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The Translation Market in Iceland – Report for the TNP3

1. General overview

The Icelandic translation market has been developing steadily during the last few years in conjunction with ongoing globalisation. There has, however, been less development in the production of qualified translators in Iceland, since the first educational opportunity at university level was only introduced three years ago. The only way to qualify in any way in Iceland was to take an examination held by the Ministry of Justice for certified translators and interpreters, an examination which focuses on legal translation.

The market has, therefore, been served by a number of freelance translators of varying degree of qualification and experience. There are still very few companies working on the market, with, in effect, only two companies making any waves in the last few years, Sprok (now part of Microsoft) and Skjal, both of which employed or employ a handful of translators, in addition to a pool of freelancers.

There has been increased demand for translators in all fields during the last few years and there are signs of increased professionalism in the field, although they are few and far between, given the preparatory situation. The University of Iceland of Iceland Translation Centre was founded in 2001 as a part of The Vigdis Finnbogadóttir Institute in Foreign Languages and is a research and service centre in translation linked to the university course of studies in translation. The centre has considerable experience in providing solutions in various fields of translation. The centre acted as a consultant for the localisation of parts of the Oracle e-business suite in 2002-3 and has also provided multilingual translation services to companies like Össur and Icelandair and the Icelandic Environment and Food Agency. The centre has built a knowledge base in the use of TMs and terminological databases and is equipped to meet the needs of customers in these fields. The centre also conducts research on the “local” aspect of localisation, in particular terminological solutions, which have proven to be the greatest challenge in localisation in Iceland, in addition to the lack of qualified localisers.

2. The translation sectors

There are a few sectors of translation to be found in Iceland, as in any country, but it will not be possible to cover all of them in great detail. It should, however, be kept in mind when looking at the figures below, that the population of the country is a little under 300,000. This means of course, that in absolute terms, the figures are very low when compared to other countries on the one hand, on the other they tend to be higher in proportional terms, since a small country simply needs to produce more culture proportionally to be able to call it self an independent nation.

2.1 Book publishing

The first and oldest sector in translation is the publishing sector, a sector that is traditionally very strong in Iceland, since books sell very well indeed in Iceland, as can be seen in the following table from Statistics Iceland:

Table 1. Book publishing 1965–2000. Number of volumes

	All editions	Books	Booklets	First editions	Later editions	Volumes per 1,000 inh.
1965	660	398	262	626	34	3,4
1970	674	461	213	617	57	3,3
1975	795	514	281	670	125	3,6
1976	840	570	270	696	144	3,8
1977	874	608	266	736	138	3,9
1978	1.045	696	349	891	154	4,7
1979	1.035	669	366	883	152	4,6
1980	1.193	723	470	990	203	5,2
1981	1.179	764	415	987	192	5,1
1982	1.329	903	426	1.133	196	5,6
1983	1.210	787	423	987	223	5,1
1984	1.096	707	389	917	179	4,6
1985	1.203	825	378	1.001	202	5,0
1986	1.282	887	395	1.043	239	5,3
1987	1.295	928	367	1.031	264	5,2
1988	1.244	879	365	1.028	216	4,9
1989	1.340	935	405	1.152	188	5,3
1990	1.593	1.101	492	1.235	358	6,2
1991	1.606	1.063	543	1.281	325	6,2
1992	1.740	1.112	628	1.288	452	6,6
1993	1.525	1.051	474	1.149	376	5,8
1994	1.550	1.045	505	1.198	352	5,8
1995	1.601	1.046	555	1.271	330	6,0
1996	1.671	1.094	577	1.311	360	6,2
1997	1.852	1.139	713	1.449	403	6,8
1998	1.970	1.193	777	1.540	430	7,2
1999	1.953	1.232	721	1.506	447	7,0
2000 ¹	1.869	1.137	732	1.521	348	6,6

Note: Books are defined as editions with 49 pages and more; booklets are defined as editions with 5–48 pages.

¹. Preliminary data. Source: National and University Library of Iceland (The Icelandic National Bibliography).

According to this, more than 6 book titles per 1,000 inhabitants have been published every year in the years from 1990-2000 in Iceland. In comparison, this would mean almost 1,000,000 new titles every year in the USA. Of these, between 20-30% have been translations as can be seen in the following table, also from Statistics Iceland:

Table 2. Book publishing 1965–2000 by origin

	Number of volumes			% Percent distribution		
	All editions	Icelandic	Translations	All editions	Icelandic	Translations
1965	660	512	148	100,0	77,6	22,4
1970	674	512	162	100,0	76,0	24,0
1975	795	611	184	100,0	76,9	23,1
1976	840	658	182	100,0	78,3	21,7
1977	874	644	230	100,0	73,7	26,3
1978	1.045	760	285	100,0	72,7	27,3
1979	1.035	711	324	100,0	68,7	31,3
1980	1.193	846	347	100,0	70,9	29,1
1981	1.179	866	313	100,0	73,5	26,5
1982	1.329	986	343	100,0	74,2	25,8
1983	1.210	901	309	100,0	74,5	25,5
1984	1.096	834	262	100,0	76,1	23,9
1985	1.203	899	304	100,0	74,7	25,3
1986	1.282	932	350	100,0	72,7	27,3
1987	1.295	919	376	100,0	71,0	29,0
1988	1.244	881	363	100,0	70,8	29,2
1989	1.340	955	385	100,0	71,3	28,7
1990	1.593	1.201	392	100,0	75,4	24,6
1991	1.606	1.153	453	100,0	71,8	28,2
1992	1.740	1.253	487	100,0	72,0	28,0
1993	1.525	1.110	415	100,0	72,8	27,2
1994	1.550	1.177	373	100,0	75,9	24,1
1995	1.601	1.238	363	100,0	77,3	22,7
1996	1.671	1.346	325	100,0	80,6	19,4
1997	1.852	1.459	393	100,0	78,8	21,2
1998	1.970	1.577	393	100,0	80,1	19,9
1999	1.953	1.541	412	100,0	78,9	21,1
2000 ¹	1.869	1.430	439	100,0	76,5	23,5

Note: Books and booklets.

¹. Preliminary data.

Source: National and University Library of Iceland (The Icelandic National Bibliography).

2.2 Commercial translation

The commercial translation sector in Iceland has grown steadily in the last few years and it can be divided into a few branches of its own: freelance translation in which translators serve commercial enterprises and state bodies and the localisation industry and the translation service industry where companies serve commercial clients. The growth in this sector can perhaps best be seen in figures obtained from the Icelandic tax authorities which show that the growth has been almost 20% on average annually from 1997-2003:

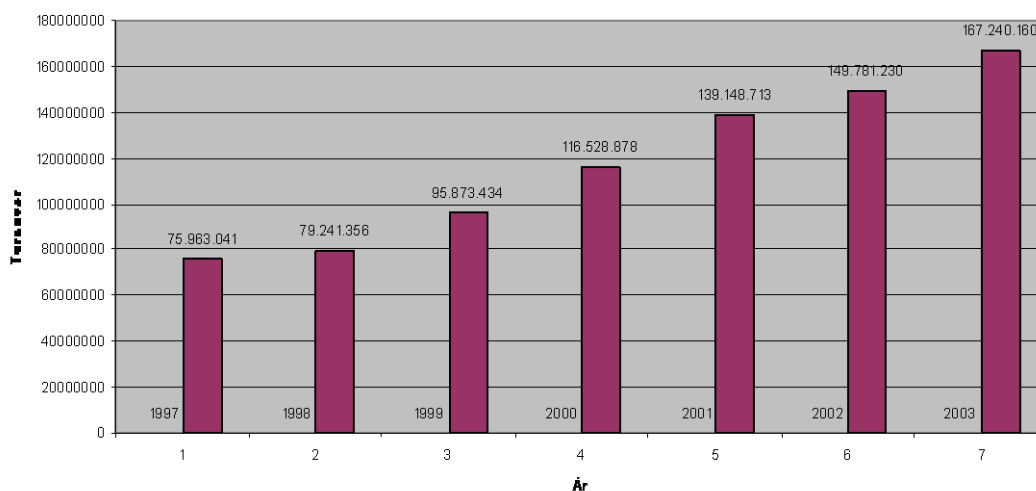
Table 3

Year	Turnover before VAT (ISK)	Number of VAT numbers	Increase of VAT numbers between years	Increase in turnover between years %
1997	75.963.041	64		
1998	79.241.356	77	20,31%	4,32%
1999	95.873.434	95	23,38%	20,99%
2000	116.528.878	103	8,42%	21,54%
2001	139.148.713	119	15,53%	19,41%
2002	149.781.230	115	-3,36%	7,64%
2003	167.240.160	108	-6,09%	11,66%
Increase in turnover 1997 - 2003				120,16%
Increase of VAT numbers 1997 - 2003				68,75%
Turnover per VAT number 1997 (ISK)				1.186.923
Turnover per VAT number 2003 (ISK)				1.548.520
Increase in turnover per VAT number 1997 - 2003 (ISK)				361.597

Source: RSK 2004

Each party in commercial translation, be they freelance translators or a small company, is given a so-called VAT number and they have to report their turnover to the tax authorities when they return the VAT they have collected with their invoices. Turnover amounted to 75 million ISK before VAT (which amounts to 24,5% in addition) in 1997 and grew to 167 million in 2003 which amounts to 120% growth in 7 years. This is well exemplified by the column graph based on the above figures:

Business translation and interpretation in Iceland 1997 - 2003 (in ISK)



The largest private company on the market now is presumably Skjal with 5 in-house translators and a large number of freelancers on register. According to the company's chief executive, Bogi Örn Emilsson, the company started out with 2 employees in 2000 and now employs 6 people with a 23 fold increase in turnover in mid-year 2004.

2.3 Legal translation for the state

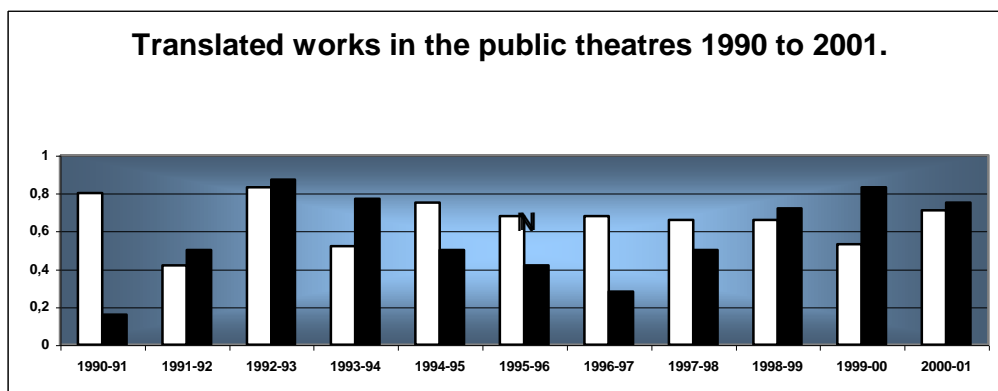
The Ministry for Foreign Affairs has run a translation department to translate EU documents and law and this department has grown steadily since 1991 when Iceland joined the European Economic Area. The department now employs about 15 in-house translators, most of whom specialise on the job. In addition a number of translators are employed on a freelance basis for most other government organs.

2.4 Software localisation

As noted earlier, the Icelandic market is very small. Larger projects in localisation have therefore been undertaken on a case-by-case basis, so to speak, with perhaps the translation of MS Windows 98 (Sprok) and parts of the Oracle e-business suite (Skyrr in-house) as the major recent projects. Apple translated its operating system from the beginning, but stopped with the introduction of MacOS X. IBM also translated some of the software it offered earlier. Microsoft has also said now that it will publish the Microsoft Windows and Office packages in Icelandic in the summer of 2004 which may constitute a watershed in the industry, if the company continues to update the Icelandic versions. The localisation industry in Iceland seems, therefore, to be poised for major growth.

2.5 Drama translation

Icelandic theatre is very lively with two major professional repertoire theatres in Reykjavik and a number of independent drama groups, both professional and amateur. One significant aspect of Icelandic theatre life is, however, translation, although this seems sometimes to be some sort of invisible activity, to lean on Lawrence Venuti's ideas. According to a study published recently, around 67% of all works shown in the two professional theatres in Reykjavik were translated.¹ Below is a column graph which shows the percentage of translated material in the National Theatre of Iceland and Reykjavik City Theatre. The white column is the National Theatre, the black one the City Theatre:²



There is no trend observable, but on the whole a large number of plays are translated, sometimes over 80% in a single year.

2.6 Translation of television material

Icelandic television was established in 1966 to counter American cultural influences.³ Foreign material has made up the bulk of the material since then and still does, if the figures from Statistics Iceland are to be believed:

Table 4. Programming of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service-TV by origin 1996–2001

	Yearly hours			Percent distribution		
	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign
1966	98	28	70	100,0	28,6	71,4
1967	717	259	459	100,0	36,1	63,9
1968	1.026	368	658	100,0	35,9	64,1
1969	1.000	296	704	100,0	29,6	70,4
1970	1.016	324	692	100,0	31,9	68,1
1971	1.027	340	687	100,0	33,1	66,9
1972	1.114	388	726	100,0	34,8	65,2
1973	1.086	410	675	100,0	37,8	62,2
1974	1.130	461	669	100,0	40,8	59,2
1975	1.074	423	651	100,0	39,4	60,6
1976	1.125	421	704	100,0	37,4	62,6
1977	1.112	406	706	100,0	36,5	63,5
1978	1.219	444	775	100,0	36,4	63,6
1979	1.185	391	794	100,0	33,0	67,0
1980	1.219	400	819	100,0	32,8	67,2
1981	1.126	382	744	100,0	33,9	66,1
1982	1.318	439	879	100,0	33,3	66,7
1983	1.330	472	858	100,0	35,5	64,5
1984	1.363	432	931	100,0	31,7	68,3
1985	1.503	514	989	100,0	34,2	65,8
1986	1.768	668	1.100	100,0	37,8	62,2
1987	2.049	775	1.274	100,0	37,8	62,2
1988	2.139	768	1.371	100,0	35,9	64,1
1989	2.571	896	1.675	100,0	34,8	65,1
1990	2.483	817	1.666	100,0	32,9	67,1
1991	2.518	780	1.739	100,0	31,0	69,0
1992	2.559	844	1.715	100,0	33,0	67,0
1993	2.668	826	1.842	100,0	31,0	69,0
1994	2.885	1.033	1.852	100,0	35,8	64,2
1995	2.932	897	2.035	100,0	30,6	69,4
1996	3.079	867	2.211	100,0	28,2	71,8
1997	3.144	842	2.302	100,0	26,8	73,2
1998	3.220	986	2.234	100,0	30,6	69,4
1999	3.147	943	2.203	100,0	30,0	70,0
2000	3.362	1.114	2.248	100,0	33,1	66,9
2001	3.177	1.064	2.113	100,0	33,5	66,5

Excluding advertisements and teleshopping 1966–1999, as well as insert slots and programme announcements since 2000.

Source: The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service (Annual Reports and unpublished information).

This means that about 60-70% of the material broadcast on Icelandic state television was indeed foreign, albeit translated, most often subtitled, but increasingly dubbed for children and occasionally with voice over in

documentary programmes. The linguistic distribution of the material can be seen in the following table from S.I.:

Table 5. Programming of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service-TV by country/region of origin 1967–2001. Percent distribution

	Icelandic	Nordic	British	French	Italian	Spanish	German	European	US	Canadian	New Zealand	Other countries	Not specified ¹
1967 ²	36,1	9,9	26,2	3,3	0,5	...	1,0	0,6	21,1	0,6	...	0,8	–
1968	35,9	6,6	26,3	4,5	0,3	...	1,1	0,9	20,7	1,7	...	2,1	–
1969	29,6	11,1	23,4	1,7	–	...	2,3	1,3	27,4	2,1	...	1,1	–
1970	31,9	11,2	22,3	3,3	0,2	...	3,1	2,0	22,0	1,4	...	2,7	–
1971	33,1	10,0	20,9	2,8	0,1	...	2,1	1,7	26,6	0,5	...	2,1	–
1972	34,8	10,7	23,1	2,4	1,0	...	4,8	2,3	17,3	0,1	...	3,5	–
1973	37,8	10,6	21,1	3,1	1,1	...	1,5	5,2	16,7	0,9	0,5	1,5	–
1974	40,8	9,7	22,3	1,2	1,2	...	2,2	4,7	14,7	0,7	0,9	1,6	–
1975	39,4	9,7	28,3	1,6	0,6	...	1,0	1,7	17,2	0,2	0,1	0,3	–
1976	37,4	9,8	23,3	0,6	1,9	...	1,6	2,6	18,5	2,8	0,7	0,8	–
1977	36,5	11,4	27,7	3,3	0,5	...	2,0	1,8	14,2	1,2	...	1,4	–
1978	36,4	8,5	26,3	2,4	0,7	0,2	2,7	0,4	16,2	1,3	...	5,1	–
1979	33,0	9,0	26,2	3,6	1,4	0,3	2,7	2,9	15,9	1,6	2,1	1,2	–
1980	32,8	7,9	24,6	2,8	1,0	0,7	0,9	4,9	21,9	0,8	0,8	0,9	–
1981	33,9	8,5	26,3	2,0	0,7	...	2,4	4,5	18,4	0,9	...	2,4	–
1982	33,3	6,7	23,3	3,7	0,7	...	2,5	6,7	18,8	0,7	...	3,6	–
1983 ³	35,5	9,6	26,9	2,5	0,8	...	4,7	...	15,4	...	...	4,6	–
1984 ⁴	31,7	6,4	26,0	1,8	1,8	...	4,5	2,8	19,7	1,4	...	4,0	–
1985	34,2	7,7	23,2	2,2	3,1	1,3	4,1	2,8	16,4	2,0	1,1	1,9	–
1986	37,8	4,3	19,1	...	...	...	...	...	17,9	...	...	20,9	–
1987 ⁵	37,8	2,7	19,2	...	...	...	...	...	20,5	...	...	19,8	–
1988	35,9	5,0	15,5	...	...	...	...	6,9	21,3	...	0,8	14,6	–
1989	34,8	5,3	18,9	...	...	...	...	7,6	20,7	...	1,0	11,6	–
1990	32,9	5,6	14,6	...	...	...	...	7,2	17,7	2,1	1,7	2,4	15,8
1991	31,0	3,2	12,6	2,9	0,9	0,6	2,1	2,1	18,3	3,1	2,7	0,1	20,2
1992	33,0	2,6	8,5	2,2	0,6	0,8	1,5	0,6	22,4	2,7	2,7	0,2	22,2
1993	31,0	3,3	6,7	3,0	0,6	0,4	0,7	0,6	21,0	1,7	2,8	0,2	28,1
1994	35,8	3,5	8,9	1,0	0,3	–	2,0	0,5	15,8	1,6	2,3	0,2	28,2
1995	30,6	3,5	7,9	1,8	0,1	0,4	1,2	0,7	21,4	1,1	1,4	0,3	29,7
1996	28,2	2,5	8,2	...	...	0,2	1,8	0,5	17,1	1,4	2,9	0,2	37,1
1997	26,8	3,1	10,5	1,4	0,2	0,4	1,8	1,0	21,4	1,2	1,9	–	30,4
1998	30,6	3,4	9,0	1,6	0,3	0,7	1,0	1,5	21,3	1,2	2,4	0,4	26,5
1999	30,0	4,0	8,3	1,8	0,4	0,3	2,3	0,5	25,2	1,0	2,2	0,3	23,6
2000	33,1	3,1	7,7	1,6	0,3	0,1	2,0	0,3	27,4	0,9	1,7	0,2	21,6
2001	33,5	2,4	9,2	1,9	0,2	0,1	1,2	0,8	31,7	0,9	0,5	0,3	17,3

The first private TV channel was founded in 1986 after deregulation and a few stations have been established. Most of their material has been translated and it is overwhelmingly in English. Below is a table of the programming of the private channels between 1987 and 2001 according to either foreign or domestic origin.

Table 6. Programming of private TV channels by origin 1987–2001

	Yearly hours			Percent distribution		
	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign
Skjár 1 Screen One						
1999 ¹	539	215	324	100,0	39,8	60,2
2000 ²	3.272	1.509	1.763	100,0	46,1	53,9
2001 ²	2.615	785	1.831	100,0	30,0	70,0
Stöð 2 Channel 2						
1987	3.660	751	2.909	100,0	20,5	79,5
1988	4.103	837	3.266	100,0	20,4	79,6
1989	4.372	743	3.629	100,0	17,0	83,0
1990	4.112	699	3.413	100,0	17,0	83,0
1991	4.138	603	3.535	100,0	14,6	85,4
1992	4.140	597	3.543	100,0	14,4	85,6
1993	4.411	793	3.618	100,0	18,0	82,0
1994	4.287	849	3.438	100,0	19,8	80,2
1995	4.425	927	3.498	100,0	20,9	79,1
1996	4.306	574	3.732	100,0	13,3	86,7
1997	4.411	678	3.733	100,0	15,4	84,6
1998	4.688	576	4.111	100,0	12,3	87,7
1999 ³	5.072	682	4.390	100,0	13,4	86,6
2000	6.350	1.523	4.827	100,0	24,0	76,0
2001	6.219	1.300	4.919	100,0	20,9	79,1
Stöð 3 Channel 3						
1995	411	16	395	100,0	3,9	96,1
1996 ⁴	3.500	186	3.314	100,0	5,3	94,7
Sýn Vision TV						
1995	236	–	236	100,0	–	100,0
1996	2.752	35	2.717	100,0	1,3	98,7
1997	2.625	119	2.506	100,0	4,5	95,5
1998	2.880	104	2.776	100,0	3,6	96,4
1999	2.850	71	2.778	100,0	2,5	97,5
2000	3.058	911	2.147	100,0	29,8	70,2
2001	3.134	904	2.229	100,0	28,9	71,1

Note: Excluding advertisements, teleshopping, insert slots and programme announcements

¹ Transmission time only after 20 October and to end-of-year.

² Excluding music (during night time and before beginning of daily programme schedule in the afternoon).

³ Channel 2 started transmissions of breakfast television during mid-week on 1 November 1999.

⁴ Estimated from the scheduled programme for the first week in February, July and October.

Source: Statistics Iceland (information from broadcasters).

It appears that a hierarchical structure developed in the Icelandic media translation market in the late 1980s and well into the 1990s. This structure could be seen in both the quality of the translations and the payment for them, which again was reflected in the methods used. The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, as it calls itself in English, was at the top, with both the

best-paid and the most experienced translators. They also did their cueing themselves, and the channel paid for proofreaders with university degrees in Icelandic. The private channel, Channel 2, ranked second in payment for translators, but here the technicians did the cueing. The translations were also proofread at this channel. The third segment in the market was the video distribution. Here an army of nameless translators (or at least they sometimes must have wished to remain nameless) produced translations as hack work for fixed and very low prices. Cueing was done by technicians, but here was no proofreading.⁴

The video and DVD market was established in eighties and like the cinema market it consists almost entirely of foreign material, overwhelmingly of English speaking origin. The material, both in the cinema and on video/DVD, has been in most cases subtitled or dubbed since 1966, so there is considerable work done in translating here, although the quality is of a questionable nature.

Table 7. Released VHSs and DVDs 1995–2001 by origin

	Number of titles			Percent distribution		
	Total	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Domestic	Foreign
VHSs						
<i>Rental titles</i>						
1995	447	1	446	100,0	0,2	99,8
1996	452	15	437	100,0	3,3	96,7
1997	450	4	446	100,0	0,9	99,1
1998	503	5	498	100,0	1,0	99,0
1999	544	2	542	100,0	0,4	99,6
2000	541	8	533	100,0	1,5	98,5
2001	580	6	574	100,0	1,0	99,0
<i>Retail titles</i>						
1996	101	11	90	100,0	10,9	89,1
1997	105	2	103	100,0	1,9	98,1
1998	227	3	224	100,0	1,3	98,7
1999	115	4	111	100,0	3,5	96,5
2000	122	13	109	100,0	10,7	89,3
2001	135	8	127	100,0	5,9	94,1
DVDs						
<i>Rental titles</i>						
1999	205	–	205	100,0	–	100,0
2000	166	–	166	100,0	–	100,0
2001	254	1	253	100,0	0,4	99,6
<i>Retail titles</i>						
1998	83	–	83	100,0	–	100,0
1999	310	–	310	100,0	–	100,0
2000	331	–	331	100,0	–	100,0
2001	441	2	439	100,0	0,5	99,5

Note:. Figures refer to video cassettes released by members of Myndmark, a joint-venture association of distributors and video rentals.

Sources: Statistics Iceland (information from distributors) and Myndmark.

Channel 2 was established in the year 1986. Their original decision was to have their own translation department within the company, instead of paying a third party for translations. Hjörleifur Sveinbjörnsson is the head translator at the Translations Section at the company. Channel 2 broadcasts material 24

hours and Mr. Sveinbjörnsson estimates that domestic material is around 4 hours, against 20 hours of translated material, or 25% of domestic material against 75% of translated material at prime time. 13 people work in the section, which includes 4 in-house translators (all new positions) and 4 in-house proofreaders. Apart from that 10-12 translators do freelance work and the working hours tend to be very long. Adding to that number, the company employs 2 translators of current affairs as in-house translators. In 1991, Channel 2 broadcast 73,3% of translated material, of which English was 68,2%, but by 1998 the number of translated material was up to 79,6%, 53,3% of which was in English.⁵

Edda Kristjánsdóttir at the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service says that about 50% of their television material is translated (cf. table above). The Icelandic National Broadcasting Service was founded in 1930, but television broadcasting did not start until 1966. This channel was the 'flagship' of media translation well into the 1990's, and the pinnacle of the above-mentioned hierarchy in the Icelandic market. But with increased competitive pressures and continued financial difficulties, partly brought on by heavy political pressures on the licence fees, the state-run channel took up bargaining methods that are more in key with those sometimes practised in the United States between the world wars.⁶

The public demand is for accurate screen translations in as good Icelandic as possible, as swiftly as possible. Until fairly recently, censoring screen text was a widespread practice, especially at the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service where it is still practised in some form today. Swearing or bad language were not considered acceptable for such texts, and therefore cut out or toned down – but the relevance of the language to the imagery has to be taken into consideration, which is exactly what has been happening in the recent years.

The Translation Department of the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service has two in-house translators and around 20 translators working freelance. The numbers of translators have been fairly consistent through the years. From 1990 to 2000, the production of domestic television programs went up, decreasing translations by around 10%. This year (2004), due to sport events and economy, translation shrinkage has been estimated to be over 20%.

Lotus Sound Design was established in 1995 by a group of actors and musicians. From the outset, Lotus has been in the forefront of sound design and dubbing for television, movies, documentaries and commercials in Iceland. The main customers are Icelandic TV stations, cinemas, ad agencies and multimedia companies. The company has three recording studios at their disposal, designed to meet the highest international standards.⁷ Staff includes actors, directors, translators and sound engineers. When the company began operations in 1995, it did not offer translation services. The client would provide the translations and the company would provide the dubbing. After the translations of children's material for dubbing was transferred to Lotus from the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, translations within the company greatly increased in magnitude. The translational scope varies from time to time, but is constantly on the rise. The peak season is autumn and winter, when a great deal of children's material is being shown for the first time.

The company now has two in-house translators and employs 2-3 freelance translators, as the need arises - estimated as the work of 1-1 1/2 in-house translators. Davíð Þór Jónsson is the head of the Translating Department. According to him this year (2004) the company translates and dubs about 400 hours of television material, movies and videotapes/DVDs, most of which is for children but also the occasional documentary for TV or educational material for other parties, such as institutions and firms. Lotus Sound Design offers all kinds of translational services for dubbing all kinds of visual material, including technical services. The Translation Department also offers help with the use of language when outside parties use their sound studios to process their own texts – this is included in the company's services.

To conclude this sector, perhaps a brief look at the cinema, the oldest visual media which required translation. Before the war, most films were either not translated or offered in the "Danish" version. During the war, when the country was occupied by the British first and then the Americans, no translations were offered, neither subtitling nor dubbing. After the war, cinema distributors claimed the costs were too high, so films were shown without any translation until, remarkably, 1965, the year before the state run television channel was founded. Since then films have been subtitled or dubbed for children. According to S.I., the percentage of US films has been between 60-85% of the market since 1965 and the percentage of Icelandic films has never reached 4%, so 96% of the films shown in Iceland are translated.⁸

2.7 Community interpreting

This sector includes both community interpreters for immigrants who need interpreting when integrating to the new community and also sign language interpreting for the hearing impaired.

The University of Iceland has only recently started offering a course of studies in sign language interpreting and there are now about 12 interpreters working for this community, which amounts to about 300 individuals in Iceland, according to figures from the interpreters themselves. 5 are working for a state run communication centre (SHH), but there is also a small firm in private hands which employs 4, the rest being employed at schools. The need for qualified sign language interpreters is growing steadily since the demands and rights of the hearing impaired have been growing.

The Intercultural Centre was established in 2001 by the City of Reykjavik and is now run by the Icelandic Red Cross through a contract with the city. It provides assistance and services to immigrants who have chosen to live in Iceland. The Centre started out with 2 in-house translators and one in-house interpreter, and that number has not changed. Freelance translators at the Centre are around 50, and circa 20 of them do regular translations for the organisation. Freelance interpreters are around 150-200, and circa 30 of them do regular work for the organisation. Demand for translators and interpreters typically increases by 5% each year.

According to Lárus Valgarðsson at the Intercultural Centre, around 300 translation assignments and about 2800 interpretation assignments were done in 2003. The translations are mainly certificates for individuals and information for users of institutions. Interpretation assignments are mainly for medical check-ups, parent interviews at schools and interviews in the social

services. This year (2004) the demand for translators and interpreters is similar to last year. All translators and interpreters work as freelancers.

3. Concluding remarks

This brief overview of the translation market in Iceland is not meant to be comprehensive, but it affords, I hope, some insight into the workings of a market in a small country where the language is at the centre of national identity.

It is also a market that is obviously growing fast and in transition from more traditional sectors of publishing and the media towards more dynamic sectors of business and localisation. It is certain to change the profiles of translators in Iceland in the years to come.

Finally, I want to thank my assistant, Kristín Vilhjálmisdóttir, for her work on this report and Anna Sigríður Gunnarsdóttir for her part on the graphs.

¹ Auðna Hödd Jónatansdóttir & Rannveig Jónsdóttir. “Þýðingar á íslenskum markaði 2001” in *Jón á Bægisá* no. 7 (2003).47-93.

² *ibid.* p. 60.

³ See my “Iceland’s “Egg of Life” and the Modern Media” in *Meta* 49:1 (2004) 59-66.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ See the tables from Statistics Iceland.

⁶ See my “Iceland’s “Egg of Life” and the Modern Media”.

⁷ From the company’s website, www.lotushljod.is, 23.06.’04. Almost verbatim.

⁸ See the article in *Meta*.