



**The Fourteenth Cambridge International Conference
on Open, Distance and e-Learning 2011**

***The Language Plaza:
Online habitat and network to promote
language skills and increase equity***



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The Presentation

Content

- Introduction and equity
- The Language Plaza
- The Future, networking, community building

Presenter/perspective

- Brynhildur (teaching)
- Thorbjörg (design)
- Sólveig (research)



From homogeneity to diversity

- The number of migrants with a different language background have been growing fast in Iceland
- Currently people of foreign origin comprise ca. 8% of the total population and come from over 170 countries
- About 5.4% of pupils in compulsory schools have about 40 different mother tongues
 - The number had more than tripled from 1998 to 2010.

The Professional Context

- Limited number of professional language teachers available.
- The teachers are often unspecialized classroom teachers, or else alone in teaching their subject.
- The schools in rural districts cannot offer as many elective subjects as those in the capital area.
- Unequal access to continuing education and in-service training compared to the capital area.
- Very little subject related consultation available.

Schools & Children of Migrating Background

- Little experience in teaching Icelandic as a foreign language.
- Experience gained in one school does not necessarily transfer to other schools.
- Low number of educated languages teachers teaching migrants their mother tongue as SL
- Resources for teachers distributed in many different places.

Vision

- To ensure that students enjoy the **equal opportunities** which they have a right to according to law.
- Encourage the **cooperation of teachers** working together without regard to their physical location.
- **Support in-service teachers** with mutual communication and practical supplementary materials.
- Share materials and **harness the collective knowledge and experience** of the users in a way that benefits all.

Current Focal Areas

- Foreign language teaching.
- Multicultural education.
- Resources for first language teaching.
- Learning materials for Icelandic as a SL.
- Methodology, activities and organization.
- Teachers' communities.
- IT resources for designing on-line materials.

Current Incentives

- Good practice from the classroom
- Peer-consultation
- External-expert consultation
- Professional development
- A bridge between the teacher education and the classroom
- Visible threads between research and materials; materials and curriculum; materials, activities and the practices of the classroom.

The Language Plaza

- Online community supporting teaching and learning languages in Iceland
- Roots in public policy and vision for needs and future of education
- Contributors (Icelandic and Nordic)
 - The Ministry of education and culture , UI – School of Education
 - The Municipality of Reykjavík, The Association of Local Authorities in Iceland
- Opened in November 16, 2010

Tungumálatorg

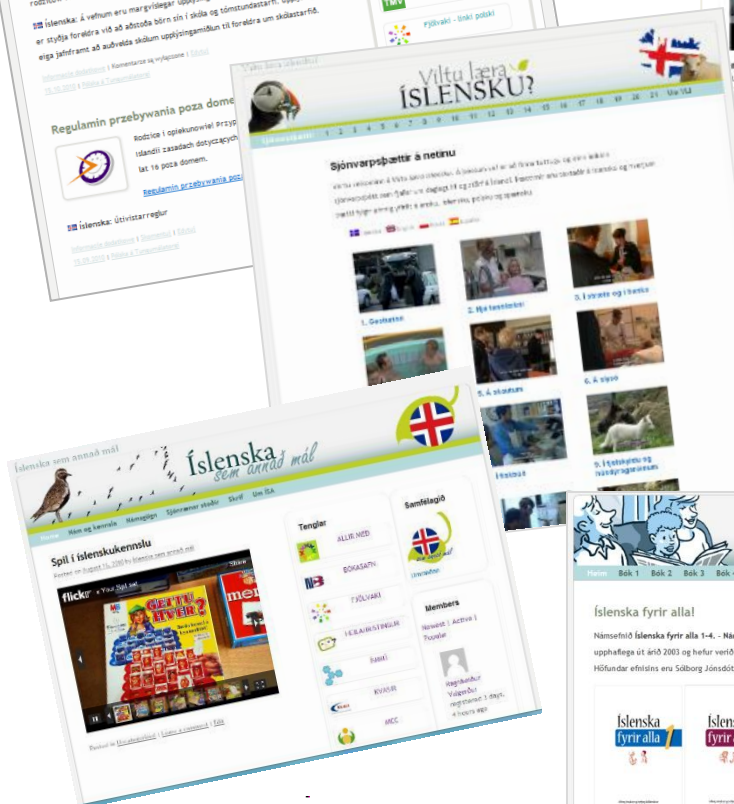
- Resources and opportunities for learning and social interaction
- Consultation and information



Contributions

- The material is published in the form of text, pictures, videos and screen recordings
- Links to relevant and useful material from other websites created around the mother tongues of immigrants and materials for Icelandic as second language are also included
- The intellectual properties are published under the licenses of Creative Commons and the community is open to everyone





The Future

- Minimum funding for next 3 years guaranteed
- NETTORG
 - Researchers and graduate students associated with five research centers at the UI-SE
 - Seven studies: community building online and six studies focus on the Language Plaza





TORG1. Action research on networking and community building
Dr. Sólveig Jakobsdóttir, with 11 researchers (9 RANNUM, 1 RFSL, 1 RCDLL). Sponsor: RANNUM

Teaching & Learning
(4 cases)

Language
(3 cases)

Research & Development
(3 cases)

Sponsor: RANNUM

Torg2-LP
Language Plaza – Design Based
Research

Þorbjörg Þorsteinsdóttir,
(M.A. thesis)

Sponsor: RFSL

LP1

Impact of the Language Plaza on
language teaching and learning

Samúel LeFever
Brynhildur Anna Ragnarsdóttir
NN (M.Ed.thesis)

Sponsor: RCDLL
Advising role:
RMCS&RISIL

LP2-4

Immigrant children and their
families – Icelandic as a second
language (ISL)

Anna Guðrún Júlíusdóttir
(M.A. thesis)

LP2

Community building for
educators in ISL

Sigríður Ólafsdóttir
(Ed.D. thesis)

LP3

Vocabulary intervention – ISL

NN (M.Ed. thesis)

LP4

Effects of the Language Plaza on
Immigrant Children and their
Families

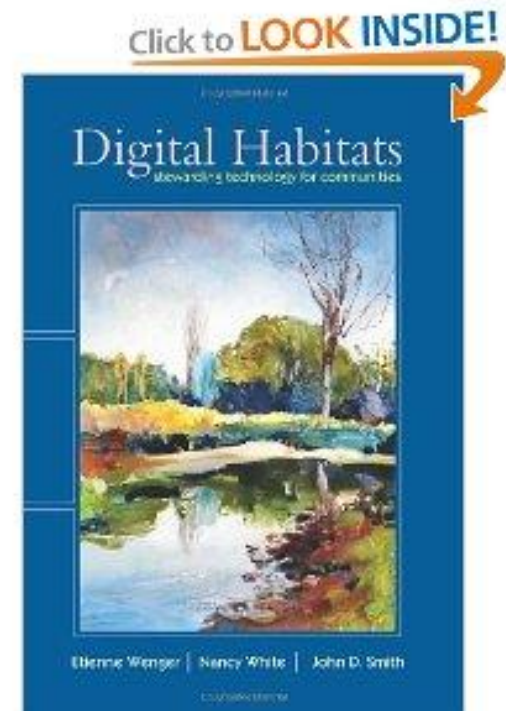
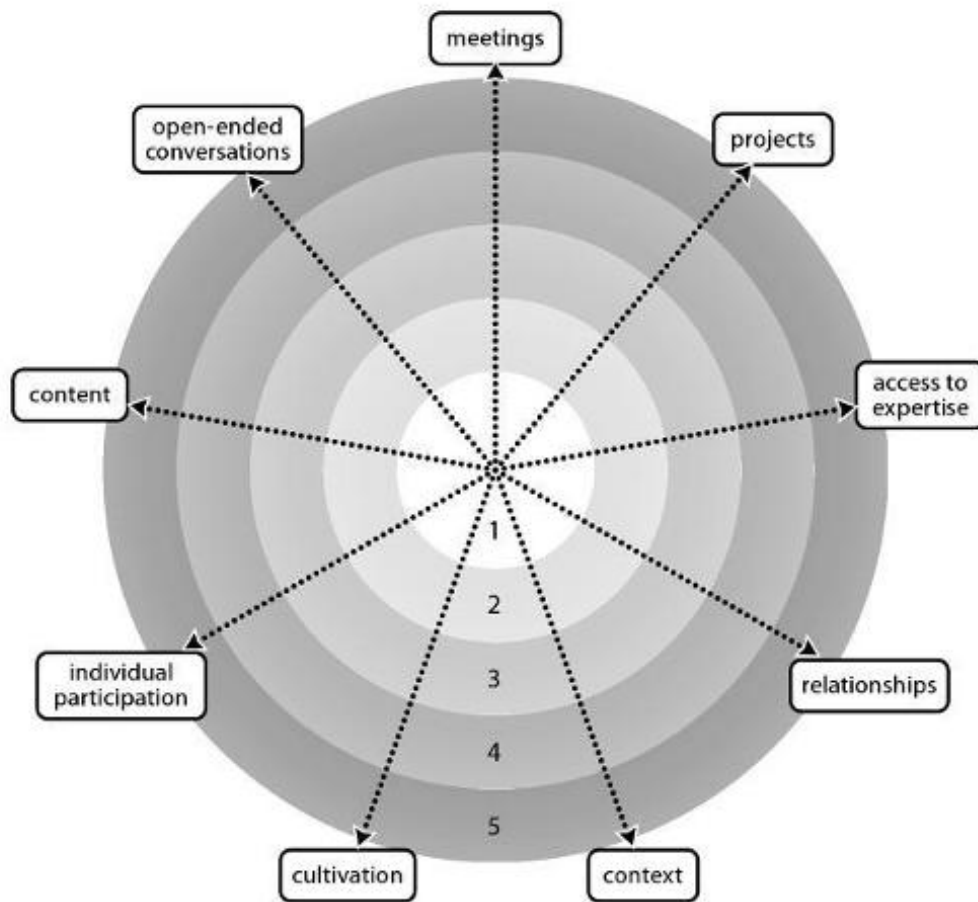
Sponsors:
RFSL and RANNUM

LP5

Spanish teaching, multimedia
development project

Ida M. Semey
(M.Ed. thesis)

Communities of Practice



Digital habitats, how used?

- Conole, Galley, & Culver (2011) - DBR with Cloudworks, studied emergent patterns of user behaviors
- Site used in several ways, some aligned with orientations by Wenger et al.
- Additional ways were academic: debates, reviews, courses, reading circles.

Collaboration

- There is interest in working with European partners (and/or from other countries) to do research and develop this model further with participation of more countries to promote greater cultural exchange and sharing of digital resources and methods in teaching and learning languages with new technologies (foreign and second language acquisition/SLA, L2)

A colorful community

