



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

**English Encountered by
Icelandic Children**

Is English becoming the second language of Iceland's youth?

B.A. Essay

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May 2012

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School of Humanities
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Abstract

The aim of this essay is to study the status of English in Iceland, specifically the exposure Icelandic children encounter through various types of media. In order to achieve this goal, two types of studies were conducted to determine the amount of English input Icelandic children encounter. First, information was gathered from the media providers in Iceland to shed light on the amount of exposure, and secondly, a survey was conducted with children of the ages eight and nine to determine how many times the children encountered English through media in their private time, what types of media they consumed and how much they used English outside school. In addition, the status of English as a global language is discussed along with a distinction between a foreign language and a second language. Due to high exposure of English through media, young Icelanders may be moving closer to speaking English as a second language than as a foreign language. The exposure is mostly of conversational English while the English needs seem to be more of an academic and formal nature. The relationship between exposure, formal English instruction and actual English proficiency needs of Icelandic children needs further investigation.

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Introduction

In this thesis, the status of English as a global language is discussed from a general perspective and the rapidly changing status of English in Iceland is described. The aim of the study was to measure the English exposure encountered by Icelandic children, 12 years and younger, in their daily lives, outside the school classroom. The goal was to gather data on the amount and nature of English exposure through the media from official and private data collection and market analysis companies, and media providers. This included, but was not limited to television broadcasting, DVD purchases, VOD rentals, cinema attendance, video game purchases, book sales and magazine sales that are especially targeting children.

Secondly, due to a lack of data on media specifically aimed at children, a survey was conducted with a sample of Icelandic children to see where their English exposure originated. Numerous studies have been conducted in Iceland on young people learning foreign languages in Iceland, but they have mostly been focused on formal education, instructional methods and children's perceptions of those methods. This study was mainly focused on how many times the children encountered English through media in their private time, in what way they were exposed to it, and how much they used English outside school.

Icelandic children in today's society are exposed to English on a daily basis through various means, as English language moves closer to being a second language in Iceland from being a foreign language, resulting in Icelandic children's greater general English proficiency (Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007, 2011).

The thesis is divided into six chapters. In chapter one, the introduction, a distinction is made between a second and a foreign language, English is explored as a global language and it is described how it has taken the status of a global language. We then move on to discussing the status of English in Iceland and how Icelandic children are exposed to the language outside the classrooms. In chapter two, the media study is presented as a whole; its purpose and meaning are discussed and the subchapters reflect on how the data collection took place followed by the results of the study itself. As previously mentioned, the results of the media study were not satisfactory and for that reason a small survey was conducted with eight and nine year old children on their exposure to English. In chapter three this survey is described in-depth and the

subchapters describe its process and results. Finally, in chapter four, the results of both the media study and the survey are concluded, with some additional information about the weaknesses and further questions posed by the study described in this thesis.

1. The Status of English, globally and in Iceland; Foreign language and second language

1.1 The difference between a second language and a foreign language

Before we can talk about the status of English, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between second language and foreign language acquisition.

As Arnbjörnsdóttir pointed out (2007), the main difference between a foreign language (FL) and a second language (SL) is that an SL is learned in a community where SL is the main language and a FL is learned mainly in classrooms in the speakers' native country. For instance, if a child has Spanish as its first language (L1) and moves to France where they learn French, French will be their SL. But a Spanish child who learns French at school in Spain has French as their FL.

1.2 English as a global language

English is the most widely spoken language in the world today. According to David Graddol: There are three kinds of English speakers: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is a second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel the language 'belongs' to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future (The British Council, 1997, 2000). David Crystal argued that there are two reasons why English has achieved the status of a global language. Firstly, the language has been made an official language of over 70 countries where it is used as a medium of communication in such domains as government, law courts, media and educational system (Crystal, 2003). Secondly, the language has been made the primary language children are taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries (Crystal, 2003).

Furthermore, Robert Phillipson stated:

Since 1945, and more intensively in recent years, there has been a gradual shift towards English becoming by far the most widely learned foreign language on the continent of Europe, taking over space, both in Western and Eastern Europe, occupied earlier by other foreign languages, French, German and Russian in particular (2007).

According to a report by The European Commission, *Europeans and their Languages* (2006), 56% of Europeans speak a language other than their mother tongue and 28% of respondents say they can master two foreign languages. However, 44% of Europeans admit that they only speak their native language. Thirty eight per cent of Europeans indicate that they know English which is, according to the report, the most widely spoken language in 19 of the 29 countries covered in the survey. Furthermore, 73% of the respondents think that young people should be competent in foreign languages and more than half of them think children should start to learn their first foreign language between the ages of 6 and 12.

The critical or sensitive period, as presented by Lenneberg in 1967 as the Critical Period Hypothesis, is “a period in the development of an organism when it is particularly sensitive to certain environmental influences” (Gleitman, Reisberg and Gross, 344). It has been documented in many studies that at such an early age, before the age of 10-12, children are in their sensitive period for second language learning (Gleitman et al., 344). Many believe that it makes sense to begin foreign language instruction to children during this sensitive period. Other say it will only be successful if there is enough input in the environment such as in a second language setting.

English proficiency is furthermore used as a requirement in many countries for access to higher education and employment. In Scandinavia, for instance, all university students are expected to have good proficiency levels in English (Phillipson, 2007).

According to Truchot (1993), “after World War II English became the prevalent language in European politics and business exchanges and also in the making of films, television programmes and popular songs”. He also stated that “in recent years the spread of English is due to changes in our society and technological development”. The increasing amount of English input through various types of media has changed the nature and the amount of input children and others receive English from, which previously had mostly been confined to the classroom.

1.3 Icelandic children and English

English is the first foreign language taught in Icelandic schools. *The National Curriculum Guidelines for Foreign Languages at the Primary Level* (Menntamálaráðuneytið, 2007) stated that English is a key factor in international

relations, for example in the fields of politics, economic affairs, higher education, tourism, and computer communications. This is due to the country's size, its geographical location and business opportunities. In 2006, a change was made to the syllabus where Icelandic children were to start learning English in 4th grade instead of 5th, although schools are allowed to start earlier (p. 4). In an article in the periodical *Málfríður* (2009), Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir pointed out that "it has been established that early exposure is only beneficial where the amount of exposure in the environment is great enough for language acquisition to occur" (p. 17).

Kristjánsdóttir, Bjarnadóttir and Lefever (2005-2006) did a survey on Icelandic students and English and concluded that English was a popular subject in Icelandic elementary and secondary schools and the children thought it was very important to learn the language to be able to use it in their daily lives and to speak to foreigners. Most of the 10 year old children that answered their survey said they learned English mostly from watching television programmes and movies, and when listening to music with English lyrics.

These studies suggest that Icelandic children use English more outside the classroom than is reflected in the curriculum once at school as many come to school already having exposure to English.

1.4 Exposure outside the classroom

As Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) stated, English is widely used in Iceland and she adds that some children are already fluent in English when they come to school (Ásrún Jóhannsdóttir, 2009). Media has changed rapidly in recent years due to new innovations in the fields of technology. According to Ulla Carlsson in the UNESCO Yearbook (2002); "media play a central role in the process called globalization" (p. 8). In this thesis, media is therefore not only considered to be books, television, cinema and magazines, but also internet and computer games.

It is a known fact that in Iceland, movies and television programs for teenagers usually have subtitles and are therefore not dubbed into Icelandic from the original language, but most children's programs are. In Þorbjörn Broddason's review from 2006, he pointed out that in 1968 a survey concluded that children in Iceland, aged 10-15 years, read 3.9 books on average in 30 days, apart from their school books. In 2003,

the number had dropped down to an average of 1.8 books. He believed that internet, television and computers were to blame for the decrease in leisure reading amongst youngsters (Broddason, 2006).

This might be the reason why Arnbjörnsdóttir stated that Icelandic teenagers are especially proficient in speaking informal American English (2007). Icelandic youngsters seem to be choosing the new media, internet, television and computers, over books, which is resulting in more input of informal English.

Arnbjörnsdóttir (2007) argued that due to Icelandic people's ability to speak and understand English, the language is getting closer to becoming a second language (SL) than a foreign language (FL). She did however, in addition to this, state that this could be due to the fact that Icelandic children and teenagers overestimate their English skills where their speaking and listening skills are much better than their productive skills (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2007). Arnbjörnsdóttir also suggested that this imbalance between productive skills on one hand, and speaking and listening skills on the other hand is a result of the type of exposure Icelanders receive; media (2007). This leaves Icelandic youngsters somewhat in between the categories of FL and SL because Icelandic children learn English through various media and not just at school, which exceeds the definition of an FL, but their English cannot be considered SL either, because of the lack of productive skills.

This information lead the researcher to want to measure the actual amount of English an Icelandic child is exposed to in everyday life. The aim was to try to get a grasp on how much English children in Iceland are exposed to through media. The following sections will describe the study that was conducted among Icelandic media suppliers.

2. Media Study – Purpose and Research Question

The overall goal was to try to measure the amount of English encountered by an Icelandic child outside of school using various different sources. This was to be achieved by conducting a media study to see how much children in Iceland are exposed to English through media. Television, movie rentals, DVD and Blu-Ray rentals and sales, book sales and magazine sales were all explored thoroughly. The following sections will describe that part of the research and reflect on the findings.

2.1 Methodology of media study

2.1.1 Data collection

To be able to measure the amount of English material from these different media providers, the researcher contacted marketing agents from various companies and/or observed the service providers in Iceland. These companies were *Skjárinn* and *Vodafone*, who are in charge of selling access to all foreign television channels available in Iceland; *Sjónvarpið*, *SkjárEinn* and *Stöð 2*, the three national television channels in Iceland; *Midi.is* and *Sambio.is*, websites who sell cinema tickets and *Eymundsson*, the biggest book- and magazine-seller in Iceland. The DVD, Blu-Ray and computer-game suppliers contacted could not give any information on the matter and pointed the researcher's questions to *Statistics Iceland* (Hagstofa), so the material available on those media providers was found there.

2.2 Results

In the following sections the results of the media study will be describes in the order that they were undertaken.

2.2.1 Television broadcasting

In 2010 there were 121,900 households in Iceland (Data Market) and according to Hagstofa (a). Almost 99% of Icelandic households have a television set. This suggests that most Icelandic children have access to at least one television channel that carries children's material in Icelandic; the state channel, *Sjónvarpið*, which is available wherever there is a television set. Privately owned channels in Iceland are *SkjárEinn* and *Stöð 2*. Feilitzen and Carlsson (2002) described international networks in English

aimed at children worldwide and their effect on local childrens programming. They stated:

In the span of a couple of years in the latter part of the 1990s, some fifty television channels directed specifically to children were introduced. Those having international distribution, such as Cartoon Network, Disney Channel and Fox Kids Network, are often referred to as "global children's television channels". The popularity of international specialty children's channels has prompted national television services in many countries to cut back their production of programmes for children (2002).

Children in Iceland have access to this foreign material on television. There are two television channel providers in Iceland, *Vodafone* and *Skjárinn*, that sell all the access to foreign channels. According to *Vodafone* (2012) 6,000 homes in Iceland have access to six foreign channels through their *Gold service pack* (*Vodafone Gull*), five of them English speaking ones, and one of them a children's channel. *Skjárinn* (2012) states that 12,000 homes pay for foreign channels through their service and as of January 2012, 40,000 homes in Iceland gained free access to five foreign channels, one of them a childrens' channel in English. However, no statistical information exists on how much children under the age of 12 watch television whereas national surveys are only conducted with participants over the age of 12. The television service providers did not have this information on hand either when asked. (*Vodafone*; *Skjárinn*, 2012)

2.2.1.1 Survey of TV watching over a one week period

Due to the lack of information, three short studies were conducted to discern how much children's material was broadcast on the three main television channels during one week in February. Children's material is in this thesis defined as cartoons, TV-shows and movies aimed at a younger audience from *Sjónvarpið*, *Skjárinn* and *Stöð 2*.

A sample was taken from the main television channel, *Sjónvarpið*, during a week in February 2012. As a result, of the 84.5 total hours of broadcasting, 13 hours or 15.3% were devoted to children programs of which 80% were in Icelandic, 17% in English and the last 3% in Danish (*Sjónvarið*, 2012). Another sample was taken from *Stöð 2* the same week. During this time, a total of 165 hours were used for broadcasting,

16% or 26.42 hours of the time were occupied by children programs of which 82.3% were in Icelandic and 17.7% in English.

SkjárEinn did not broadcast any programs for children during the same week (Appendix A). No measurable information is on hand how much children in Iceland watch television, but the supply is clearly present as these findings show.

Chart 1: Broadcasting by total hours vs. hours aimed at children

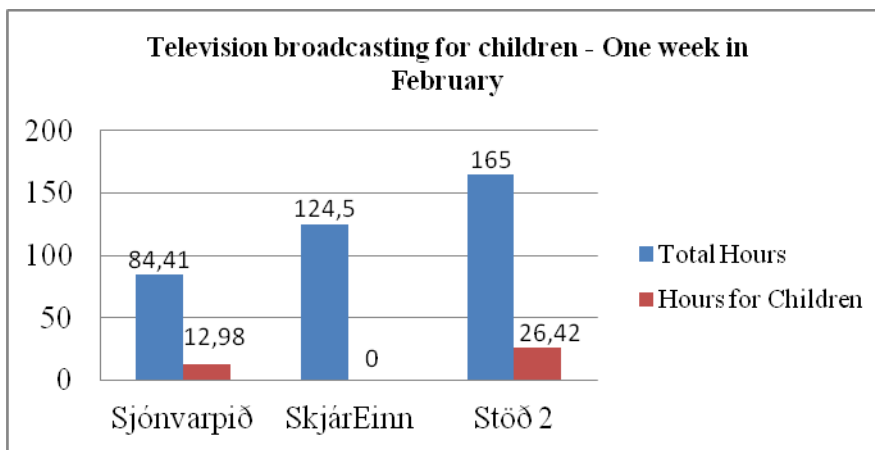
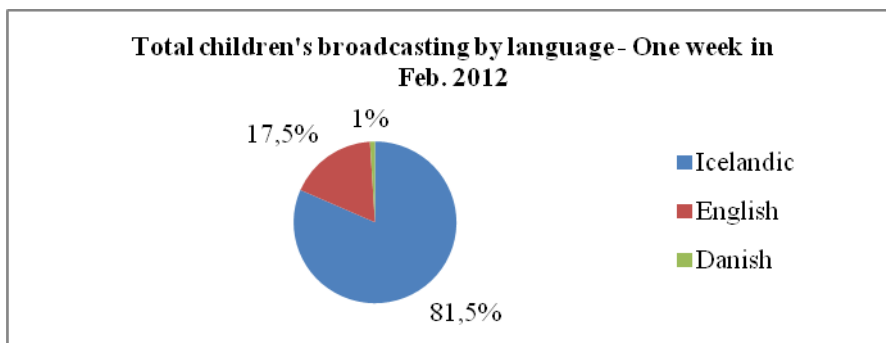


Chart 2: Total broadcasting of children’s material by language – One week in February 2012



Children’s material in English on the Icelandic television channels takes 17.5% of air time while 81.5% of the material is in Icelandic.

2.2.2 Movie rentals through VOD (Video-on-demand)

According to information from *Skjárinn* (2012), VOD (Video-on-demand) is getting more and more popular as a means to rent movies. It is a convenient option for customers to be able to rent movies at home since there is no need to go outside, and the movie is paid for with the television bill. It can sometimes even be cheaper for

customers to use this option because some of the movies available are for free of charge on VOD but not in a video rental store.

Movies that are aimed at families and are shown both in English and dubbed into Icelandic have an approximate rental ratio of 100 per English movie against 250 per dubbed Icelandic movie. The gap becomes bigger when it is movies that are solely aimed at young audience, approximately 50 English rentals against 300 Icelandic rentals (Skjárinn, 2012). Although no indicative information is on hand how much children in Iceland watch rented movies through VOD, the statistics suggest that Icelandic children watch movies in Icelandic more often than movies in English. It is not clear whether it is the children themselves or their family members that are making these decisions.

2.2.3 Magazine sales

According to *Eymundsson*, the oldest and largest booksellers in Iceland, there were four magazines sold in their stores in 2011 that were aimed at an audience of 12 years old and younger. Two of them were in Icelandic, one in English and one was in Danish.

On average over one year, *Eymundsson* sold 7,616 magazines to the age-group 12 years and younger of which 6,848 or 89.9% were in Icelandic, 568 or 7.6% were in Danish, and 200 or 2.6% were in English (Penninn-Eymundsson, 2012) (Appendix B). Altogether, the statistics show that children in Iceland rarely read magazines in English and they are also of short supply.

2.2.4 Cinema attendance

In 2009 the twenty most popular movies shown in Icelandic movie theatres distributed as follows: three Icelandic, two Swedish and twelve from the United States. In March 2012, five movies aimed at children were shown in Icelandic cinemas, of which four were dubbed into Icelandic and not shown in English and one was only shown in English (Midi.is and Sambio.is). On the top 10 list of movies 16th-18th March, three were children movies. Nevertheless, when asked about attendance to children movies, no information was available from neither the cinemas themselves nor the movie providers in Iceland.

In other words, Icelandic children seem to have limited access to movies in English at the cinema. In one month only one of the five children movies was shown in

English. It can be expected that on a yearly basis there will be approximately 12 movies in English out of 60. The researcher thinks the number of movies in English is probably higher and that children do have more of a choice in which language they see the movies.

2.2.5 DVD/ Blu-Ray sales

In 2010, according to Hagstofa (b, 2012) the distribution of sold DVD discs by origin was as follows: Icelandic movies: 112,939 and foreign movies: 639,170, an approximate ratio of 1:6. Additionally, the ten most sold movies distributed by country origin were as follows: Three from Iceland, two from Sweden and five from The United States. Despite this, no measurable information is on hand how much children in Iceland watch movies on DVD or Blu-Ray.

Unlike the supply of children movies at the cinema, these findings show that foreign DVD movies are a lot more popular than Icelandic ones. This could however be due to the fact that many Icelanders go to the movies to see Icelandic movies rather than buying them. The supply of foreign movies is also much higher than the supply of Icelandic movies.

2.2.6 DVD/Blu-Ray rentals

According to Hagstofa (c, 2012), in 2010 the distribution of rented DVD discs by origin was as follows: 2,194 Icelandic movies and 36,353 foreign movies. Also, the ten most rented movies distributed by country are as follows: one from Iceland, one from Sweden and eight from the United States. To emphasize, a short study was conducted that showed that during 16th – 22nd March, the top 20 list of DVD rentals included one children's movie (Kvikmyndir.is). Foreign children's movies on DVD can usually be played both in Icelandic and English but no measurable information is on hand how much children in Iceland watch rented DVD movies.

Similar to the previous section on movies sold on DVD and Blu-Ray, renting foreign movies seems to be a lot more popular than renting Icelandic movies. It is impossible to see how many of the rented movies are aimed at children, the statistics only show that the demand is more for foreign movies than Icelandic ones, mostly American movies, or eight out of every ten movies.

2.2.7 Video-game sales

None of the video-game stores and distributors that were contacted could give out any information on the matter but the researcher did however find some information on-line. First, according to the top ten lists on *Skifan.is* (Topplistinn, 2012) for both PC and Play Station 3 (PS3) games, there was only one game out of twenty allowed for an audience younger than 12 years and all the games were only playable in English. Second, *BT's Topp 5* (2012) list of the most popular PC, PS3 and Wii games was a little bit different; their list contained eight games out of fifteen that were allowed for the audience of 3/7-12 years old, all of the games were in English. Third, the *Topp10!* List from *Elko.is* (2012) contained the most variety of computer games, a total of six types. As a result, of the 43 most popular games they had on this list, twelve were allowed for children below 12 years, all of them only in English apart from one which was a dictionary.

Even though little information is on hand about how much children play computer games, it is obvious that the most popular games allowed for the audience are all in English so the ones who play these games should get a considerable amount of English input while playing.

2.2.8 Book sales

According to *Eymundsson*, the numbers for children books in English sold in their stores in Iceland are almost non-existent. The only books they sell a reasonable amount of in English (that are not school-books) are aimed at tourists such as animated books about the Yule Lads (*Jólasveinar*).

However, even though there were no measureable amount of sold children-books in English, the bookseller was able to offer numbers for Icelandic children-books sold in their stores for the past five years and those statistics showed that numbers of Icelandic children's books that are sold in bookstores are rapidly dwindling (Appendix C) (Penninn-Eymundsson, 2012).

2.3 Discussion of the results of the media study

The aim of the media study was to measure English media exposure Icelandic children encountered in their daily lives. Statistics show that most Icelandic children have access to a television set with at least the state channel *Sjónvarpið*. Information given from the

foreign channel providers conclude that a total of 58,000 individuals and families in Iceland have access to at least one foreign children's channel. It is impossible to see how many of these families have children. The sample that was taken, however, clearly shows that the supply of children's material on Icelandic television channels is quite high. Both *Sjónvarpið* and *Stöð 2* dedicated a few hours a week to children's programmes and around 17% of these programmes were in English. The third channel, *SkjárEinn* did not show anything aimed at children.

Icelandic children seemed to prefer Icelandic or dubbed movies over English speaking ones on VOD rentals. Movies aimed at families have an average rental ratio of 100 English against per 250 Icelandic. Movies aimed at young children have a bigger difference or 1:6.

Only 2.6% of sold magazines in *Eymundsson* are in English of the average 7,616 magazines sold per year. Children books in English have an even smaller sales percentage, almost non-existent. The statistics showed that time spent on leisure reading by young people in Iceland is dropping rapidly year by year.

Since no information was on hand from the cinemas on attendance to children movies by language, the only information that was on hand with help of the internet was the origins of the movies that have recently been the most popular ones. Same occurred with DVD/Blu-Ray sales and rentals. The conclusion is that a much higher number of foreign than Icelandic movies are sold and rented in Iceland.

The study showed that all of the popular video games in Iceland are only playable in English. The few games that have been made in Icelandic do not make these lists. This means that the children that play computer games could be getting a fair amount of English input while playing video games.

Sadly, the information on hand from the media providers is of short supply but it can be concluded that Icelandic children have much more access to English material through newer media, like television shows, movies, and computer games than other types of media, like books and magazines.

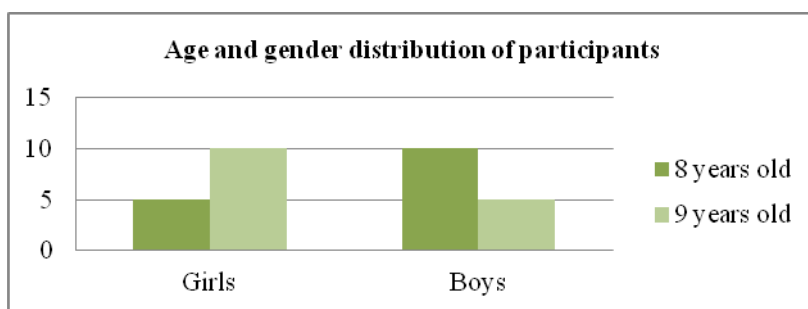
3. Survey of 8-9 year old children about their exposure to English

The media suppliers were unable to give concluding information about English exposure. Therefore the researcher conducted another study in which she interviewed a number of children aged 8-9 about their exposure to English. This study will be described in the following sections.

3.1 The participants

According to Hagstofa (d, 2012), 7th February 2012 there were 8,259 children of the ages eight and nine living in Iceland. A small sample of a total of 30 eight and nine year old children was asked to answer a short anonymous questionnaire about their exposure to the English language. The subjects of the survey were in 3rd and 4th grades of elementary schools. The reason for choosing such young participants is that at that age they are just beginning to learn English at school and it is interesting to see how much they are already using English at that time. The subjects were chosen by visiting three different after-school programs in the Reykjavík area and asking children of the appropriate age to answer the questionnaire. The sample was 30 students that distributed by age and gender as shown in the accompanying chart:

Chart 3: Age and gender distribution of participants



The aim of this survey was to get answers from the children themselves to gather information on how much they use English in their daily lives. This was not a random sample.

3.2 The survey

The children were presented with a questionnaire in Icelandic that contained 12 questions that were all fitted to one page. Some of the questions were borrowed from a

previous study that was carried out for the (then) Ministry of Education in Iceland by Lovísa et.al.

At the top of the page was a short note to the students about the survey, followed by two background questions where they could tick the appropriate boxes whether they were a boy or a girl and whether they were eight or nine years old. Next, the third question was on how they rated their English proficiency themselves with the possible answers being “*very good*”, “*rather good*”, “*okay*” and “*not good*”. The fourth question was on how many times a week the children used English in their daily lives, outside of the school classrooms, with the possible answers being “*every day*”, “*4-6 times*”, “*1-3 times*” and “*never*”. The fifth and last question was in eight parts on in what way they used English outside school, whether it was by reading books in English, watching television shows and movies in English, seeing English movies rather than Icelandic at the cinema, speaking English to foreign people they know, using English on the internet, listening to music with English lyrics, reading magazines in English and/or playing computer games in English. Henceforth, the possible answers were “*frequently*”, “*sometimes*”, “*rarely*” and “*never*” (Appendix D).

In addition, a mobile phone recording device was used to record the sessions to reflect on at later times if any issues would occur. This is a small survey using a simple frequency analysis.

3.2.1 Accessing the data

The researcher visited three after-school programs and gathered all the 3rd and 4th grade students available to a quiet room and explained the questionnaire to them. The students were asked to answer each question truthfully and to their best knowledge; there were no right or wrong answers. The students answered the questions anonymously. An employee of the after school-program was present during the entire time during each visit and they also signed a letter of agreement on that they understood the survey was anonymous, not traceable back to the individuals and the results would be used for this thesis (Appendix E). While the children were answering the questionnaire, the researcher was recording the session in case the children had any questions about the survey or wanted to share their thoughts with the researcher.

3.2.2 Statistical treatment

Microsoft Excel was used to analyze frequency and create frequency tables and charts to display the results of the survey.

3.3 Results

As previously mentioned, a total of 30 children participated in the study of which 15 were girls and 15 were boys. The participants were asked how they rated their own English proficiency. The answers distributed evenly over the four possible answers but when looking at girls and boys separately there was a big difference, where 13% of the girls rated their English proficiency as “*very good*” while 40% of the boys did.

Chart 4: English proficiency, girls

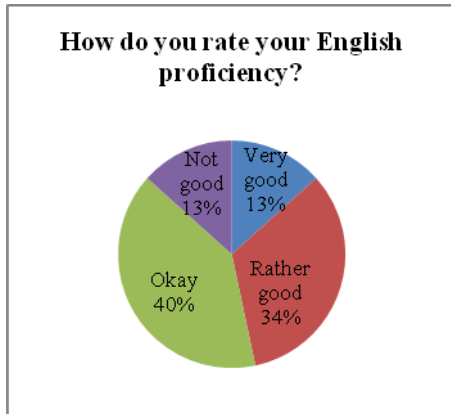


Chart 5: English proficiency, boys

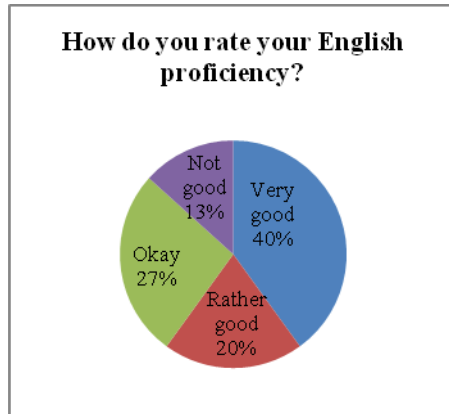
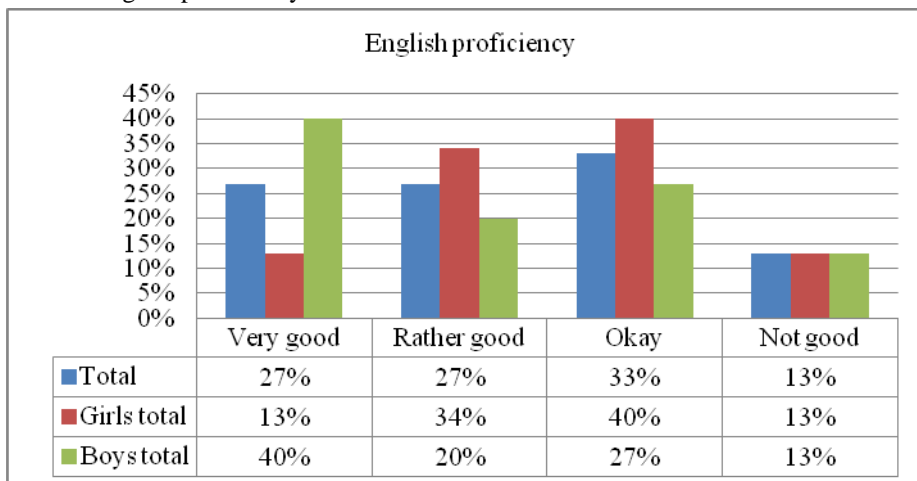


Chart 6: English proficiency levels



When the participants were asked how many times a week they used English, their answers distributed quite evenly, however, 27% of the boys answered they used English “*1-3 times a week*” outside of school while 46% of the girls did.

Chart 7: Use of English, girls

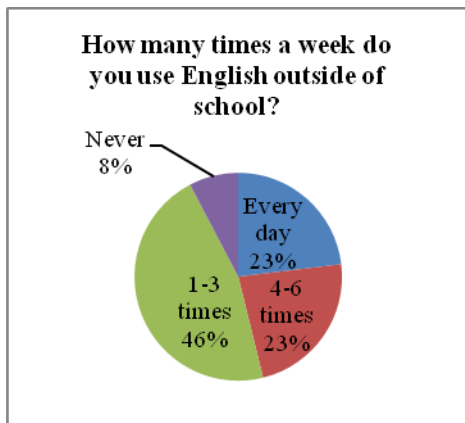


Chart 8: Use of English, boys

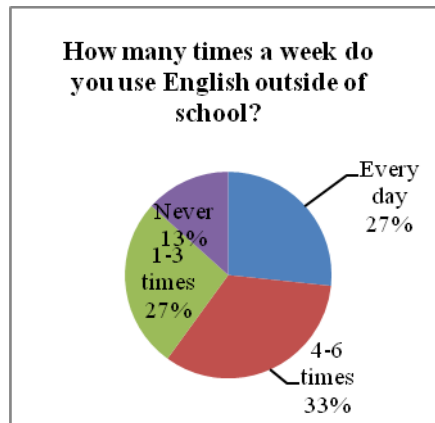
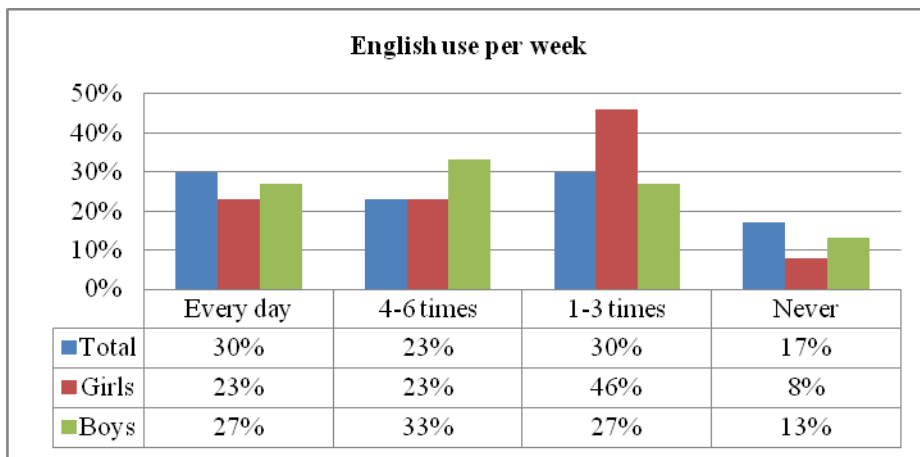


Chart 9: English use per week



The fifth question is in eight parts. The participants were asked how often they performed certain activities using the English language.

Table 1: Activities in daily lives performed using English (number of children)

	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Read books in English	0	3	2	2	4	5	9	5
Watch television or movies in English	10	12	5	1	0	2	0	0
Pick an English movie rather than Icelandic in the cinema	4	6	2	3	6	4	3	2
Speak English to foreigners	2	5	5	4	3	1	5	5
Use English on the internet	5	8	4	3	2	2	4	2
Listen to music with English lyrics	11	10	2	4	0	1	2	0
Read or look through magazines in English	0	4	2	2	5	4	8	5
Play computer games in English	9	13	5	0	0	2	1	0

Table 2: Activities in daily lives performed using English (percentages)

	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
Read books in English	10%	13%	30%	47%	100%
Watch television or movies in English	73%	20%	7%	0%	100%
Pick an English movie rather than Icelandic in the cinema	33%	17%	33%	17%	100%
Speak English to foreigners	23,3%	30%	13,3%	33,3%	100%
Use English on the internet	43,3%	23,3%	13,3%	20%	100%
Listen to music with English lyrics	70%	20%	3%	7%	100%
Read or look through magazines in English	13,3%	13,3%	30%	43,3%	100%
Play computer games in English	73%	17%	7%	3%	100%

Most of the participants said they used English frequently when *watching television or movies*, when *listening to music*, when *using the internet* and when *playing computer games*. Conversely, 60% of the girls and 33% of the boys said they never read books in English outside the classroom and only 10% of the participants said they frequently read books in English. A further 73% of the participants rarely or never *read or look through magazines in English* while only 7% of them rarely *watch television or movies in English*. At the same time, 53% of the participants frequently or sometimes *speak English to foreigners*. The only group that has quite even distribution is where 50% sometimes or frequently *pick an English movie rather than Icelandic at the cinema* and the other 50% rarely or never do.

Chart 10: Activities in daily lives performed using English – total

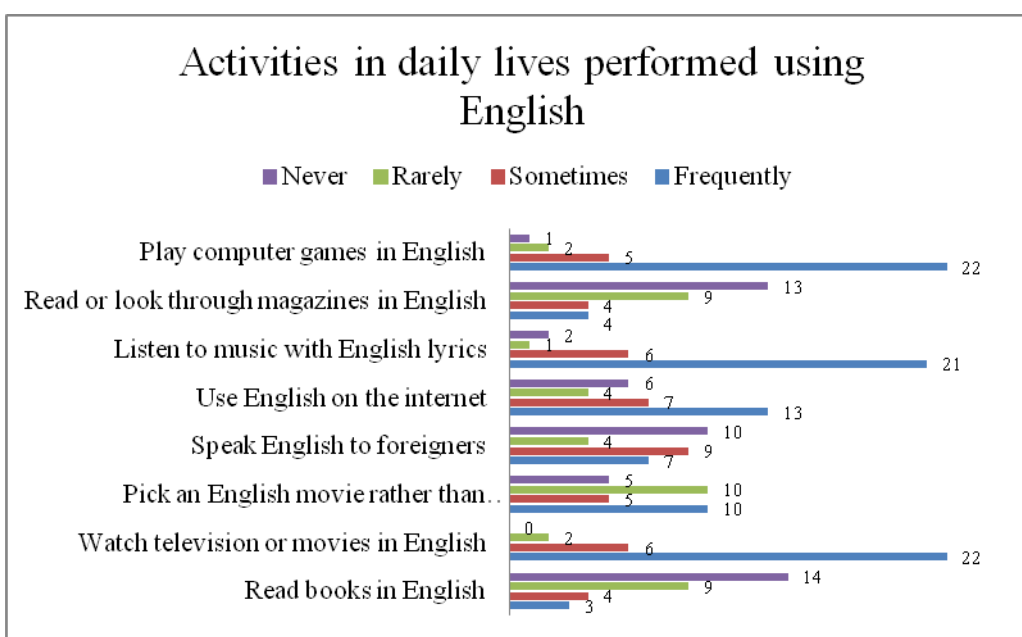
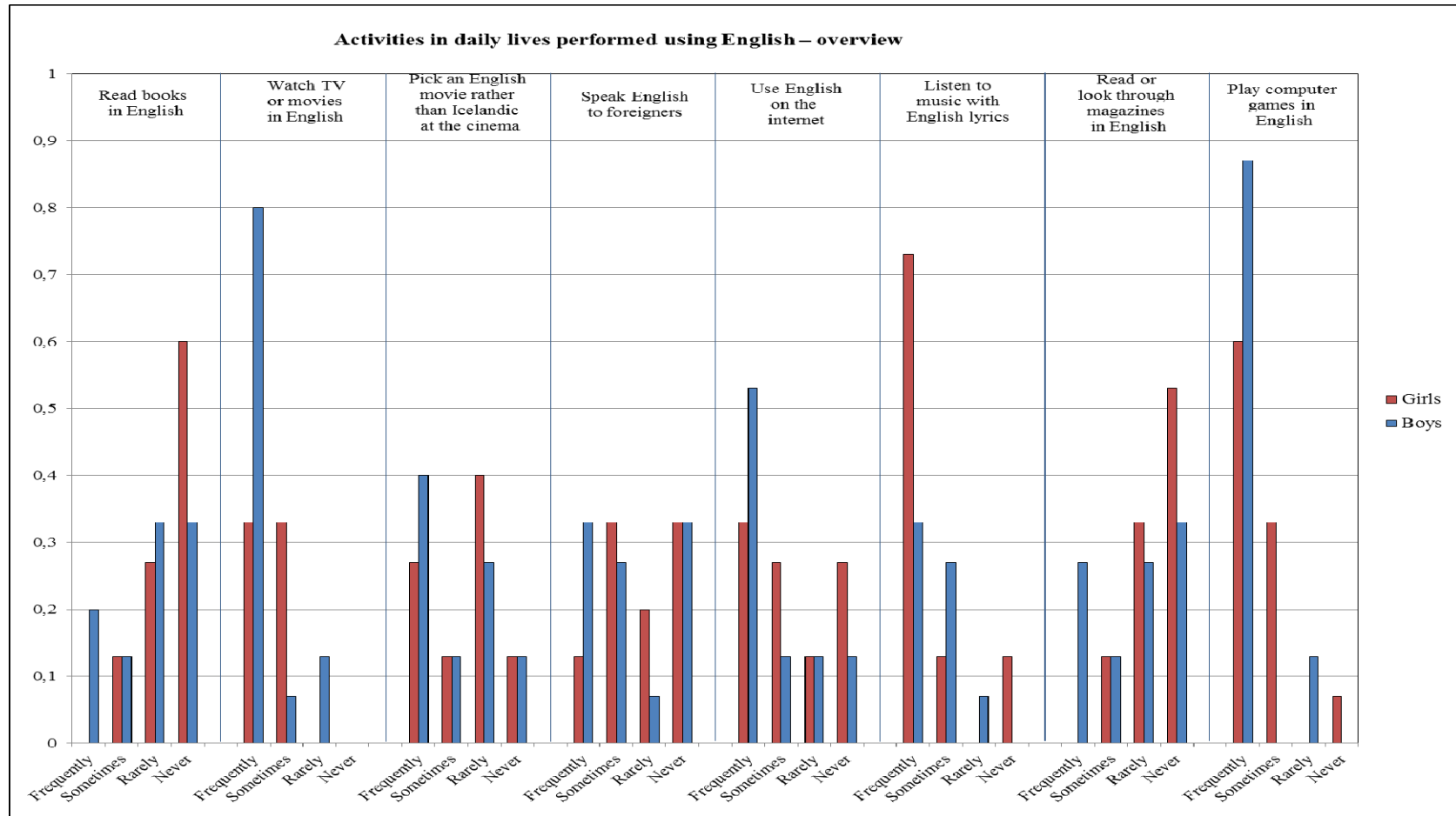


Chart 11: Activities in daily lives performed using English –overview



The results of this part of the study will be discussed in the following section.

3.4 Discussion of the results of the survey

The aim of the survey was to gather information on how much the children represented in the sample used the English language in their daily lives. The boys rated their English proficiency noticeably higher than the girls as 40% of the boys rated their English as *very good* while only 13% of the girls did so. The same number of girls and boys rated their proficiency *not good* and only 13% of the participants said they never used English outside school.

Furthermore, 73% of the participants said they used English frequently when watching television-shows and movies and when playing computer games, and 70% of them said they frequently listened to music with English lyrics. None of the participants said they never watched television or movies in English. Comparatively, 33% of the boys and 60% of the girls or almost half of the total participants said they never read books in English and 53% of the girls and 33% of the boys never read magazines in English. These findings seem to support Broddason's (2003) findings that reading printed media is gradually going out and newer media is taking over.

When asked when they used English outside school, over half of the participants said they *sometimes* or *frequently* spoke English to foreign people in Iceland and 66.6% said they *sometimes* or *frequently* used English on the internet. The distribution was even when they were asked whether they would pick an English movie over an Icelandic one in the cinema, 50% said they *sometimes* or *frequently* would and 50% said they *rarely* or *never* would.

The researcher recorded a few questions from the participants on why she was doing this research and what meaning it would have for the participants. They all seemed very interested in the matter and especially interested in learning the English language, which showed the researcher that children today are very positive towards English.

4. Conclusion

The evidence indicates that children in Iceland prefer new media over reading books and magazines. The children seem to have very limited access to printed material in English and perhaps that is due to the fact that they prefer using technology. This may affect the type of English the children are using since the language used on the internet, in television shows and in movies is usually informal conversational language and not the type of language used in books. The media is therefore teaching the children informal English instead of the formal English they learn, and need, in the classroom. Some of the participants had travelled to English speaking countries and/or used English when travelling. This shows even further that even though children had only just started their English studies at school, they had been using English for a longer period of time in their everyday lives.

The conclusions of this study are that no one is monitoring the English exposure Icelandic children encounter through media so very little statistical evidence is available about the viewing and general use of media by children. This lack of available data must be considered a weakness of this study. Also, the survey that was conducted only included 30 participants, all from the greater Reykjavík area, which does not give any information on the behaviour of children outside the capital region. It is possible that conducting this survey with children from more rural parts of the country would give different results.

Children in Iceland seem to be highly exposed to media through the internet, movies, television and music at the expense of reading books and magazines. The study indicates that the only books some children read in English are the mandatory books they read at school according to the Icelandic syllabus and the only formal language they are learn must come from within the school classrooms. Children in Iceland are therefore most likely better at speaking, reading and listening to informal English due to the fact they use English media to such extent. The productive and receptive skills of Icelandic children might be limited to informal English until they acquire the formal language skills at school. Consequently, it could be suggested that English is slowly moving towards having a second language status in Iceland from being a foreign language, due to the rapid globalization of the language and the amount of English exposure Icelandic children encounter.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sjónvarpið:

Day	Total hours of air time	Minutes of children shows	Minutes in English
Wednesday Feb 1, 2012	9,83	84	0
Thursday Feb 2, 2012	9,25	65	0
Friday Feb 3, 2012	11,16	55	0
Saturday Feb 4, 2012	17	255	125
Sunday Feb 5, 2012	18,16	205	10
Monday Feb 6, 2012	10	55	0
Tuesday Feb 7, 2012	9	60	0
Total	84,41	779	135
%	100%	15,30%	17%

Stöð 2:

Day	Total hours of air time	Minutes of children shows	Minutes in English
Wednesday Feb 1, 2012	23,42	160	25
Thursday Feb 2, 2012	23,58	270	120
Friday Feb 3, 2012	23,5	195	0
Saturday Feb 4, 2012	23,5	300	0
Sunday Feb 5, 2012	23,42	300	60
Monday Feb 6, 2012	23,58	165	25
Tuesday Feb 7, 2012	24	195	50
Total	165	1585	280
%	100%	16,00%	18%

Skjárninn:

One Week	Total hours of air time	Minutes of children shows	Minutes in English
Total	124,5	0	0
%	100%	0%	0%

Appendix B

Information from *Eymundsson*

Magazines aimed at the age-group 12 years and younger

		Copies sold			Total average year	Total average month
Title	Language	November	December	January		
Andrés Önd	Icelandic	250	334	165	2996	249.66
Syrpa	Icelandic	467	372	124	3852	321
Top Model	English	14	34	13	200	16.55
Anders And	Danish	40	52	50	568	47.33
Total Icelandic vs. English		717/14	706/23	289/13		

Appendix C

Information from *Eymundsson*

Amount of sold books aimed at children and teenagers pr. year

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Amount of books	181,340	169,211	131,632	131,742	121,367

Amount of sold books aimed at children pr. year

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Amount of books	161,429	153,512	118,646	121,229	111,757

Appendix D

Úttekt á enskunotkun 8 og 9 ára barna
2012

Mars

Enskunotkun 8 og 9 ára barna Spurningalisti

Ég hef áhuga á að fá vita hversu mikið þú notar ensku í daglegu lífi fyrir utan skóla.
Vinsamlegast svaraðu spurningunum með því að krossa við það svar sem á best við.

Kærar þakkir fyrir þátttökuna.

1. Kyn: Ert þú stelpa? strákur?
2. Aldur: Ert þú 8 ára? 9 ára?
3. Hvernig finnst þér enskukunnátta þín vera?
 Mjög góð
 Frekar góð
 Sæmileg
 Ekki góð
4. Hversu oft á viku notar þú ensku í daglegu lífi fyrir utan skóla?
 Á hverjum degi 4-6 sinnum 1-3 sinnum Aldrei
5. Hvar notar þú ensku annars staðar en í skólanum?
Merktu við það sem á við þig í öllum spurningunum.

Ég les bækur á ensku
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég horfi á sjónvarpsþætti eða bíómyndir á ensku
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég fer frekar í bíó á myndir með ensku tali heldur en íslensku
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég tala ensku við útlendinga sem ég þekki
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég nota ensku á internetinu
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég hlusta á tónlist með enskum texta
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég les eða skoða tímarit á ensku
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Ég leik mér í tölvuleikjum sem eru á ensku
 Oft Stundum Sjaldan Aldrei

Appendix E

Úttekt á enskunotkun 8 og 9 ára barna
2012

Mars

Leyfisbréf

Þessi könnun er unnin á vegum Hugvísindasviðs Háskóla Íslands af Þórönnu Hrönn Þórsdóttur undir leiðsögn Birnu Arnbjörnsdóttur Ph.D.

Tilgangur þessarar könnunar er að kortleggja enskunotkun 8 og 9 ára barna á Íslandi í frítíma þeirra. Niðurstöður könnunarinnar verða birtar í BA-ritgerð í maí 2012.

Könnunin er nafnlaus og verður á engan hátt hægt að rekja svör til einstaklinga.

F.h. Frístundaheimilis

Rannsakandi