Iceland: A Microcosm of Communities Affected by the Spread of English

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University of Iceland

18. November 2017
University of Victoria
Richard Beck Lecture
**Kachru’s Concentric Circles of English**

**The Expanding Circle**
- China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Korea, Nepal, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Russia, Zimbabwe

**The Outer Circle**
- Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia

**The Inner Circle**
- USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand
Iceland

- Population: 325,000
- Nordic Welfare State
- Language: Icelandic.
Theoretical Background

- ELF Movement (Jenkins; Seidhlofer; Maurannen)
- English Expansion - Dynamic Model (Schneider, 2007)
- Growth of EMI Programs in Iceland and the Nordic Countries (Wächter & Maiworm, 2014)
- Limitations of EFL based pedagogies to prepare EMI students (Dearden, 2015; Dimova, et al., 2015; Arnbjörnsdóttir & Prinz, 2014; Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2017, 2010; Hellekjær, 2005; Percorari et al, 2011)
Language Development across the Lifespan: The Impact of English on Education and Work in Iceland

Onset of Formal Instruction 4. Grade

In Secondary School

In the Work Place

English Exposure: Children

At the end of Primary School

English Exposure: Adults

At University
English Exposure: 750 Adults

**Hear English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fjöldi</th>
<th>Húdali</th>
<th>+/-</th>
<th>Húdali</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 sinn í mánuð eða sjáltnar</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 sinnum í mánuð</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,8</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 sinnum í víku</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 sinnum í víku</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daglega, minna en 1 kist á</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3,0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daglega, 1-4 tíma á dag</td>
<td>378</td>
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<td>3,6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daglega, með en 4 tíma á</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fjöldi svara</strong></td>
<td><strong>736</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Netta að svara/eykti</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alls</strong></td>
<td><strong>740</strong></td>
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**Speak English**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>+/-</th>
<th>Húdali</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>2,2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1,9</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daglega, með en 4 tíma á</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,3</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fjöldi svara</strong></td>
<td><strong>730</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alls</strong></td>
<td><strong>740</strong></td>
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**Read English**

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<th>Húdali</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2,9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2 sinnum í víku</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5 sinnum í víku</td>
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<td>Daglega, minna en 1 kist á</td>
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<td>2,8</td>
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<td>Daglega, með en 4 tíma á</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1,5</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>733</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netta að svara/eykti</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alls</strong></td>
<td><strong>740</strong></td>
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**Write English**

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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 sinnum í víku</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,5</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-5 sinnum í víku</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>1,8</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daglega, minna en 1 kist á</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,3</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>1,8</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daglega, með en 4 tíma á</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0,9</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fjöldi svara</strong></td>
<td><strong>733</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netta að svara/eykti</td>
<td>7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alls</strong></td>
<td><strong>740</strong></td>
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</table>
Self Reported English Proficiency: 906 Adults

### Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/Rather good</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/Nor</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/Rather poor</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/Rather good</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/Nor</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/Rather poor</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Self Reported English Proficiency: 906 Adults

#### Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/Rather good</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/Nor</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/Rather poor</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good/Rather good</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither/Nor</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor/Rather poor</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>22%</td>
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</table>
The Linguistic Landscape of Iceland?
English and Language Policy in the Nordic Countries

• Nordic residents, who internationally speaking, have good English skills.  
  (Declaration on a Nordic Lang. Policy, Art. 2.1)

• ... that business and labor-market organizations be urged to develop strategies for the parallel use of language.

• ... that it be possible to use both the languages of the Nordic countries essential to society and English as languages of science.

(Declaration on Nordic Language Policy 2006, p. 94)
Parallel Language Use?

Parallel Language Use:

“The use of parallel languages refers to a situation in which two languages are considered equal in a particular domain, and where the choice of language depends on what is deemed most appropriate and efficient in a specific situation.”

www.cip.ku.dk
Major Findings
Education/EFL

• Students who begin formal English instruction in the 4th grade exceed the curriculum goals for that grade
  (Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir, 2018)

• Extramural English exposure is reinforced in EFL instruction in primary and secondary school. i.e. conversational, receptive language
  – Heavy emphasis on literary genes at advanced levels
  – Students report that their English education had little to do with their actual English needs once at university or at work
  – Lack of consistency in type and amount of reading in primary school
    (Anna Jeeves, 2013, Jóna G. Guðrmundsdóttir, 2016)

• Tests at the end of secondary school reveal that lexical and writing proficiency is insufficient for university study
  (Guðmundur Edgarsson, 2018)

• General overestimation of English skills.
Major Findings

EMI at the University of Iceland

- 90% of textbooks are in English
- Proliferation of instruction, theses and assignments written in English
- Robust confidence in English skills
- Actual proficiency in informal, receptive English
  - Limited awareness of academic genres
  - Inability to match register to task
- 35% of students struggle greatly with English
- 50% claim that their workload increases
- 83% report problems working with two languages.
The Work Force

English skills a job requirement? 3% yes
How much English used? 71% emails daily

69% read docs daily

“writing and speaking English fluently has become fundamental to getting work done”
Conclusions

• Enormous extramural exposure
• Overconfidence in English skills
  – Students
  – Teachers
  – Population as a whole
• Traditional EFL Curriculum fortifies receptive, colloquial English
• Icelanders struggle with English in education and the work place
A Hidden Challenge!

- Conflicting policies  (Hultgren, 2016)
- Overestimation of proficiency
  - Receptive = Productive
  - Lack of genre awareness
    - English vs. Icelandic?
    - Repertoire of registers and genres?
- Instructors do not see it as their role to support language
- Tradition?
Academic English at the University of Iceland

• Academic English needs of Icelandic students across disciplines
  – Students at UI struggle with course content in English
  – Students registering for courses in the BA in English prog.
  – Straining department resources
    • BA program is content based with a focus on Literature and Linguistics – no remedial English courses

• BA English students
  – Lacked proficiency in Academic English
  – Had fewer opportunities to write in over-enrolled courses

• Traditional composition course ineffective
  – Poor student evaluations, limited observable improvement, high instructor turnover.
Response:
Reorganized Program/New Approach to Teaching Writing to meet EMI Needs

BA in English Program:
– Intensive academic writing course
– Genre based courses

General Student Population:
– Academic English Program

Constraints:
– Awareness is growing but, many departments do not accept transfers from English
Developed a New Approach to Teaching English to Students in EMI Programs

- Raise Awareness through AWARE
- Focus on a “Gateway” Genre

- Authors: Patricia Prinz and Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir
The Approach

• Thesis Driven Writing

• Limited genres with a focus on transferable features
  – Expository writing (description, narrative, enumeration, and compare/contrast)
  – A case study
  – A research paper

• Authorial Voice: writing assignments based on student own personal knowledge and experience For 2/3 semester text

• Mastery of a single element at a time which synthesized into larger writing tasks over the semester.
The Linguistic Landscape of Iceland?

A new linguistic context:

• ELF at the grassroots level
• ENL standards in Education and the work place.
Future?

- 2019-2023: 2.6% economic growth
  - Travel Industry
- 2016/2017: 30,275 newcomers in Iceland
  - Can only increase
- Internationalization of education and the work force

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir and Patricia Prinz, CIP 2014
THANK YOU!

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir


Reference


  Writing & Pedagogy, 8(1), 5-32. Available from:  
  http://dx.DOI:10.1558/wap.v8i1.30051  (Accessed 29th December 2016)