

Ari Páll Kristinsson & Guðrún Kvaran

Title:

**“National language policy and planning in Iceland: Aims and institutional activities”**

The central theme of Icelandic language ideologies is grammatical, orthographic and lexical purism. Language discourses in Iceland suggest that there is general interest in linguistic matters in the population, and that most people do not question the legitimacy of traditional Icelandic language management, or the ideals of linguistic purism.

The use of Icelandic versus other languages in certain domains of use, such as in commerce, in the academia, and in some fields of technology, is, however, not as central an ingredient in common language ideologies. While Icelandic is the only national language in Iceland, and the first/native language of about 90% of the population, there is considerable presence of English in Iceland today.

Thus, as concerns questions on dominant attitudes to language planning in Iceland, the general public is by and large supportive of corpus planning efforts, such as the coining of Icelandic neologisms, standardization of orthography, and proper usage. On the other hand, various status planning efforts, that seek to promote the use of Icelandic in all domains of use, are not always as warmly welcomed by representatives of businesses, tourism agencies, and other local actors who like to see their activities and operations in Iceland as part of international competition and consequently tend to use English instead of Icelandic, e.g. in advertising, in board meetings, in public presentations, in service encounters etc.

The Icelandic Language Council was founded in the year 1964 and had several tasks. It was, however, only in 2011 that the Parliament passed a special legislation about the language where in the first paragraph it is affirmed that Icelandic is the national language of Iceland. Paragraph 6 of the law concerns the Language Council which is appointed by the Minister of Education and Culture. Some of its earlier tasks were transferred under the auspices of the Arni Magnusson Institute for Icelandic Studies and the principal duty of the Council is now to provide scholarly advice to the government in all matters concerning the Icelandic language and make recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Culture about an Icelandic language policy. The Council issues yearly a report on the status of the Icelandic language which is distributed to the Parliament and the public media. The Language Council can on its own initiative praise commendable instances of language use in the public and point out cases where improvements are desirable.

In 2008 the Icelandic Language Council composed a document on language policy at the request of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was ratified by the Parliament in 2009 and published that same year under the title *Íslenska til alls* [Icelandic for all purposes]. This document has proved to be a very useful resource for the efforts of the Council to preserve the language. It is referred to when the Council has reason to point out violations of the language policy and the law of 2011 in public usage e.g. in the media, in advertisements and signposts. As the situation is today the number of such instances seems rather likely to increase in the future.

The Icelandic Language Council has for decades had a good relationship with all the Nordic language councils and it took part in writing the Nordic Declaration of Language Policy in 2006. These councils meet every year to discuss matters of common interest.