

In a nutshell

The Icelandic Village is a network of businesses in downtown Reykjavik that willingly accept and interact with Second Language Icelandic learners in Icelandic during everyday business interactions. Both the Second Language learners and business partners receive basic instruction and support materials to guide their interactions. The Icelandic Village seeks to provide a safe environment where low level speakers of Icelandic can participate in everyday interaction with Icelandic speakers as a resource for learning.

The project partners represent expertise in second language acquisition in everyday life and experience design necessary for developing and studying a type of “living lab” – a guided real life environment. The instructional and support material will be developed and analysed through a series of collaborative workshops in Reykjavik. The project will be documented as a basis for understanding and improving guided participation both in relation to second language acquisition and experience and material design for supporting everyday interactions.

What?

- ✦ The Icelandic Village is an environment for L2 interaction outside the classroom. Participating in the Icelandic village is a group of companies in downtown Reykjavik and/or on the campus of the University of Iceland (in Reykjavik) that offer service in Icelandic to low level speakers of Icelandic. These customers will be able to conduct their daily life business in Icelandic in a place where the staff is trained to serve them: A guided participation in real-life interaction in Icelandic.
- ✦ The Icelandic Village is a bridge between classroom interaction to real life interaction.
- ✦ In the Icelandic Village Second Language speakers of Icelandic such as second language learners of Icelandic, immigrants and even tourists have an opportunity to use Icelandic in their daily live.
- ✦ Real businesses such as a bakery, a Café, a bank etc. in downtown Reykjavik, Iceland, will participate in the Icelandic Village.
- ✦ L2 learners of Icelandic at the University of Iceland and preferably in other places that teach Icelandic, will be participating in a new way of language learning. They get training in the classroom before going to the Icelandic Village to conduct business
- ✦ A learning material specific to the Icelandic Village is used for the training.
- ✦ The staff in the businesses in the Icelandic Village gets instruction in attending to customers who speak low level Icelandic.
- ✦ The Icelandic Village has a specific design which makes it visible in the businesses and elsewhere.
- ✦ The Icelandic Village will be a model for language ‘Villages’ in other places such as in the Nordic countries and elsewhere in Reykjavik.

Why?

- ✦ It is difficult to start speaking in a new language outside of the classroom.
- ✦ Learners of Icelandic use the new language exclusively in the classroom in the first year of learning.

- ✦ Locating suitable places outside of the classroom to use the language is not easy.
- ✦ Second language speakers of Icelandic are often responded to in English when they try to speak Icelandic to the locals.
- ✦ Language use is a condition for language learning.
- ✦ Language use in early stages of language learning can further the learning process.
- ✦ Interaction in the Icelandic Village between second language speakers of Icelandic and Icelanders contributes to mutual understanding and tolerance.

How?

- ✦ Foreign students of Icelandic at the University of Iceland get special training in the classroom to prepare them for the semi-real interaction in the Icelandic Village. They go through six steps of a pedagogically designed process.
- ✦ Specially selected staff in the companies of the Icelandic Village are trained to serve low level speakers of Icelandic in Icelandic (rather than English).
- ✦ The environment in the companies has a special design characteristic for the Icelandic Village. Signs, banners and buttons will display to the customers that the company is participating in the Icelandic Village.
- ✦ The project is in co-operation between Iceland, Denmark and Sweden.
- ✦ The contribution from the University of Iceland is leading the project and providing both the theoretical background of the project and the site for the Pilot run.
- ✦ The contribution from the University of Southern Denmark is research in L2 learning in Everyday life environment as well as developing and designing material and workforms.
- ✦ The contribution from the Interactive Institute (Sweden) is to lead the design aspects of the Icelandic Village, support material and workforms through the organization and facilitation of design workshops with the various research and business participants.

Video [in Icelandic]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eHp4dPb9hc&feature=youtu.be>

Guided participation in real life interaction in Icelandic

Visiting elderly Icelanders

The new learning /teaching program The Icelandic Village has proven successful for beginning learners of Icelandic at the University of Iceland for the past three years. A need for a similar program for more advanced learners has become obvious; the learners like the method and want to continue on the same path. Guðrún Theodórsdóttir got the idea to activate the group who had time and spoke Icelandic: elderly people. This has been the task of workshops with the participation of The University of Iceland, University of Southern Denmark, The Interactive Institute in Sweden and also participants from the Universities in Jyväskylä and Tampere in Finland.

The result is a program using the framework of the Icelandic Village where learners visit elderly Icelanders in Activity centres for the elderly and have a conversation with them. They are prepared in the classroom in the same fashion as in the Icelandic Village. They visit the same elderly person twice and record both visits. Then they work with the teacher in the classroom evaluation the visits; how did it go? Problems? Success stories to share with other students? The final step in this program is to give a presentation in class on the two visits.

This method has been used for two years now and is under constant observation and repair; the group of learners is too big for this program (80-90 learners), and some of the elderly talk to many learners, which can be too much. However, the program has been welcomed in the activity centres and we have learned that both the elderly and the staff look forward to getting these visits. On one occasion an activity centre, which we had not contacted, called and asked to have some of the students over. Thus, the program is beneficial to both the learners who get an opportunity for a longer conversation and in some cases get a new friend, and the elderly people who meet with these young people from all over the world and they get an opportunity to tell their stories.