroad (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 50).

Indeed, the three major universities (i.e. University of Iceland, Reykjavik University, and University of Akureyri) have instigated policies as a result of which Icelandic has been declared the primary and official language, i.e. 'the spoken and written language of the University is Icelandic, in teaching, research and administration. Furthermore the main language of instruction in master's and doctoral programmes is Icelandic, in so far as possible' (University of Iceland, 2004); 'Icelandic is the first language of Reykjavik University' (Reykjavik University, 2010); 'Icelandic is the official language of the university' (University of Akureyri, February 2008, Article 3). However, the practices at Icelandic universities demonstrate that, in actuality, there is a need for English in addition to Icelandic; for example, in post-graduate studies and in specific programmes for international students and exchange students. The universities are obliged to offer a number of courses in English through their exchange student agreements. At Reykjavik University, English is explicitly defined as the second language:

In order to ease access for international students, teachers, and specialists, and thus create a multicultural community of knowledge, English has been defined as the second language of Reykjavik University. Information material, post-lists, notifications, and other material distributed by the University to students and teachers are therefore both in Icelandic and in English. (Reykjavik University, 2010)

Since Iceland endorsed the Bologna declaration on higher education in Europe in 1999, the number of courses taught in English has increased at the University of Iceland, and the number of international students has increased in parallel. Figures for numbers of exchange students since 1992 (supplied by Óskar Óskarsson in the university's International Office) show that there is an upward trend in the number of students coming to the University of Iceland on the Erasmus programme; i.e. the number of exchange students at the university has increased from 23 students in the 1992–1993 academic year to 374 students in the 2008–2009 academic year. The number of international students independent of the Erasmus exchanges has also grown considerably since the turn of the century. According to the Pro-Rector of the University of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson (in an interview in 2009), this growth is due to an increase in the number of research students coming to Iceland to undertake master's and doctoral

Table 8. Increase in numbers of international students at the University of Iceland between 2000 and 2009.

Academic year	Number of international students	Number of countries of origin
2008/2009	1004	82
2007/2008	777	72
2006/2007	717	76
2005/2006	648	66
2004/2005	641	69
2000/2001	411	53

Figures supplied by Óskar Óskarsson, International Office.

research. In the academic year 2008–2009, there were 330 doctoral students of whom about 28% were international students. Table 8 shows the increase in students, including master's and doctoral students, since 2000.

The University of Iceland recommends that international students take a course in 'Icelandic for international students' offered by the University, but this course is not normally required. Students need to function in Icelandic, even though research students' supervision is provided in English, and for most academic fields, as much as 90% of the course material at the University of Iceland is in English (Blöndal, 2009).

According to the University of Iceland's course catalogue, the language of instruction in master's and doctoral programmes at the University of Iceland in the academic year 2009–2010 is as shown in Table 9.

Considering all three academic areas, approximately 76% of programmes are only in Icelandic, while 6% are only in English, and 18% use both languages.

For example, in the Humanities, there is a full programme taught in English (i.e. Medieval Icelandic Studies at the postgraduate level), in addition to programmes in English language and literature. Icelandic for international students, a BA programme, is taught in Icelandic and English. A large number of study programmes, especially in the sciences and engineering, consist of some courses in English and some in Icelandic; for example, there is a 2-year master's programme in industrial engineering, consisting of 18 individual courses, of which 8 courses are taught in Icelandic and 10 in English.

One special undergraduate programme in geophysics is taught in English, but all of the other undergraduate programmes in science are taught in Icelandic. However, according to the Pro-Rector at the University of Iceland, it can happen that an Icelandic student doing an undergraduate course may be obliged to do part of that course in English; e.g. a course being taught in English if there is an international student in the class, or if, as sometimes happens, an international visiting professor is teaching a course at the undergraduate

Table 9. Number of master's and doctoral programmes offered in Icelandic and/or English in 2009/2010.

	Total number of programmes <sup>a</sup>	Icelandic only	English only	English and Icelandic
Humanities	39	35	4	0
Social sciences	43	34	4	5
Mathematics and natural sciences	47	29	0	18

<sup>a</sup>Each programme is made up of several courses.

level. Students are aware this might happen and, the Pro-Rector claims, most students are not concerned about that eventuality, although writing in English may be a problem for some of them.

Despite the official policy requiring the teaching of all courses in Icelandic, the common practice seems to favour flexibility; i.e. teaching through English to accommodate international staff and students. Furthermore, the University of Iceland aspires to become an international university, and as a consequence, it has been attracting significantly more applications for faculty positions from abroad. Usually, the applicants for teaching posts are required to teach at undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels. Thus, adherence to a very strict policy requiring the use of Icelandic could create a problem.

There is some concern among the members of the Icelandic Language Council and of the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture that students are not exposed to Icelandic terminology if subjects are taught in English. The Icelandic language policy approved by Parliament in 2009 urges that students and teachers should be aware of new Icelandic vocabulary in their fields (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 57). The language policy of the University of Akureyri states:

the students must know and understand scientific terms in Icelandic and, where the course involved is taught in English or another foreign language, special emphasis should be placed on learning and being able to use the Icelandic equivalents, as staff and students will be required at some point to talk or write about their own discipline in Icelandic. (University of Akureyri, 2008)

However, some native Icelandic academic staff who have studied or worked in another country for many years may not be familiar with the ongoing development of new Icelandic terminology. Consequently, they find it challenging to teach entirely through Icelandic and to produce publications completely in Icelandic, although many vocabulary problems can be overcome, for example, by using the word bank operated by the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies ([www.arnastofnun.is](http://www.arnastofnun.is)).

The percentage of doctoral dissertations at the University of Iceland written in English varies across subject fields. In the last decade, more than 75% of dissertations were written in English in the social sciences, as well as in mathematics and natural sciences, but fewer than 25% of dissertations were written in English in the humanities. The trend towards English is reflected in the following figures. In the academic year 2000–2007, on average 28% of doctoral theses at the University of Iceland were written in Icelandic (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 54), while in the academic year 2007–2008, 8% were written in Icelandic and 92% were written in English (University of Iceland, 2007, 2008 and listings in the National University Library). According to the University of Iceland regulations in 2006 and 2007, specifications for writing theses in particular faculties are:

- Social Sciences: ‘A doctoral thesis shall be written in English unless there is some special reason for it to be in Icelandic’.
- Medicine: ‘A doctoral thesis shall be written in English’.
- Humanities: ‘A doctoral thesis shall normally be written in either Icelandic or English’.

However, a summary in Icelandic is required if the thesis is written in English: ‘All theses shall have an abstract in both Icelandic and English’ (University of Iceland, 2010). The new Icelandic language policy specifies that, if a doctoral thesis is written in

English, the author shall be required to write an extensive abstract in Icelandic and to seek to publish the research in an Icelandic academic journal if possible (Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, 2009, p. 58). Iceland is not alone in adopting such a policy. Researchers in other countries, e.g. Denmark, are also required to produce abstracts in their first language if these are written in English.

According to the Pro-Rector of the University of Iceland, the limited size of the Icelandic research community gives rise to a particular problem regarding theses written in Icelandic; namely, that it is difficult to find qualified international interrogators for theses written in Icelandic. If the quality of the research is to be properly evaluated, Icelandic students may be obliged to write about their subject in English. Furthermore, at the Icelandic Research Fund, research proposals are written in English because it is necessary to send them out to the international research community. Because there are so few Icelanders, it is important to have international critical observers to review such proposals.

Similarly, if researchers write papers in Icelandic, there may not be a sufficient supply of peer reviewers. The science policy of the University of Iceland is that academics should publish in the best journals in their field – such journals are usually international peer reviewed and are commonly published in English. Iceland is leading in some areas of study; e.g. in Icelandic geology, in Icelandic linguistics, and in some areas of medieval studies. Icelandic experts in these fields are selected to evaluate academic theses from other countries and therefore need to be able to function in English. However, a number of scientific journals in Iceland are published either partially or fully in Icelandic. Among those are journals of research in medicine, linguistics, history, and education.

Icelandic students face the problem of whether their command of English is adequate to write theses and academic papers (Ammon, 2003). Although many Icelanders consider themselves to be competent in English,<sup>17</sup> people in the Ministry and in the universities recognize that the English proficiency of a substantial number of students is not sufficient to participate in publications at the professional level, as the length of English instruction in compulsory and upper secondary schools is insufficient to acquire the level of English language skills necessary to produce impeccable academic papers (see also Ammon, 2003, p. 30).

There is a conflict between the perception of policy makers that it is necessary to keep Icelandic as the language of instruction and research versus the necessity of disseminating research into the international scholarly community which requires English. Furthermore, if Iceland wishes to remain in a leadership position in many research areas (e.g. geology, genetics and engineering), then English is required to attract first rate researchers and students.

Another subject of current debate in Iceland is whether Icelandic public universities should charge tuition fees to students. The current financial crisis might suggest that Icelanders would wish to market their courses internationally and to charge tuition fees. At the time of writing, access to public universities in Iceland is free. These universities are not permitted to collect tuition fees (according to the Law on Public Universities no. 85/2008); they are only permitted to collect a registration fee paid directly to the higher education institution admitting the individual (about 300€, as of December 2009). Fees are not charged in public universities because the Ministry considers education to be a public good. Fees are the same for Icelanders and for others (Foreign Ministry, 2009, p. 66), making Iceland a relatively inexpensive destination for international students. (Denmark, for example, charges an additional sum for international students coming from outside the EU.) However, privately owned universities, which do not fall under the jurisdiction of this legislative act, have been charging tuition fees as well as registration fees for Icelandic students as well as for international students.

Funding for higher education has become increasingly difficult since the financial crisis because the state, which operates the Student Loan Fund, has to find the money to lend to the students. If tuition fees were increased, the students would need higher loans from the Student Loan Fund. Furthermore, the rules for student loans by the Loan Fund have recently changed so that the loan is 20% higher for the academic year 2009–2010 than for the previous year. This change has been instigated to encourage more people to attend higher education during a period of unemployment in Iceland – again as a result of the crisis.

## Conclusions

A major factor in Iceland's success in language planning in the past was that Iceland is a country, isolated geographically with a small population, which was proud of its linguistic and literary heritage. These factors and the fact that the population was homogeneous meant that it was easier to implement corpus planning in the past than it is for the larger heterogeneous population that constitutes the contemporary Icelandic nation. For example, the successful campaign that was instigated in the 1940s to eradicate a spoken dialect would be unlikely to succeed today, fundamentally because the ideology behind such a policy would not be strong enough.

There is a conflict between global market forces and national protectionist policies. Trends in higher education, for example, suggest that Iceland will want to benefit from the market for students worldwide and will therefore offer more courses taught in English. Thus, higher education institutions are more likely to provide extra courses in English for students and staff than courses in Icelandic.

In the future, in the face of the spread of English, the small size of Iceland's population may be less able to support the national language, because it is unlikely to be able to sustain costly language policies on its own and in opposition to market forces. Iceland is not a community in isolation, and to counteract the use of English, it may find itself needing more support from the EU and the Nordic community. Presently, weightier issues, i.e. having to overcome its financial crisis and liaise with global financial institutions, in English, are of greater concern.

Having said this, it is necessary to highlight the fact that fundamental to the development and maintenance of a language is a nation's corpus planning, which is required in order to ensure the status of the language. Throughout the twentieth century and up to the present, Icelanders – including the general public, professionals working in special branches, translators, journalists, textbook writers, and other interested parties, along with specific public institutions – have managed to develop and modernize their language. It is possible that Iceland's language policies, therefore, may ensure that Icelandic can be used in a broad range of domains *alongside* English provided that the Icelandic community fully supports it, both ideologically and financially.

As defined by Spolsky (2004), language policies consist of practices, beliefs, and management. Thus, management is not likely to be effective in the long run if it is not grounded in prevailing linguistic ideologies and practices of the population in a polity. Linguistic practices and beliefs among the speakers of Icelandic might be leading towards decreased support for maintaining the use of Icelandic in all the domains in which it is in use at present. An implication of this assumption might therefore be that management efforts to continue to modernize the vocabulary and keep Icelandic in use in all domains in the future are in vain.

In our view, current evidence suggests the following scenario for the future of Icelandic: the sociolinguistic situation will be one of parallel use of Icelandic and English, with

Icelandic being used for functions of national and local concern, and in a few international domains (in particular, domains such as geology, medieval studies, and a few others which enjoy a strong tradition in Iceland and involve many native speakers of Icelandic), while English will be used in most international domains. Both languages will be in use in domains such as the media. Icelandic is unlikely to *lose* national domains while Icelanders continue to modernize their language. Icelandic and English will have to *share* domains, because the small size of Iceland's population and unequal amounts of funding cannot match, for example, the media output produced by the English-speaking world. As long as the Icelanders continue to develop their national language through their corpus planning, Icelandic will function in all relevant domains, although partly alongside English.

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### Notes

1. Please note that views quoted in this monograph, from written sources or interviews with policy-makers, are not necessarily shared by the authors.
2. Throughout the text, the authors have used the proper Icelandic characters. The Icelandic alphabet and other grammar notes are to be found in the appendix.
3. The *Codex Wormianus* contains four treatises on language, rhetoric and poetry. They have 'traditionally come to be known respectively as the First, the Second, the Third, and the Fourth Grammatical Treatise' (Benediktsson, 1972, p. 14).
4. The task of the author of the First Grammatical Treatise was in part parallel to some initiatives taken by his contemporaries elsewhere in Northern Europe. It is evident that the authors and scribes were aware of the inadequacies of the 'traditional' orthography when used for their respective (newly established) literary vernaculars. For example, in eleventh-century Germany, the Benedictine monk Notker marked German vowel length consistently for the first time, and in England around 1200, the Augustinian canon Orm invented a method to mark phoneme quantity (Benediktsson, 1972, p. 37).
5. The term *islenska* (Icelandic) was not used in the first centuries of the history of Icelandic. Rather, 'Nordic' (*norraena*) or 'Danish' (*danska*) were the common terms for the medieval Nordic language which came to be preserved in Iceland. In 1558, in a text by Bishop Gísli Jónsson, the term *islenska* occurs in print for the first time (Sigmundsson, 1990–1991, p. 129; 2003, p. 65). By then, the former common Nordic language was no longer comprehensible to the other Nordic peoples.
6. Some of the better-known European language academies are *Accademia della Crusca* (in Italy, founded in Florence in 1582–1583), *Académie française* (French Academy, founded in 1635), *Real Academia Española* (Spanish Academy, founded in 1713), and *Svenska Akademien* (Swedish Academy, founded in 1786).

7. Sveinbjörn Egilsson had been partly brought up and educated by the founder of the Society for National Enlightenment, Judge Magnús Stephensen (Sigmundsson, 2003, p. 71).
8. Some of these are discussed in more detail in the ensuing section.
9. Throughout this text, all quotations from Icelandic, both in legal documents and in other sources, have been translated into English by the authors.
10. Some publishers of term lists have, in fact, sought to meet the quality demands for accuracy and systematicity by, for example, listing their neologisms in a logical numerical order in columns parallel to the respective concept definition in English and equivalent terms in English and other languages. This method is supposed to ensure that Icelandic scientists and technicians can adhere to the international standard terminology apparatus, even if they are using Icelandic neologisms to denote the terms themselves.
11. There were about 250 users of ISL in 2009, as reported in Part I.
12. Iceland became a member of COE in 1950.
13. These surveys, involving 86 and 58 students between 16 and 20 years of age, respectively, were carried out to investigate students' use of and attitudes towards English.
14. The views presented here are not necessarily those of the authors.
15. As the reader will have noted, 'Sport' and 'Extra' are examples of lexical borrowings in Icelandic.
16. The secondary Nordic language community also includes speakers of Sami, Faroese and Greenlandic and some 200 immigrant languages, which are not covered by the Nordic Language Convention.
17. A survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture in 2001 and carried out by Price Waterhouse Coopers to investigate how competent the general public perceive themselves to be in English. The results of this survey indicated that 63.8% reported themselves to be 'competent' and 25.3% to be 'reasonably competent', i.e. almost 90% of the general public (Óladóttir, 2009).

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## **Appendix. A note on the Icelandic alphabet, grammar and vocabulary**

### **Alphabet**

Aa Áá Bb Dd Ðð Ee Éé Ff Gg Hh Ii Íí Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Óó Pp Rr Ss Tt Uu Úú Vv Xx Yy Ýý Þþ Ææ Öö

The most unusual letters in the Icelandic alphabet are *Þþ* and *Ðð*. *Þþ* is pronounced like the *th* in *thing*, and *Ðð* is pronounced like the *th* in *this*. *Þþ* and *Ðð* have been in use in Icelandic writing since the

twelfth and thirteenth century, respectively. These characters were based on an English model as the characters were used in Old English orthography.

Diacritic marks above the vowel characters denote a different vowel quality, e.g. *a* [a], but *á* [au], etc. The first syllable of a word is always stressed. All stressed vowels can be either long or short, depending on the following consonants. *lí* and *Ýý* are pronounced exactly alike, and so are *lí* and *Ýý*.

### Grammar

Icelandic nominals have four cases (nominative, accusative, dative, and genitive), three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and two numbers (singular and plural). The definite article is added to nouns as a suffix. Verbs are conjugated according to tense, person, number, mood, and voice. There are a number of different inflection categories for nominals and verbs. The table below shows three examples out of many categories for noun inflections.

	‘horse’ (masculine)		‘book’ (feminine)		‘table’ (neuter)	
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite
Singular						
Nominative	Hestur	Hesturinn	Bók	Bókin	Borð	Borðið
Accusative	Hest	Hestinn	Bók	Bókina	Borð	Borðið
Dative	Hesti	Hestinum	Bók	Bókinni	Borði	Borðinu
Genitive	Hests	Hestsins	Bókar	Bókarinnar	Borðs	Borðsins
Plural						
Nominative	Hestar	Hestarnir	Bækur	Bækurnar	Borð	Borðin
Accusative	Hesta	Hestana	Bækur	Bækurnar	Borð	Borðin
Dative	Hestum	Hestunum	Bókum	Bókunum	Borðum	Borðunum
Genitive	Hesta	Hestanna	Bóka	Bókanna	Borða	Borðanna

### Vocabulary

A few examples of Icelandic vocabulary are provided below. The leftmost column contains words that have been in continuous use since Iceland was settled in the ninth century. The middle column starts with an ancient compound word (*skipstjórn*) and the rest are twentieth-century neologisms coined in the same manner, i.e. the lexeme *stjórn* denotes ‘leadership, managing/conducting something’. In this manner, it is relatively easy to create a coherent class of words. The rightmost column contains borrowings.

<i>höfuð</i>	‘head’	<i>skipstjórn</i>	‘ship conducting’	<i>kaffi</i>	‘coffee’
<i>auga</i>	‘eye’	<i>leikstjórn</i>	‘directing a play’	<i>banani</i>	‘banana’
<i>þú</i>	‘you’	<i>hljómsveitarstjórn</i>	‘orchestral conducting’	<i>píanó</i>	‘piano’
<i>móðir</i>	‘mother’	<i>flugstjórn</i>	‘air traffic control’	<i>sjampó</i>	‘shampoo’