

# Globalization in English Studies



# Globalization in English Studies

Edited by

Maria Georgieva and Allan James

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**P U B L I S H I N G**

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## INTRODUCTION

MARIA GEORGIEVA AND ALLAN JAMES

The volume *Globalization in English Studies* addresses the issue of how globalization as a crucial characteristic of present-day post-modern societies impacts upon culture, literature, language communication and the policy of language learning and use in different geo-political and sociocultural contexts. The concept of globalization, used to account for the multitude of linkages, interconnections and interdependences that currently transcend territorial and sociocultural boundaries and bring about radical transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and power distribution, has been in the centre of continual controversy over its meaning, scope, intensity and social significance. Public opinion about the integration processes spanning all spheres of social life today tends to oscillate between full appreciation and severe criticism depending on what is taken as a starting point: the increased opportunities for free flow of capital, international travel and participation in world affairs or the dangers for smaller societies' independent functionality in the context of ever increasing hegemony and control of powerful international business and finance corporations over world activity. Nevertheless, whether or not positively evaluated, whether considered from the narrow angle of current political, economic and technological developments, or from the broad perspective of evolutionary processes straddling all spheres of life, globalization is always closely associated with language, in particular, a shared code of communication, or *lingua franca*. It is the major symbolic instrument to mediate the free and easy exchange of thoughts and ideas in the intercultural context of the multitudinous global networks of activity and exercise of power occurring every day. All linkages and interconnections that underpin the diverse social groupings are operationalized *through* language and *in* a language shared by all those involved. As argued by some scholars, successful participation in global networks is so crucially dependent on the possession of a *lingua franca*, that it appears as if it is "language that is being globalized and globalizing" (Fairclough 2006:3). All the more so since globalizing processes tend to generate their own specific discourses that may clash with established norms and lead to a

radical refashioning and rescaling of existent genres and styles of speaking.

For a number of geo-historical, socio-political, economic and technological reasons, widely discussed in the literature, the language that has firmly established itself as the language of international communication, i.e. as world lingua franca, is English. In consequence, Global English takes a primary place in discussions of the effect of globalization on culture in all its specific manifestations: literature, popular culture, language communication, language learning and use policy and so forth. Inasmuch as all these culture domains and practices are also constitutive of the knowledge field of *English Studies* as a multiplex disciplinary space, the present volume aims to throw light on the complex interplay between globalization processes and language, literature and culture as approached from a range of perspectives. A notable characteristic of the volume, then, is that it includes contributions from different domains subsumed under English Studies and thus creates a base for a valuable cross-disciplinary synergy of ideas and insights into the issues under study.

There is a general agreement amongst scholars that globalization is not a unitary phenomenon. It comprises a complex set of processes of modernization, technologization, liberalization, democratization, integration and transformation of social spaces articulated through a rich harmony of “voices of globalization” (Fairclough 2006:5), in which “global” and “local” entities are subtly intertwined through blending, crossing, mixing and transforming to account for the new types of social relations in the mushrooming intercultural, interregional or transnational networks. This explains the diversity of characteristics that scholars identify and give prominence to in their research on globalizing trends and their impact on societies, a diversity that is also salient in the current volume owing to the varied sociolinguistic and cultural contexts under study and contributors’ different theoretical backgrounds and analytical perspectives.

The chapters in the first section, **Globalization in Culture**, dwell upon the effects of globalization in particular cultural domains and institutional attempts in some countries at reducing the negative consequences of globally-oriented products for local practices. The cultural domain that *Perianova* has chosen to explore is food, in particular people’s diet and consumption patterns and how changed views of what is the “right” food are reflected in identity discourse. In pursuit of high standards of hygiene and health safety, fast food chains of the McDonald’s type have managed to establish a global ideal of “rootless” food, disassociated from its sources, time or space, offered in identical outlets mostly originating from



North America but mushrooming today anywhere from Sofia to Beijing as a symbol of the rationality of global processes. The desire to be “modern” and “western” has contributed to the globalization, or McDonaldization, not only of world foodscape patterns but also of identity discourse since the products of the fast food industry have turned into a “common currency” through which people can signal their “worldliness”. Changing the perspective, *Hilmarsson-Dunn*, in turn, discusses how a small country like Iceland is striving to protect and enhance Icelandic, its history and literary tradition through a judicious language policy regarding the media in a context of steadily growing bilingualism, cherished by the general public as a valuable resource for professional growth and world integration.

Studies in the next section, **Globalization in Literature**, bring into relief some new characteristics of the complex relationship between global integration processes and society. On the basis of an analysis of the creative work of three women writers, *Katsarova* discusses globalization from the prism of the changes in worldview and sensitivity they experience conducive to a gradual broadening of scope and artistic creativity of their literary style of writing. The transition from narrow topics of femininity to an equitable and responsible portrayal of social life in these women writers’ work comes to signal, according to the author, their stronger commitment to the global problems of humanity as a characteristic of post-modernity. In his chapter, *Stotesbury*, in turn, focuses attention on British diaspora culture as represented in the Glasgow fiction of Suhayl Saadi, a Scottish writer of Asian descent, that foregrounds “hybridization” as another salient feature of today’s globalizing world. The author discusses how Saadi’s personal cultural hybridity reflects on his narrative, where mythologies and cultures, both ancient and utterly contemporary, are blended, crossed, transposed and refashioned in an attempt to mediate the effect of the powers of continuity and defiance inherent in the personal and ethnically based cultural identity of diaspora members. Finally, *Budakov* takes readers to the virtual space of internet communication regarded by many as an indispensable part of postmodern life. On the basis of an analysis of three postmodern novels, the author tackles the issue of identity change in a world dominated by high technologies, computerized interaction and corporate power. He draws attention to the dangers that globalized technocracy can pose to personal identity, providing opportunities for uncontrolled anonymity and fictive representation, for dehumanizing social relations and wiping out borderlines that commonly serve as a reference point in building identity and a sense of belonging.

The chapters in the **Globalization in Language Communication** section are equally varied both in terms of topic and sociolinguistic context. In her study of the impact of Global English on Italian in the domain of business and economics in particular job advertisements, *Leonardi* argues that when borrowed entities are reconceptualized to fit local norms of use they can acquire uses or functions non-existent in their language of origin. *Vassileva's* target is intercultural communication in an academic context. She presents a project aimed to investigate the production, transmission and consumption of scientific knowledge in multimedia settings and the new opportunities they offer for the realisation of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Intercultural communication, but in a professional setting is also dealt with in the chapter by *Coposescu*. In particular, she examines a specific mode of multi-modal communication in international companies based in Romania, called Virtual Networking Communication sessions, where English is used as the language of communication among people that are far removed from one another in space. A major conclusion of her analysis is that the use of technologies allows participants in such intercultural events to create a specific kind of organizational culture through a process of adaptation to the constitutive cultures and languages of all those involved. Hence, successful communication is more strongly dependent on speakers' professional expertise and compliance with organizational rules than on linguistic proficiency. Finally, *Georgieva* tackles the issue of how local people select, appropriate, and creatively utilize cultural entities designed for global consumption and transmitted to them through different channels, shaping and reshaping them to make them appear as their "own". The ultimate result of appropriation is a kind of transcultural discourse practice, labeled "Globe Talk", a product of mixing, merging, crossing and blending of "outside" and "inside" entities that reflects people's cherished desire to level social differences and build identities that are in step with the global world as an ultimate horizon for action.

The last section, **Global English and English Language Teaching/Learning Policy**, approaches the issue from a pedagogical perspective. *Grozdanova* explores the intersection between Interaction, Interlanguage and International English in online communication and considers the implications for the practice of TEFL. Discussing the changes that globalization has caused for learners, learning environment and ways of speaking, she argues that an in-depth examination of online communication can provide valuable insights into learners' communicative competence and favoured strategies of speaking, which can serve as a basis for upgrading mainstream teaching strategies currently in use. In the last chapter,

*Katsarska* offers a portrayal of English Studies as a degree subject in Bulgarian institutions of Higher Education. She traces the impact of globalization processes on the context and content of instruction (before and after the democratization watershed) and on the potential of the discipline to serve as an active channel for the transmission of globalized (Western) social and aesthetic values in local contexts. In general, the influence of globalization is evaluated positively as having invigorated the profession and increased the opportunities for professional realization.

In conclusion we could say that the relationship between globalization and the multitude of culture practices subsumed within the domain of English Studies is too complex, dynamic and variable to allow a simple, uniform description. For this reason the volume does not claim to exhaust the issue. Rather, our idea has been to provide a range of views on the social, political and cultural ramifications of globalization for English Studies that could serve as a basis for future debate among scholars and practitioners.

## References

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**PART ONE:**  
**GLOBALIZATION IN CULTURE**

# THE IMPACT OF GLOBAL ENGLISH ON LANGUAGE POLICY FOR THE MEDIA: THE CASE OF ICELAND

AMANDA HILMARSSON-DUNN

Global English is perceived by many Icelanders to be threatening the Icelandic language. As elsewhere, this small Nordic country is being flooded with English in domains such as information technology, education and the media. The impact of English in the media is particularly significant. The sheer quantity of Anglo/American exports overshadows national TV and film productions; radio and TV broadcasts of popular youth music, videos and DVDs spread English further into teenage hearts and minds. Some commentators (e.g. Hjarvard 2004) believe that young people increasingly speak the language of the media and adopt the culture that goes with it.

While global English has been enthusiastically adopted by Icelandic businessmen - in fact before the recent economic crisis, some companies were on the verge of adopting an all English policy, or at least a bilingual one - language policy makers have become more concerned about their language. New policy recommendations for protecting and enhancing Icelandic in eleven domains were proposed by the Icelandic Language Council in 2008 and ratified by the government and the parliament.

This paper investigates whether language policies, at European, Nordic and national levels, have any effect on controlling the flood of English into the media in Iceland.

Key words: Icelandic, globalisation, language policy, ideology, media, corpus planning, English.

## **1.Introduction**

Globalisation is a process whereby flows of goods, labour, finance and ideas cross national borders. It has brought about the spread of consumerism and commodification including, Coupland (2003: 470)

asserts, the commodification of language itself. This “can disenfranchise people and undermine their sense of authentic membership in longstanding communities” (ibid). Although for many people globalisation is welcome, as they wish to reap the benefits of being part of the modern world, most also wish to maintain their identity. As Edwards (1985: 42) notes, they “want the solace of the past *without* sacrificing the rewards of progress.”

Globalisation has brought with it the global *lingua franca*, English, which has an impact upon languages and identities. Many Icelanders are concerned that Icelandic, being a small national language, might lose out to English because of globalisation. There exists a conflict between the necessity of having an educated English-as-a-second-language (ESL) speaking population, who can communicate in the wider world, and the desire to keep their own language intact and fully functioning.

In the education domain, English is now the first foreign language taught at school (as in the other Nordic countries) as well as being the default language of mobility in Europe. There is a constant flow of English words on television, films, and the internet. These are the domains which have the greatest influence upon the younger generation, whose attitudes towards English may affect policy making in the future. As Spolsky (2004: 91) states, “English as a global language is now a factor that needs to be taken into account in its language policy by any nation state.”

Iceland is a unique case in Europe: it represents possibly the only country within Europe which is monolingual. In other words, it has no indigenous minorities, nor sizeable immigrant communities, although these have recently increased significantly (now about 8%). However, there is a great emphasis on foreign language learning, which means that most, especially young Icelanders, can communicate in more than one language. Iceland is small (population of about 320,000) and is isolated geographically, a factor which has assured its language more protection from outside influence in its past history, relative to the other Nordic countries. In the last ten years or so Iceland expanded its financial and service sector becoming a very wealthy nation, until the financial crisis of 2008, which resulted in its economic collapse.

Iceland was a colony of Denmark for about five hundred years, only gaining its independence in 1944. Presently, Iceland is a member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) since 1970, and the European Economic Area (EEA) since 1997, as well as being a member of the Nordic community. It has been part of the Schengen area since 2001. It submitted its application for EU membership on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2009 to the current Swedish presidency. This application is presently being considered.

Its application to join the EU is seen as a way of stabilising the economy. Membership of the EU, however, has implications for the language.

In this paper I shall first investigate the value of English and why many people wish to learn it. This will be followed by 1) an outline of how language policy is intrinsically connected to ideologies about language, and specifically, to Iceland's history and literary tradition; 2) an examination of Iceland's corpus planning; 3) a study of policy for the media in Europe, the Nordic region and in the Icelandic nation itself.

## 2. Why English?

Many researchers have contributed to the debate about the value of English and why it is more often learnt than any other language. These include Phillipson (1992; 2003), whose theory of linguistic imperialism has aroused much debate; and Crystal (2003), who has written extensively about how English has spread as a global language and its consequences for other languages. Wright (2000; 2004) has looked at the rise of English within Europe and the problems faced by language planners and policy makers. Maurais and Morris (2003) have edited an important work on languages in a globalising world, which contains many chapters, for example by Tonkin, about globalisation and the value of English.

According to Holborow (1999: 56 - 57) the dominance of English today is a continuation of the process of capitalism, which was deepened by the British Empire and "given further impetus by the commanding position of American capitalism" in the twentieth century. Thus English was and is the language of the dominant powers and prevailed well before the present "onslaught of economic globalization" (ibid: 57).

Many people are prepared to invest in English more than in other languages because of the high market value attributed to it. Haugen (1987: 144) asserts that the "language market", as he calls it, "determines the values that an individual or a society attaches to each language." An individual learner "will resist paying the price" (of learning a language) "unless the benefits it brings are commensurate with the cost" (ibid). Coulmas (1992: 85) argues that, as English is learnt as a foreign language by more individuals than any other language, "it occupies a special position on the world market of languages." Therefore, "its balance on current account is much better than any of its competitors."

In economic terms, according to Grin (1999: 16) "the higher the number of people who speak language Y, the more interesting it becomes for additional people to learn Y as well, creating what could be called a snowball effect." According to de Swaan (2001: 193), "if English is the



language of the powers that be, it is also the language of empowerment.” Speaking English gives the user what Bourdieu (1991: 55) refers to as “linguistic capital”.

English is thus the choice of those who wish to benefit from the opportunities presented by globalisation. As Tonkin states:

The adoption of English is, as always with languages, primarily a manifestation of a set of non-linguistic factors having to do with global economic integration and with significant changes in the way of life of a highly influential and increasingly numerous global elite, but the fact that this elite uses English gives the English-speaking countries, and particularly the USA, a certain competitive edge... English is the operating system on which the global economic network is based, and the owners of the system have a market advantage (2003:322).

It is evident that globalisation has had important effects on how people view English, from both a national and an individual view. The paradox is that many nations and individuals recognise the need to know English but at the same time are worried about its dominance and continued spread, which can be to the detriment of the national language. This is the case in Iceland, where globalisation has influenced policy for education, whereby English, rather than Danish, the language of the old coloniser, is now the first foreign language taught and where the impact of the English media is significant. Many Icelanders understand English before even learning it formally at school because of the influence of television programmes and films at a young age. Therefore younger people know English better than other foreign languages.

This trade in cultural products has been one of the most important aspects of globalisation in the last twenty years (Wright 2004: 152). The film world is dominated by Hollywood, and films contain expensive special effects and feature highly paid celebrities. Many of the world’s television programmes are made in the USA. These media play a significant role in spreading English into the Nordic countries and round the world.

Speaking the language of popular culture may be associated with prestige, and be valued by younger people. Hjarvard (2004: 91-92), a Danish researcher, argues that “the media actively contribute to changes in the structure, spread and status of languages” and that English particularly influences global youth culture as the “language of status and a source of identity and meaning.” Global English is prestigious, eagerly acquired and valuable, and its speakers acquire „linguistic capital“. In television advertisements in non English speaking countries, for instance, the use of

English words and expressions “reflects the prestige Anglo-American culture already enjoys” but also the media contribute actively to reinforcing this status by extending it to new fields (ibid). Spending on global advertising, Phillipson (2003: 73) informs us, went up seven fold between 1950 and 1996 and, he reports, more money is spent on advertising in the USA than on the entire education system.

### **3. Outcomes from the impact of English**

The phenomenon of global English (or any dominant language) impacting on other languages can result in one of three outcomes: language maintenance, bilingualism or language shift (Paulston 1994: 3).

The first outcome is that of language maintenance, where nations and groups accentuate the differences between their languages and the dominant language in order to prevent change. This is also known as “divergence” (Oakes 2001: 42).

The second outcome is of bilingualism. Crystal (2000: 79) asserts that the very fact that a dominant language is present means that there is pressure on people to speak that dominant language, which results in “a period of emerging bilingualism.” According to Myers-Scotton (2002: 52), whenever bilingualism exists “there is always a power differential between the languages involved” as the more powerful language is used for high level functions.

The danger to a language comes when stable bilingualism becomes unstable through English usurping the domains of the other language. Loss of a domain, whatever its nature, begins with borrowings and code switching from the dominant language. Rather than distancing the native language from the dominant language (divergence), many nations/groups borrow forms from the dominant language, to the extent that the traditional standard language undergoes changes to its linguistic systems. Oakes (2001: 42) refers to this outcome as “convergence”.

Crystal (2000: 21) warns that if English is allowed to take over in too many domains there is little left for people to talk about in their native language. Some languages, he asserts, “suffer discourse attrition so much that they end up surviving in just one domain”, for example, Latin which has survived for centuries as the language of the Catholic Church, but is scarcely used in any other domain.

Furthermore, if people believe that their language brings no social advancement they are less likely to want to use and maintain it. Young people may see their old language as irrelevant and identify more with the new language. The old language then becomes a curiosity with little

prestige, and in the end its status may be “gradually eroded” until no one wants to use it (Crystal 2000: 84). Thus, in some cases globalization may lead to language death.

Some nations, as with Iceland, believe English to be a threat, others do not. Those that do worry about the negative impact of English endeavour to formulate policies to influence language behaviour, in order to try to protect their languages against shift and loss to English. As Fasold (1984: 260) argues: “the same social and economic conditions that produce shift in one group will not budge another group from their determination to maintain a traditional language.” Differences in ideologies, therefore, influence all aspects of a nation’s language policies and planning.

#### **4. Language policy: Iceland**

Some researchers define *language policy* as being the expression of the ideology itself; for example, Bakmand (2000) states that language policy may be viewed as the expression of the ideological orientations and views. Silverstein (1979: 193) defines language ideologies as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure or use.” When children acquire language, they don’t acquire the code alone, but the ideas behind the language, that is, the meanings, values, beliefs, attitudes, and myths which make up their identity. Therefore, speaking a particular language may have great significance for a particular group and mean a lot more than mere communication.

It was in the 1770s that the philosopher, Herder (cited in Edwards 1985: 24) linked the nation-state with its language. He argued that “even the smallest of nations cherishes the history, poetry and songs about the great deeds of its forefathers through its language. The language is its collective treasure” (ibid). This is the case with the Icelandic nation, whose strong sense of national identity is equated with its language, and whose literary tradition is the core of Icelandic heritage. The Icelandic sagas are the most famous examples of Icelandic literature, which relate stories about the first settlers of Iceland in the period 870 -930 AD. Most sagas are about the deeds of individuals, often poets, and their families. They feature neighbourhood conflicts, kinship loyalties, and the pursuit of honour and social status.

The Golden Age of Icelandic literature (13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries) defined the identity of the Icelandic nation-state, which the Icelanders created on achieving independence from Denmark in 1944. This ideology is the main

reason Icelanders put so much emphasis on corpus planning; it is the justification for maintaining their language as it always has been.

#### 4.1 Corpus planning

The most obvious impact of English on Icelandic is the influx of anglicisms, which have flooded into Iceland, particularly through the media. The mixing of languages is “anathema to Herderian ideology” (Gal 2006: 20) because foreign words are supposed to corrupt the standard language. Therefore Iceland’s policy is to keep out anglicisms and invent new words. This purism has been motivated by the need to preserve Icelandic national identity – firstly from Danish, now from English. Iceland’s purist language movement goes back over two hundred years.

Thomas (1991: 140) asserts that literary traditions have an impact on purist attitudes and that “purism is an inalienable element of an overall cultural paradigm” (Thomas 1991: 144). The primary rationale for purism, according to Thomas (1991: 59), is in terms of three functions: 1) the solidarity function; 2) the separating function and 3) the prestige function.

The *solidarity* function is “guided by the principle that a speech community should retain maximal solidarity with the previous speakers of a language as represented by a corpus of literary tradition” (Thomas 1991: 53). This is the case with the Icelanders. Icelandic corpus planners often make use of obsolete words, bringing them back from the saga literature to form the roots of new words.

The *separating* function is that of differentiating and distancing the language from others (Thomas 1991: 54). Dictionaries and grammars become necessary to stress these differences by “introducing new vocabulary and stressing those phonological and grammatical alternatives that are most different from those of any autonomy-threatening contrast language” (Fishman 1972: 20). For example, the two most unusual letters in the Icelandic alphabet are Þ (þ) (thorn) and Ð (ð) (eth), once used within the whole Nordic region and now unique to Iceland. Continued use of these letters, along with resistance to change in the written form allows Icelanders to read their ancient texts easily.

The *prestige* function refers to the ability of a language to gain or lose prestige by borrowing words, for example from English. As Thomas puts it (1991: 56), “once a language loses prestige, its socio-communicative functions are likely to be usurped by a more prestigious idiom”. Thus, in Iceland new borrowings are kept out to ensure the prestige of Iceland’s own neologisms. New words, according to Kristinsson (2007, personal communication), are a prerequisite for enhanced status, that is, in new or

specialised domains, and make it possible to enhance the literary standard further. The Icelandic Government has given financial support towards the creation of neologisms since the 1950s, assisted by a large number of individuals and scientific committees that produce neologisms for such fields as diverse as astronomy and computing. They publish their word lists on the Icelandic word bank, which is available on the internet. Thus, this policy of preservation and modernisation ensures that Icelandic can be used in every new domain (see also Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson, 2010 in press).

A survey carried out by the author with about eighty students in 2005<sup>1</sup> and again with about sixty students in 2009, which was designed to collect information on young people's use of English, showed that most students look upon neologisms favourably. However, there are large quantities of anglicisms in the spoken language everywhere and they are increasing. This is due to younger people using words that they see/hear from the media, also from the internet, on a daily basis, which they perceive as 'cool' or prestigious, but also because of the length of time it takes for the new Icelandic words to come into common use. Therefore, despite corpus planners' efforts, Icelanders are often compelled to use the English word well before the Icelandic word appears. They may then continue to use the English words rather than the new Icelandic ones because they are used to using them. Moreover, although anglicisms do not get into the dictionaries or the formal written language as the policy is to keep them out, they are used much more in informal written texts as well as in the spoken language. It is this increase in anglicisms which is perceived as such a threat to the Icelandic language.

I shall now investigate what Iceland can do in terms of policy for the media and the impact of EU and Nordic policy for this domain.

## **5. Supranational policies for cultural products**

One way of countering English in the media is to produce home-grown radio and TV programmes and films in the national language. This has been recognised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which has adopted no less than three conventions in recent years to safeguard cultural heritage. In 2003, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which aims 'to safeguard intangible cultural heritage', to ensure respect for it, raise awareness of its importance to communities, and to provide "international cooperation and assistance" (UNESCO Culture Sector, 2006). As at March 2009, this convention had been ratified

by 110 states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2009). The convention is supposed to protect films, music and other cultural heritage from foreign competition and help small nations “to promote and distribute their cultural products on the world market” (Moore, 2005) and in their own languages. As with UNESCO, the EU is making efforts to promote cultural diversity. The EU does not legislate directly on culture, but enables collaboration to take place through cooperative projects and joint agreements.

Through the EEA agreement Iceland has been able to participate in many EU cultural programmes, which promote linguistic and cultural diversity. It benefits from these programmes by receiving grants for film making, television programmes, and translation of national literature, among other things. For example, the EU’s cultural programme, 2007-2013 has a budget of 400 million euros for projects to celebrate Europe’s cultural diversity (European Commission, accessed 2009). The EU hands out millions to subsidise Europe’s film industry via the EU Media programme. The EU Television Without Frontiers Directive, launched in 1989, aims to promote the movement of television programmes within the internal market and to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness. According to Article 4 of this directive, member states should ensure that broadcasters reserve a “majority proportion” of their transmission time for European works (European Commission Audiovisual and Media Policies, 2007).

Other foreign funds that have supported film production include the Council of Europe’s Film Fund, “Eurimages”. For example, in 2007, Iceland was allocated 200,000 euros for the production of the feature film *Skrapp Út* (Back Soon), in cooperation with France and Slovenia, from the Eurimages fund (Council of Europe Eurimages, 2007). These programmes have increased the exposure of national cultural products in Europe. Without their support many forms of cultural expression would not survive.

Iceland also participates in similar programmes within the Nordic community, which are funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. There are two major funds for Nordic cultural cooperation run under the Nordic Council of Ministers: the Nordic Cultural Fund and the Nordic Film and Television Fund. The goal is to further the Nordic region as a home market and ensure that Nordic films are shown in cinemas and on television throughout the region. The Nordic Film and Television fund promotes the production of audiovisual projects by assisting in the top up financing of films, television series, documentaries etc. within the Nordic region (Scandinavian Films, accessed 2009). The proviso is that the films have a “satisfactory marketing/audience potential within the Nordic

countries” (ibid). The fund will also create other Nordic language versions, primarily by dubbing, if the film has been well received in the country of origin.

A further alliance between the five Nordic countries’ public service broadcasters is ‘Northvision’ (European Commission, accessed 2009), whereby the countries benefit from an exchange of Nordic programmes.

However, although programmes like the EU Media programme have increased the exposure of national cultural products in Europe, there has been a parallel increase in Anglo-American cultural products in English. Legislation is sometimes used as a way in which to counter these products, but even legislation may not be effective. For example, the French, via the *Loi Toubon*, have legislated, among other things, for the media to be in French only. Martin (2006) has shown how the French media have been undeterred by this legislation and have got round it by using ingenious strategies to do so, simply because they want to appeal to a global audience. One example of this is that translations of English headlines in posters or magazines are smaller or less visible (Martin, 2006: 227); another example is that some firms copyright some product features as trademarks. These features have to be translated into the French, but are in English first (ibid: 223). As we can see, although there is an awareness globally of the necessity to protect small languages and cultures, these efforts may go against the laws of the market.

## **6. Policy for the media in Iceland**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland sets policy for cultural affairs. Cultural institutions that come under their jurisdiction include the Icelandic Film Centre, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service and the Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies, which preserves old Icelandic manuscripts and other documents (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2005: 6). The Ministry also allocates grants to many individuals and groups to promote Icelandic culture abroad.

While it is recognised that sweeping changes have occurred in Iceland due to globalisation, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture in 2006 (Þorgerður K. Gunnarsdóttir (2006)) emphasises that “the core and the essence of our culture remain much the same as before” and, “the defining criteria of Icelandic identity is what it has always been: our history, our language and our beloved country” (ibid).

## 6.1 Broadcasting

Today, in order to safeguard cultural diversity, a major proportion of television time is supposed to be devoted to European programmes within the Nordic countries, in line with the European Television Directive of which Iceland is a member (see above). Also, the Nordic television and film fund's purpose is to promote the production and distribution of Nordic films and television programmes.

Despite this cooperation within Europe and the Nordic area to promote European and Nordic programmes, however, the language of broadcasting in Iceland today is very often English, firstly because the number of public service broadcasters is few in comparison with the number of private stations and secondly because new technologies in broadcasting have led to a huge increase in the presence of the global language, English.

Another reason why so many films and TV programmes in Iceland are in English is historical - because the first broadcasting in Iceland was carried out in English. This was due to the dominance of the USA, economically and militarily, after the Second World War. Thus English had "first mover advantage", that is the first language to move into this particular market. According to Elfa Gylfadóttir, Head of the Media Division in Iceland (email correspondence, 2009), Iceland was part of the Marshall Aid programme after the Second World War, as a result of which a lot of cultural material was promoted for ideological reasons. American broadcasting from the NATO base resulted in Icelanders being exposed to large amounts of American military radio and television. American films became very popular. The American base ran the only television channel in the country for ten years, until Ríkisútvarpið (RÚV), the public service broadcaster, was established in 1966. The (American) channel had a great impact on the public taste for television programming.

It was also a major influence on the borrowing of English words as well as influencing the attitudes of young Icelanders about American culture. This worried Icelandic policy makers, who up until then had been more concerned about the impact of Danish words, and, in the 1960s, there was a restriction on the transmission "for cultural and language political reasons" (Kvaran and Svavarsdóttir 2002: 83- 84, cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn 2006: 303).

Today RÚV broadcasts two radio stations and one television station throughout Iceland. In its programming policy, it "has a duty to nurture the Icelandic language, the history of the nation and the national cultural heritage" (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland 2002: 20, cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2006: 303).



The two public service radio stations have a policy to broadcast good quality spoken Icelandic. However, the majority of those who listen to these stations are in the older age range. According to figures provided by Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, Head of radio channels, Rás 1 (Channel 1), and Rás 2 (Channel 2), the average age of listener to the traditional Rás 1, which has a lot of spoken language programmes, including poetry, plays and literature, is sixty-one, and to Rás 2 which is a music channel, and more informal in nature, the average age is fifty-one. Neither of these channels allows English words. The main competitor to Rás 2, 'Bylgjan', has an average age of listener of thirty. This channel is more successful in directing its programmes towards a younger audience and appeals to some teenagers but uses less good quality Icelandic (Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, personal communication, 2009).

However the main stations with a young audience are the commercial stations, which, according to Sigrún Stefánsdóttir in an interview (2009) do not have any 'standards'. While the traditional Rás 1 listeners do not tolerate English or any other foreign language programmes, young listeners are attracted to those stations broadcasting English music and there are many to choose from: twenty radio stations that held broadcasting licences in 2009 (Útvarpsrettarnefnd, accessed 2009). The data from the survey done with students in 2005 and again in 2009, looking at students' use of English, showed that nearly all the students preferred to listen to Icelandic commercial stations, which play international pop music, than the Icelandic public service radio stations. Only four students out of a sample of eighty six claimed to listen to Rás 2, one of the public service stations, in 2005, while three out of fifty eight students claimed that Rás 2 was their favourite in 2009. All the rest cited private radio stations broadcasting a variety of English and Icelandic music. Although the discussion on all these channels is in Icelandic, the lyrics are often in English. In the questionnaire filled out by Icelandic students, some claimed to have learnt a lot of English words through pop lyrics and to switch to speaking in English if the subject is pop music.

The one public service television channel, which used to be the only TV channel up until 1986, broadcasts a higher share of quality Icelandic programmes than the other channels, including a lot of arts and current affairs programmes, but also general entertainment programmes, including foreign films and shows such as "Desperate Housewives", which are dubbed or subtitled. All children's programmes (aimed at those at age five or under) are dubbed, as are advertisements shown during these programmes.

However, as with radio there are many other television stations in competition with the National Broadcasting Service: three other private

terrestrial TV stations and several other regional channels and operators of digital, satellite, and other new technologies. Most of these are commercial television stations, which broadcast US American shows, pop music, sitcoms, sports and films. Elfa Gylfadóttir (2009, email correspondence) explained to the author that the BBC and ITV channels, as well as many other UK English speaking channels, are also accessible to all, that Icelanders are able to watch television in English without subtitles, via satellite receivers, which are now very common in Iceland. It is estimated furthermore that around 5% of Icelandic homes are Sky customers. Moreover, because Icelandic production is very expensive, more English programmes are being broadcast in Iceland than in the neighbouring Nordic countries.

The same age divide exists with television viewing, where young people prefer commercial stations with English programmes, and the older people prefer Icelandic programmes. However, the channels that appeal to young people, which are often broadcast from other countries via satellite, are broadcast directly in English (i.e. without subtitles or dubbing). Furthermore, other Icelandic channels, such as Stöð 2 (channel 2), the main competitor to RÚV, which mainly imports programmes from America, Australia and UK, do not have the same standards of Icelandic as the public service broadcaster (according to Sigrún Stefánsdóttir in an interview, 2009).

In a speech, the Minister of Education, Science and Culture (Gunnarsdóttir 2006a) reported that the share of Icelandic television programmes had “steadily declined” in the face of foreign material, despite the fact that more stations have been showing more Icelandic programmes. Where Icelandic broadcasts increased sevenfold in the period from 1987 to 2003, Gunnarsdóttir (2006a) reports, foreign broadcasts increased tenfold in the same period. A working group investigating the status of the Icelandic language in the media and the arts did a survey of the three biggest TV stations in 2007 and found that 46% of material was in Icelandic on the state TV channel, about a quarter on Stöð 2 (main private channel) and on the next largest private station (Skjár einn) – in terms of viewers - only a fifth (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 2008: 58-59).

Article 7 from the Broadcasting Act (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture 2000) specifies that “[T]elevision broadcasters shall make every effort to ensure that the greater part of their transmission time is reserved for Icelandic and other European material.” It is vital, Gunnarsdóttir (2006a) states, to support local production to counter the presence of Anglo-American programmes. To this end the government introduced a bill, a specific goal of which was to regulate the amount of

Icelandic programming on the air and its share of broadcasting time (ibid). According to an agreement between the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and the State broadcaster, RÚV, from 2007 the proportion of Icelandic television programmes at prime time (i.e. between 1900 and 2300) should be increased to 65% by 2012 (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 2008: 58). The Icelandic Language Council states that this will be advantageous to the Icelandic language. Furthermore, they propose that TV stations should be encouraged to carry on showing a varied domestic programme (ibid: 65).

The directors of the TV channels always argue that the main reason for broadcasting so many foreign programmes is due to the expense of Icelandic programmes (Menntamálaráðuneyti, 2008: 59). The majority of children's programmes are also foreign, although there has been a big improvement in the amount of programmes that are dubbed than before. On Stöð 2, 60-70% of children's programmes were dubbed in Autumn 2007 and this percentage is increasing. The channel also shows some films that are dubbed. On the state TV channel, RÚV, all programmes for young children are dubbed, subtitles only being used for programmes aimed at older children or teenagers (ibid).

The survey that the author carried out with fifty-eight Icelandic students in 2009 showed that forty of them mostly or always watched English TV programmes, that fifteen claimed to watch Icelandic and English TV equally, but only three claimed to watch only Icelandic. Of the TV stations that they preferred to watch, seventeen claimed that Stöð 2 was their favourite, seventeen claimed Skjár einn to be their favourite, thirteen preferred other private stations, but only five preferred the public service broadcaster, RÚV. On the other hand, of ten teachers at the school, who also completed this survey, 8/10 preferred the public service broadcaster, RÚV. These results give a good idea of the differences in choices between older and younger Icelanders, and how much the young are being influenced by English media because of these choices and, therefore, how much influence the media may have upon the development of the Icelandic language.

While it is clear that legislation is an effective way of increasing the status of a language, legislating for more Icelandic on TV channels may not influence teenage choices, when so many English programmes are available on other stations. Furthermore legislation is unlikely to be effective if funding is not available to purchase Icelandic programmes. Due to the recent financial crisis, the budget for public service broadcasters was cut by 20% on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 (Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, personal communication, 2009). The goal of Article 7, therefore, she

reports, is very difficult to reach as, as shown above, it is cheaper to buy programmes from other stations, e.g. English programmes. Alternatively the programmers can put existing material in different slots, for example a programme that might have been shown at 23:00 can be slotted in at prime time instead. This shows up on the statistics that the share of Icelandic broadcasting has increased. The same goes for national radio. Sigrún Stefánsdóttir (personal communication, 2009) reported that it was also a good time to bring out older materials to save money rather, than getting rid of employees in the economic crisis.

As for TV viewing in other Nordic languages, it is possible to watch programmes in other Nordic languages, such as Norwegian or Danish, but there is not much of it. According to Elfa Gylfadóttir, (email correspondence 2009) Iceland has implemented the Television without Frontiers Directive. She reports that RÚV has most often been the only television station in Iceland that fulfils the 50% broadcasting in EU languages and that Nordic programming takes at least 5% of the total broadcasting time. However, the students in the 2005 survey claimed to never or not often watch Nordic programmes and seldom any other European programmes at all. Other people who want to watch Nordic programmes often get channels from the Nordic countries by buying a package, for example, Sigrún Stefánsdóttir reported in an interview (2009) that there are not many opportunities for people like her or her Norwegian husband to listen to Scandinavian programmes so they have to buy a package in order to get channels from Norway and Denmark.

## 6.2 Films

Iceland's policy after World War II, like other European countries including France and Denmark, was to fund film-making to increase the production of Icelandic films (Ólafsson, 2005 personal communication). The main role of the Icelandic Film Fund today "is to make grants and loans for Icelandic film production, stimulate the cinema in Iceland, collect and publish information on Icelandic films, publicise Icelandic films abroad" (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland, 2002: 16, cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn, 2006: 304).

Although Iceland produces its own films, in order to use its own language in this medium, the students' responses to the questionnaires in 2005 indicated that they are not considered as good as American ones. Moreover, the majority of films watched by young Icelanders are in English, and the majority prefer English-language films to home grown films or films from other European countries. The main reasons given for

their preferences are that English-language films are better and more fun than Icelandic films, that they have better actors and feature celebrities, that there are many English language films to choose from compared to very few Icelandic films. The vast majority of students claimed to *not often* watch Icelandic films, but to *often* or *very often* watch English language films. Furthermore, the majority *never* watched films in any other language.

In 2009 the data from students also show that the vast majority only or mostly watch films in English. This is also due to quantity of American films as well as quality. Moreover, American films are inexpensive for the media companies to buy. The spread and influence of films and TV drama is huge. The vast majority of such material in Iceland has been in English for a long period of time. It is fair to say that this entails a major domain loss (Menntamálaráðuneyti 2008: 69).

As with television, language policy is that all foreign films are subtitled, although, Ólafsson (personal communication, 2005) stated that the younger people do not consider subtitles to be necessary, while for older people it is unacceptable not to have subtitles (cited in Hilmarsson-Dunn 2006: 304). The Icelandic Language Council believes that not enough effort is put into translating subtitles and recommends that subtitles should be translated carefully and in better Icelandic because they are read by so many people (Menntamálaráðuneyti 2008: 64). Film advertisements are also subtitled in Icelandic but very often the Icelandic translation can barely be seen. This may reflect the wishes of the advertisers, as in France, to appeal to a global audience by using English first.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, and the Ministry of Finance signed an agreement with Icelandic film makers in 2006 to strengthen Icelandic film making (Menntamálaráðuneyti 2008: 69). They are in agreement that no fewer than four full length films should be made annually. Policy is that emphasis should be on the production, at least every other year, of films for children and families. Various subsidies will be available for this purpose and should mean that the Icelandic film industry can play a more significant role in Icelandic cultural life (2008: 70)

Elfa Gylfadóttir (2009, email correspondence) reported that the government has put emphasis on Icelandic production by increasing the funding for the television fund at the Icelandic Film Centre. RÚV has to increase the funding for buying Icelandic productions between 2007 and 2012 as part of a five year public service contract.

The Iceland Language Council has made many other recommendations on language use, including for newspapers, advertisements, language technology (see Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson, in press 2010), and translations of literary material in and out of Icelandic. For example they point out that advertisements often appear in languages other than Icelandic, that the course in media studies at the University of Iceland does not even run a compulsory course in Icelandic. They recommend that the media and advertising institutes set up a language policy before the end of 2009 and that they should stand guard over the Icelandic language (Menntamálaráðuneyti 2008: 63).

The proposals even encompass the language of popular songs. It is an unfavourable development, they state (ibid: 71) for English to be the song language, and artists should be encouraged to show more pride in their mother tongue. Many could publish their songs equally in Icelandic as well as English. The precedent, that has been set by the most famous songwriters, who sing in Icelandic only, should be something for younger people to follow. In fact, although groups such as “Sigur Ros”, have been singing in Icelandic for some years, they made their name first by singing in English.

## 7. Conclusion

The responsibility of the media towards the development of the Icelandic language is evident from this paper. The language policy proposals put forward by the Icelandic Language Council and ratified by the government and the parliament, indicate that active support is being given to the language at the highest levels. However, even *with* this support, language policies cannot prevent Icelanders from choosing to watch media broadcast in a prestigious world language, English, mainly because home grown products cannot compete against the vast quantities of Anglo-American cultural products coming into the country through new technologies. Moreover, the traditional bastions of the national language, the state broadcasters, have been shown to have far fewer young listeners/viewers than the private commercial stations. Thus, despite the emphasis on corpus planning and promoting broadcasting as much as possible in Icelandic, there is less likelihood that these policies can be as successful in preventing linguistic borrowings from English now as they once were. Young people are fully conversant in English, which is part of their daily life, unlike the situation was for their parents. This may mean that the policy makers of the future will not be as concerned about the impact of English as is presently the case.