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## Attitudes towards languages and cultures of young Polish adolescents in Iceland

This preliminary study examines the attitudes to Icelandic, Polish and English languages and cultures of four young Polish adolescents in Iceland. Its aim was to establish their motivation to learn Icelandic as well as to maintain their heritage language and culture. Also investigated was whether English was an impediment to their acquisition of Icelandic. Interviews, in Polish and Icelandic, were undertaken. It was found that the adolescents were motivated to learn Icelandic, to integrate into Icelandic society *and* to maintain their Polish heritage. In this sense, they lived in “two worlds,” maintaining close bonds with their Polish heritage, while also integrating into Icelandic society. English was not impeding their integration. Unlike some of their parents, they could imagine living in Iceland in the future, as they saw Iceland as a place where they could “fulfill themselves.”

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### Viðhorf pólskra unglunga á Íslandi til tungumála og menningar

Þessi forkönnun rannsakar viðhorf fjögurra pólskra unglunga til íslenskrar, pólskrar og enskrar tungu og menningar. Markmiðið var að greina áhugahvöt þeirra til að læra íslensku og halda við eigin tungu og menningararfi. Einnig var rannsakað hvort enska stæði í vegi fyrir því unglungarnir læri íslensku. Tekin voru viðtöl á pólsku og íslensku. Í ljós kom að unglungarnir vildu læra íslensku, samlagast íslensku samfélagi og varðveita pólskan menningararf. Að þessu leyti lifðu þeir í tveimur heimum, með því að halda við nánnum tengslum við pólskan menningararf og laga sig um leið að íslensku samfélagi. Enska stóð ekki í vegi fyrir þeirri samlögun. Ólíkt sumum foreldra þeirra gátu þeir hugsað sér að búa á Íslandi í framtíðinni enda litu þeir á landið sem stað þar sem þeir gætu uppfyllt væntingar sínar um sjálfa sig.

Robert Berman er dósent, Samúel Lefever lektor og Anna Katarzyna Woźniczka er framhaldsnemi, öll við Menntavísindasvið Háskóla Íslands.

## Introduction

We had noticed that some adult immigrants in Reykjavík tended to use English in their daily communication with Icelanders. Their language choice, we reasoned, might be influenced not only by the fact that some had just arrived, but also by their long-term plans, in some cases, to return to live in their homeland (Hallfríður Þórarinsdóttir, 2011). We reasoned that a sense of impending departure might diminish their motivation to learn Icelandic in favour of learning or developing English, for the pragmatic reason that English is seen to be more useful internationally than Icelandic.

At about the same time as we were reflecting on some adult immigrants' apparent language use in Iceland, Sigríður Ólafsdóttir (2010) discovered that after two years in the country, the Icelandic vocabulary of many immigrant children did not continue to grow much.

It was these three precepts that provided the rationale for our undertaking the present study. That is, some recent adult immigrants do not appear to learn Icelandic; some immigrants plan to leave Iceland; and the Icelandic language of many immigrant children may be fossilizing after two years' residence in the country. While being aware that these were hypotheses possibly not even linked, we nevertheless developed the working hypothesis that a significant number of immigrant children may not be motivated to learn Icelandic. We set about investigating this hypothesis. For this preliminary study, we narrowed the larger immigrant population to one important demographic, Poles living in Reykjavík, represented here by four individuals, although our intention is ultimately to study a large number of immigrant children of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds living in numerous locations throughout the country.

In short, in this paper we examine young adolescent Polish immigrants' attitudes to the Icelandic language and culture, in order to ascertain their motivation to learn the language. We used the opportunity to concurrently ascertain their attitudes to their native Polish language and culture, as well as to the English language, both as a means of comparison and to help explain our results.

## Review of the literature

Iceland entered a new era in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, joining many other European countries and much of the developed world in becoming a destination for immigrants. Despite the economic downturn of 2008, many newcomers and their families have remained in Iceland, meaning that Icelandic schools are now faced with the responsibility of teaching children whose mother tongue is not Icelandic. Like Norway, Iceland's immigrants now account for about 8% of the population. They are from many countries, with the largest group coming from Poland (Statistics Iceland, 2011).

Sigríður Ólafsdóttir (2010) found that the Icelandic vocabulary of foreign children residing in Iceland from between two years and up to seven years was not significantly different. In other words, she discovered that after two years in Iceland, immigrant children's language did not seem to develop much. This apparent fossilization of second language growth seems to be at odds with findings in other countries. For example, although it may take immigrant children ten years to be able to use "academic language" as well as their native-born peers, it has been shown that many immigrant children attain oral proficiency in three to five years, and academic language proficiency in four to seven years (e.g. Hakuta, Goto & Witt, 2000; Collier & Thomas, 1989). But whether it is seven years or ten years that is required to attain equality with peers, *we would expect to see evidence of significant progress between years two and seven*. Yet, according to the work of Sigríður

Ólafsdóttir, this seems not to be the case in Iceland, meaning that there appears to be a problem.

There may be a wide variety of factors contributing to explain Sigríður Ólafsdóttir's findings. One possibility is that Icelandic schools may not be serving these children's needs. However, a study designed to assess schools' competence, relevance and effectiveness in teaching immigrant children is a major undertaking and it is necessary to first consider other factors.

One such factor is children's maintenance of their first language (L1) since a number of studies have demonstrated a significantly positive relation between children's two languages, with L1 retention being shown as a key to academic success in children's second language (L2) (e.g. Cummins, 1991; Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004; Scheele, 2010; Verhoeven, 2007.). However, the question of the L1 maintenance of immigrant children in Iceland was being investigated by Woźniczka (2011) at the time, so we opted to investigate the third possibility for the apparent lack of development of L2 skills among immigrant children, which was that they were simply not motivated to learn Icelandic.

Research by Hallfríður Þórarinsdóttir (2011) of almost five hundred adult respondents showed that among the Polish community (numbering about 9,000, or 3% of the country's population), more than 40% said that they would either "probably" or "definitely" return to live in Poland, whereas only 20% responded that they "will not return" or "probably will not return." It may be necessary to add that the study also showed that most of those who planned to return had no definite departure date in mind. However, we felt that these families' impending departure might impact on the children's motivation to learn Icelandic. And since motivation "determines the extent of active, personal involvement in L2 learning" (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p.12) and thus is a crucial precondition for learning to take place, the question had serious educational implications.

Motivation in second language acquisition "is more complex than merely wanting to learn the language" (Gardner, 2007, p.10). Most crucial within the concept of motivation is what Gardner calls being "integratively motivated," meaning, for example, that the individual has a genuine interest in communicating with members of the other language and has a positive attitude toward the language learning situation (Gardner, 2007), or as Krashen says, they are "open" to learning the new language (Krashen, 1981, p. 21).

Embedded in the issue of motivation to learn a new language is the issue of language status, both the status of the language of the immigrant (Ball, 2010; Holmen, Latomaa, Gimbel, Andersen, & Jorgensen, 1995) and the language of the new community. In that context, Berman (2001) writes that the contexts of language learning:

provide a rich basis for comparing not only how the same languages are acquired in different situations of contact, [and] they also make it possible to consider the impact of the relative social status of the home (typically minority) language compared with the school (mainly majority) language. (p. 420).

The issue of language status led to our inclusion of a third language, English, into the investigation. We had noticed that some adult immigrants in Iceland used English rather than Icelandic to communicate—and even learned English rather than Icelandic after arriving in Iceland. English is a high status language in Iceland, where it is approaching "second language" status, as opposed to being merely another "foreign language" (Berman, 2010; Birna Arbjörnsdóttir, 2007). We wondered whether English may be "getting in the way" of motivating children to learn Icelandic.

## Method

Our research questions were as follows:

Are young immigrant adolescents motivated:

- to learn Icelandic, and to know the culture of Iceland?
- to know Icelanders?
- to learn their heritage language and to know that culture?
- to learn English?

In light of the previously mentioned study of the home language environment of Polish 7- and 8-year-olds (Woźniczka, 2011), we decided to undertake this study by interviewing Polish 12- and 13-year-olds, i.e. individuals who were five years older than those in Woźniczka's study. These young adolescents, all living in the vicinity of Reykjavík, had arrived in the country in the last four years. We reasoned that they would be able discuss their motivation to learn Icelandic and to maintain their native language in a relatively sophisticated manner—and that they would be able to discuss the place of English in this dynamic.

Our aim was to describe the attitudes and motivation towards learning languages and cultures of each interviewed participant and to learn more about these individuals' lives. We based our research on qualitative inquiry.

The children who were chosen and agreed to participate in the study came from various parts of the greater Reykjavik area. One girl, Basia, and three boys, Jurek, Patryk and Konrad, participated in the research project. They all shared some characteristics, including being successive bilinguals, and learning, or having learned, in the Polish School in Iceland. Jurek, Konrad and Basia had been living in Iceland for about 4 years, and Patryk for 2 years, at the time of the interviews. However, their experience and background were different. While Jurek and Patryk had younger siblings, Konrad was an only child and Basia lived with her mother. All of the boys had begun to learn English when they lived in Poland.

Parents of the children were first informed of the purpose of the study as well as of the process of data collection. Upon their agreement to participate, they were asked to fill out a short questionnaire with questions including their date of arrival in Iceland, level of education and position held in Iceland, as well as the language spoken at home and other languages that they knew. They were assured that all the information would be used only for the purposes of the study and that their and their children's names would remain anonymous.

For the purpose of our study we used semi-structured interviews, which lasted for at least half an hour each and were recorded in places familiar to the participants, such as their home or school. The interviews consisted of open and closed questions about attitudes towards learning Icelandic language and culture, and participation in Icelandic society, maintaining their Polish language and culture, and learning English (see Appendix).

In one case, the interview was conducted by two interviewers, one of whom used Polish and the other Icelandic. This was done in order to determine the attitude of the boy towards both languages, as well as his relative ease in using them. In other cases, where only one interviewer was present, Polish was chosen in order to increase the confidence of the interviewee and allow him or her to open up. Research has shown that it is easier and more natural to talk about experiences and emotions in the mother tongue, since

“memories seem to be tagged by the language of encoding” (Schrauf and Durazo-Arvizu, 2006).

All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. A random ID number was assigned to each child and later substituted with a pseudonym. Data that informed the research question were marked, with different colours used for classification. After the initial analysis of the data in this way, supportive and corroborative evidence in the form of informative dialogues and statements were sought from the data (see e.g. Lichtman, 2006).

## Results

Here we examine these four adolescents' attitudes to three languages and cultures: Icelandic, Polish and English.

### Icelandic language, country and culture

All four adolescents were pragmatic and positive about learning the Icelandic language. They realised that they needed to know this language for social interaction with Icelandic peers and for school, but they also enjoyed being able to add a new language to their repertoire. The names below are pseudonyms; R denotes the researcher.

Asked whether they liked learning Icelandic, Jurek answered, “Well, to be honest, really I didn't have any choice but to learn it.”

Patryk replied, “Yes, but sometimes it's difficult.” What he liked about learning it was that it “is a new language.”

Two of the youngsters said it had been easy to learn Icelandic because they had begun to learn it at an early age. But they remembered what it was like to have limited competence in the language.

R: Is there something difficult about learning Icelandic?

Basia (a girl): No, not really, because I started to learn it early.

R: How was it at the beginning, when you came to Iceland and didn't understand the language?

Basia: Well, it was hard. Kids were saying things to me and I couldn't understand them.

Despite various difficulties, all of the youngsters felt they were successful learners of Icelandic, including the one who had only been in Iceland for one-and-a-half years, and they used the language widely in their daily lives.

However, they rarely watch Icelandic TV. Konrad speaks Icelandic with his friends and says about the Icelandic language, “it just came.” So on the face of it seems that he converses easily in Icelandic. However, the reason he does not watch Icelandic TV is “because of the language”, so it seems that he has not yet reached full proficiency.

Similarly, Basia, who prefers reading Icelandic rather than Polish books, and in fact had two from the library on loan at the time of the interview, tends to select books that are “easy to read.”

“I chat in Icelandic,” says Patryk, who also says, when asked whether he likes reading in Icelandic, “I like it, but sometimes I don't understand half of the book.” To be fair, he has been in the country for only two years, meaning that he is doing very well. But Jurek has

been here for four years, has many Icelandic friends, sometimes argues with his sister in Icelandic, yet says, “what is difficult for me to understand...is science studies, this “náttúrufræði.” He adds, “I don’t understand it in Polish, either.”

In terms of Iceland itself, all respondents said that they like living here. One felt he had more opportunities in Iceland than in Poland. Another talked about Icelandic nature, both its beauty and destructive power, and how he enjoyed travelling around the country with his family. The remaining two youths were less specific; they said they liked “everything” about the country, had gotten used to living in Iceland and didn’t miss Poland. Three of them could see themselves living in Iceland in the future. The fourth adolescent had lived in Iceland for only two years and was not yet ready to accept Iceland as his future home.

R: ...do you like living in Iceland?

Jurek: Yes, I can fulfill myself in sports here. Because my parents didn’t have enough money in Poland... I like everything here. It’s nice. ... I can fulfill myself here, and I couldn’t do it there.

R: ...do you think that you will stay in Iceland? How do you imagine this?

Jurek: Well, my parents want to stay here. Me too, I would really like that.

R: What do you like about living in Iceland?

Patryk: Well, it has beautiful landscapes, a lot of new things, geysers, and we travel a lot. Me, Mom, Dad and my sisters, during weekends, in our free time.

R: Is there something you dislike?

Patryk: No. I’m just scared of earthquakes. And volcanoes.

R: Do you imagine yourself living in Iceland your whole life?

Patryk: Maybe, I’m not sure. I’m just thinking about it.

It seems that all of the youngsters felt accepted in their Icelandic schools. In addition, all of them participated in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, music, or dance, with Icelandic peers. They all had Icelandic friends with whom they interacted in Icelandic, both inside and outside school.

R: You said that you have many friends from Iceland. Do you often spend time with them?

Konrad: Yes. Very often.

R: And what do you do then?

Konrad: [Play] computer games, or we go outside to do something.

R: And when you are at school, are you more often with Icelandic or Polish friends?

Konrad: Icelandic.

Two of the youngsters mentioned having friends from other countries (China, Russia, Philippines and England) and they used Icelandic to communicate with them.

The adolescents also gave examples of how their Icelandic peers had helped them, for example with schoolwork.

R: And do you receive any help [at school]? Does somebody help you with translation, or do you have to manage on your own?

Jurek: Well, they sometimes help me with translation. Well now, we wrote an essay of 900 words. And there they helped me as well. They corrected my mistakes and so on.

R: So who helped you, friends or teachers?

Jurek: I mean my friends. They are very nice to me and they help me sometimes.

### **Polish language, country and culture**

Great importance was placed on maintaining the L1 in each of the adolescents' families. All the youngsters said they used Polish predominately at home with parents and siblings. Only a few cases of code-switching were mentioned, such as when parents wanted to practice their Icelandic or a younger sibling used Icelandic at home. Instances of code-switching were mentioned only by the youngsters who had lived for a number of years in Iceland.

R: And what language do you speak with your parents?

Jurek: Polish. But we have also started to speak in Icelandic. Because my mother wants to improve it and my father wants to learn Icelandic.

Each of the youngsters attended Polish school or had previously done so. This was a positive experience for all of them. One of the youngsters (Konrad) chose to go to Polish school rather than after-school sports training with Icelandic youngsters. The individuals also had access to Polish through satellite television at home, and preferred watching Polish rather than Icelandic programmes. Two of them talked about reading Polish books, both from their personal collection and from school or public libraries.

In order to explore aspects of cultural identity the adolescents were asked for their opinions about Polish traditions and holidays—with which all were familiar. Basia talked about how her family celebrated Polish holidays but the others felt there was less emphasis on practicing Polish traditions in Iceland because the customs were not known here. However, in some cases they had had an opportunity to talk about Polish customs at school. Overall, there did not seem to be much sharing of Polish culture with Icelandic peers.

One of the students felt that he related better to the "Polish way of life," in particular to what he saw as the Polish emphasis on discipline and waking up early in the morning. He also enjoyed learning about Polish history. Other youngsters talked about their preference for Polish foods.

Family ties were clearly an important part of the adolescents' identification with their Polish heritage. All of them mentioned strong attachments to relatives and friends in Poland and maintained ties through regular visits to Poland and computer-mediated communication. But one of the youngsters did not have as much contact with old friends as he would like. He felt that he didn't have time to keep up the contact.

R: Do you still have contact with your friends there?

Patryk: Yes. Through gadu-gadu [Polish messenger], through Skype and Nasza klasa [Polish Facebook]. ... in the future I would like to return to Poland. I miss all my friends, Grandma, Grandpa, the whole family.

R: So do you stay in touch with your family as well?

Patryk: All the time through the Internet.

The youngsters also had Polish friends in Iceland. They had made friends with other children at the Polish school and in their neighbourhoods. Most of their parents' friends were Polish and they considered themselves to be part of the Polish community in Reykjavík.

Cultural and language identity are closely linked for the Polish youngsters. It is important for them to be able to speak Polish and they are glad to have opportunities to use Polish. One youngster remarked that children occasionally make fun of the language, but it didn't bother him. The youngsters are proud and active users of Polish, as can be seen in the following comments:

Konrad: Yes, I'm a Pole. And to speak with my family and friends, it's important.

Patryk: Well, I like to speak Polish. It's important to me that I can speak Polish. All those words. Polish is one of the most difficult languages. And I'm happy to be a Pole.

He added: I prefer to speak Polish, not being stressed in Icelandic because I don't understand something. And with Poles I'm not stressed because I know that I will understand everything, because it's my language.

Jurek: "Well, I just like it [at the Polish school]. Because... it's the only day that I can speak Polish the whole day."

All of the youngsters have positive attitudes towards learning Polish and consider themselves to be successful learners of Polish. Although they experience some difficulties in learning the language, for example grammar and spelling, they enjoy learning Polish and are confident users of it.

R: Do you sometimes feel that you have problems with communicating in Polish, that you miss some words or you feel uncomfortable, unsure?

Jurek: No... But there are some words that I don't know yet, because I wasn't in Poland too long. And there are some words that I have forgotten a bit.

All four adolescents had Polish friends in Iceland, whom they met at their regular school, at the Polish school or during leisure activities. Some of them found it difficult to say whether they preferred having Icelandic or Polish friends. The cultural or language background of their friends did not seem to matter.

R: Where are [your friends] from?

Jurek: Well, those Poles, they don't live so close. ...But sometimes I meet them too. As I said, we play football sometimes.

R: And Icelandic friends?



Jurek: Well, yes, yes.

R: And who is your best friend?

Jurek: I don't have any favourites... They are just all cool.

### **English language and culture**

All of the adolescents were learning English at school. In most cases they enjoyed it. English added to their overall knowledge of languages, of which they were proud. Moreover, they recognized the value of knowing English both for school and for leisure activities, such as listening to music, watching movies and using the Internet. Here is Patryk:

R: What do you think about learning English?

Patryk: I like it a lot.

R: What do you like about learning English?

Patryk: Being able to speak another language.

R: Do you think it will be good to know in the future?

Patryk: Yes, you can always use English, for example in the US. It's helpful.

Similarly, Konrad is positive about the language:

R: Do you like [English]?

Konrad: Yes. ...It's quite easy. And I can understand movies and when I'm surfing the Internet.

R: So do you often use it outside school?

Konrad: I watch movies ...on the laptop sometimes.

R: Have you ever used English on the street?

Konrad: Yes. An old lady asked me for directions and I told her.

R: How did it go?

Konrad: Well, I think .

But when asked which language was most useful, he replied, "most useful in Iceland is Icelandic."

R: And in the future?

Konrad: I don't know. Icelandic, because I will be here.

English for most of these young people is a language for school and entertainment; it is not the most practical or useful language for them in their current situation.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The interview data show that the four adolescents have achieved a level of plurilingual competence which enables them to use different languages for a variety of purposes. The individuals who have lived in Iceland the longest were able to switch comfortably between

Polish and Icelandic, and in some cases had served as translators for their parents. In general, Polish is the language used in the home and with family and friends, whereas Icelandic is used outside the home, at school and in interaction with Icelandic peers. All respondents speak Icelandic exclusively, never English, to their Icelandic friends, and moreover Icelandic is used to communicate with friends from other countries. Finally, English is used for personal needs such as leisure and in preparation for the future.

Looking somewhat deeper, it seems we may also be witnessing these students' easy familiarity with informal Icelandic (and possibly English) language, or BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills), but on the other hand an ongoing struggle to master CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency), terms coined by Cummins (1979).

The danger is that teachers, parents and even the students themselves may overestimate their L2 proficiency, based on their ability to “chat,” and not focus sufficiently on developing their formal (or “academic”) language potential. Research informs us that it can take immigrant children anywhere from 4 to 10 years to catch up with their native speaking peers (e.g. Hakuta et al, 2000; Collier & Thomas, 1989), meaning that it is not surprising that these young adolescents have not yet done so, having been here for only two to four years. But it is crucial for them, their parents and their teachers to realise that focussed instruction must continue in this area, not only in Icelandic but also in Polish (see Brynhildur Anna Ragnarsdóttir and Anna Filinska, 2010).

We had been concerned that English might be interfering with these young people's acquisition of Icelandic, based on the facts that their parents in many cases rely on English to communicate with Icelanders and that English is a high status language in Iceland. We feared that these factors might demotivate young people from wanting to learn Icelandic rather than English. But when we examine what these four young adolescents say about English, we find that they sound very much like young Icelanders in their attitude to, and in some cases in their use of, the language (Lovísa Kristjánsdóttir, Laufey Bjarnadóttir and Samúel Lefever, 2006).

They *all* like English music, and most report watching English language movies on their computers—though sometimes with Polish subtitles—and most use English in various ways on the computer. But they are as ambivalent about English as many Icelandic adolescents. On the one hand Jurek is sufficiently interested in English that he is taking private lessons, which he says he really enjoys, because he sings in English and plays computer games in English. But he admits he has a problem with it because it is difficult to write.

Replying in Icelandic as to how he enjoys learning English in school, Patryk answers that it is “fun.” He implies how useful it is to know English for travel. Responding to the question as to which was his favourite language, he replies, “Polish, then English, and then Icelandic.” However, this young man speaks no English outside school, prefers Polish to English language TV, and says that he does not read English—although he had said earlier that he reads both Polish and Icelandic library books. Therefore it would appear that English is certainly not *getting in the way* of his schooling; in fact, one would hope that he will be able to keep up with his peers as English becomes increasingly demanding in school. Even more bluntly, Basia says English in school is “always getting more and more difficult, so I just stopped learning it, because I don't understand it.”

As is the case with Icelandic youths, these four young people's English language skills are not uniform. For example, Konrad says that he likes English in school because “it's quite easy.” On the other hand, he answers that he does not read in English.

In regard to English, the main point is that the language is seen by these young adolescents as a useful, and even “fun” extracurricular skill that enables them to listen to songs, to watch movies and perhaps, in the future, to travel. It is also a school subject which for some is easy and for others is difficult. But in no way does it come close to the importance in their lives of Icelandic. For them English is very much a *third* language.

What comes most strikingly out of the interviews with these four young people is not only that their lives span two parallel worlds, but that they coexist in these different, separate worlds with relative nonchalance and ease. Patryk says that Poland is “another climate. I feel different there.” But in Iceland, “it’s not the same, it’s another world,” with different customs, “different culture, different food. Completely different, new.” These young people speak Polish almost exclusively at home and then they switch to Icelandic with their school friends. But more than this, they seem positive about dealing with each arena.

But, despite the fact that they “didn’t have any choice” but to learn Icelandic, and when they started out “it was hard,” there is a sense of positive optimism in their dealing with both worlds. Just as they all mention having both Polish and Icelandic friends who, according to Jurek, “are just all cool,” so too are the two linguistic and cultural worlds just fine when taken on their own merits. For example, Konrad says of the importance of learning Polish, “I’m a Pole. And to speak with my family and friends, it’s important.” But this does not diminish the importance of Icelandic, for after all, he will need Icelandic for the future because, as he says, “I will be here.”

The four young Polish adolescents interviewed for this study seem highly motivated, both to maintain their Polish heritage and to integrate into Icelandic society. On the one hand, they clearly demarcate the areas where Icelandic and Polish are spoken, and on the other hand, they manage to live successfully in these parallel worlds.

These findings are similar to stories of youth from various backgrounds and in different places, including virtual worlds, who successfully position themselves to a greater or lesser extent in plural worlds (see eg. Nilan & Feixa, 2006).

In addition, we found that the English of these four individuals is not getting in the way of allowing them to maintain their mother tongue nor to learn Icelandic, but is used for completely different purposes, mainly for entertainment. These children seem to make the best use of each language and consider each language an asset.

Zurer Pearson (2008) argues that “very powerful is the natural attraction of the majority language culture for the child” (p. 129). Indeed, participants’ stories support this statement. Patryk says, “Ísland er mjög gaman. Skemmtilegt” (Iceland is very much fun. Enjoyable). These four adolescents are motivated to learn Icelandic, primarily because they are attracted to Iceland. Iceland is a place where they are going to live, where they have their friends and where they can “fulfill themselves”. They need to communicate, understand others and be understood. Clearly, to accomplish all of their objectives, Icelandic is the key!

As we stated in the beginning, this study is a preliminary step. Further investigation is needed as to the possible differences in children’s motivation according to their length of stay in Iceland and whether they return to Poland. Will the children develop their academic language potential in both mother tongue and Icelandic? Will their attitude towards particular languages change along the way? Moreover, it is necessary to investigate different minorities, in different Icelandic locations, to see whether they share the same characteristics as these adolescents.

Although this study is only the prelude to future research, the stories from these four individuals contain a wealth of information that reassures us of at least two wonderful truths. First, bilingualism does not indicate a problem, but an advantage. Second, children want to make the best of the world (or worlds) in which they find themselves. Our duty is to help them “fulfill themselves” in whichever world we encounter them.

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## Appendix

### Interview questions

1. Warm-up
  - 1.1 How old are you?
  - 1.2 Who do you live with?
  - 1.3 How many brothers and sisters do you have?
  - 1.4 Are you the oldest? Youngest? In the middle?
  - 1.5 Do you spend time with your brothers and sisters? When?
  - 1.6 How long have you been in Iceland?
  
2. Attitudes towards Polish language and culture
  - 2.1 How often do you speak Polish to your parents?
  - 2.2 How often do you speak Polish to your siblings?
  - 2.3 How often do you speak Polish to family friends and relations?
  - 2.4 Do you have any Polish friends? Are they your best friends?
  - 2.5 How often do you speak Polish to your friends?
  - 2.6 Are you learning Polish at school or outside school?
  - 2.7 Do you sometimes have difficulties speaking in Polish or understanding it?
  - 2.8 Do you watch Polish TV? Do you like doing this?
  - 2.9 How often do you watch Polish TV?
  - 2.10 Aside from school and TV, do you listen anything else in Polish, such as music, or stories that are read to you? Do you like this?
  - 2.11 How often?
  - 2.12 Do you know any Polish songs or stories?
  - 2.13 Do you read anything in Polish (outside school)? What? Do you like doing this?
  - 2.14 How often?
  - 2.15 Is it sometimes best to use Polish? When?
  - 2.16 Do you like the Polish language?
  - 2.17 What do your friends/others say about your Polish?
  - 2.18 How important is learning Polish to you?
  - 2.19 Do you remember living in or visiting Poland? Do you like the idea of living there? Why or why not?
  - 2.20 Do you know about Polish traditions such as Easter “Smigus Dyngus”, Andrzejki , etc...

3. Attitudes towards Icelandic language and culture
  - 3.1 How often do you speak Icelandic to your parents?
  - 3.2 How often do you speak Icelandic to your siblings?
  - 3.3 How often do you speak Icelandic to your friends?
  - 3.4 How are you learning Icelandic – at school, outside school?
  - 3.5 What do you think about your Icelandic lessons? Are they helpful?
  - 3.6 Do you enjoy learning Icelandic?
  - 3.7 Is it difficult?
  - 3.8 What is good about learning Icelandic?
  - 3.9 What do your friends/others say about your Icelandic?
  - 3.10 Do you like watching Icelandic language (not English language) TV? Which programs?
  - 3.11 How often?
  - 3.12 Do you read anything in Icelandic, outside school? What? Do you like doing this?
  - 3.13 How often?
  - 3.14 Do you listen to Icelandic, such as in songs, or stories? Do you know any songs or stories?
  - 3.15 How often?
  
4. Participation in Icelandic society
  - 4.1 What kind of sports do you like? Do you play with Polish or Icelandic children?
  - 4.2 Do you study music? With Polish or Icelandic children?
  - 4.3 Do you sing in a choir? With Polish or Icelandic children?
  - 4.4 Do you attend sports or music events? With Poles or Icelanders?
  - 4.5 Do you spend time with Icelandic kids at school?
  - 4.6 Do you spend time with Icelandic kids outside school?
  - 4.7 What do like about living in Iceland?
  - 4.8 What do you dislike?
  - 4.9 Do you think you will stay in Iceland for a long time? How long, do you think?
  - 4.10 Do you like Icelandic traditions, customs? Do you/your family celebrate any of them?

5. Attitudes towards English
- 5.1 Are you learning English – at school? Outside school?
- 5.2 Do you enjoy learning English? What is good about learning English? What is difficult about it?
- 5.3 What do others say about your English?
- 5.4 Do you like watching English language TV? Which programs?
- 5.5 How often do you watch English programs on TV?
- 5.6 Which language do you prefer watching on TV: Polish, Icelandic or English?
- 5.7 Do you read anything in English? What? Do you like doing this?
- 5.8 How often?
- 5.9 Do you listen to English anywhere, such as on the net or in songs?
- 5.10 How often?
- 5.11 Do you know any songs?
- 5.12 Outside school, how often do you speak English to anyone?