

# Language, Identity and Belonging: The Situation in Iceland

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**Keywords:** Iceland, ideology, identity, Inclusion/exclusion, migration

Iceland has long embraced a language ideology based on purism and linguistic conservatism (Pórarinsdóttir 2010). Until the early 2000s, policies and teaching methods designed to maintain the purity of the language were directed at Icelandic first language speakers. With growing numbers of immigrants to the country from the mid-1990s to the present, language policies and practices have directly focused on those learning Icelandic as a new language in their repertoire. As a result, migrants to Iceland who heed the Ministry of Social Affairs' suggestion that they learn Icelandic so as to become fully integrated into society are challenging the conservative ideological stances, particularly that advocating purism (Skaptadóttir 2007; Skaptadóttir and Innes Forthcoming).

While research shows that spaces for change are appearing and that allowances are being made for language learners (Harðardóttir 2015; Innes and Skaptadóttir 2016; Skaptadóttir and Innes Forthcoming), linguistic purism is still present. Recently, it has been used to critique Icelandic-English code-mixing (Silfur Egils 2016 and comments following). Statements critiquing learners' productions also are offered and concerns about speakers' abilities to speak Icelandic well are used to limit access to jobs and other types of resources (Skaptadóttir 2015; Wojtyńska and Zielińska 2010). In this paper, we will trace how learners navigate in an environment in which they are uncertain about which ideological stance they are likely to encounter, welcoming/encouraging versus boundary-maintaining/discouraging, and what learners make of the varying responses they receive when they use Icelandic.

Review of interview and other varieties of data from fieldwork with adult learners of Icelandic allows us to explore whether Icelanders truly are adhering less to the purist language

ideology and are adopting a more flexible and inclusive view toward language. We also intend to pursue the question of what this means for identity construction and issues of belonging in Iceland, both for native speakers and learners of Icelandic. Investigating issues like these provide new paths for exploration of identity construction and belonging among transnational migrants.

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