Virtual Reykjavik is an Icelandic language and culture training application available online for foreigners learning Icelandic. In this video game-like environment, users are required to solve particular tasks. In order to complete each level, the users must interact with the agents via a microphone and use spoken Icelandic, which enables them to practice language skills such as speaking and listening. Reading, however, is limited to selected texts about cultural information of particular sights and buildings in the virtual downtown Reykjavik and to the transcription of the conversation between the user and the agent. The game uses communicative approach, game-based and task-based learning.

Authentic language from real-life situations is a rich source for creating a realistic interaction between human users (learners) and virtual agents. Moreover, it helps to define vocabulary and culturally specific verbal expressions that humans use in natural conversations. As such, it was collected from context-specific situations in downtown Reykjavik where natural language was used in conversations between different speakers. The data were analysed and used not only for defining specific communicative functions that occur in face-to-face conversations between humans in real life, but also for modelling a realistic multimodal behaviour of embodied conversational agents (ECAs) that is present in those functions. By using authentic language in Virtual Reykjavik, the ECAs are able to respond to learners in a more natural manner that resembles language practices of Icelanders in real life. As opposed to language textbooks, Virtual Reykjavik provides for a specific interim learning space, in which learners can practice Icelandic in virtuality in the way it is used in in real life.

Branislav Bédi is a PhD student in Second Language Studies at the University of Iceland. Together with the Center for Analysis and Design of Intelligent Agents group (CADIA) at Reykjavik University, he has been working on developing a computer game for teaching Icelandic language and culture. His main focus is on natural language and multimodal behavior of human speakers in conversations, and its application into the design of Embodied Conversational Agents (ECAs). He holds a Master of Arts degree in German Language from the University of Iceland, a Master of Arts degree in a double major in English and German Studies, Teacher Training, from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Icelandic form the University of Iceland.

PhD supervisor: Prof. Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir (University of Iceland)

PhD committee: Assoc. prof. Hannes Högni Vilhjálmsson (Reykjavik University) Prof. Ana Paiva (Technical University of Lisbon)
Meet and ask

Branislav Bédi

about living and studying in Iceland

(free discussion)

13 April 2016 at 16:15 in room 219 at KLIŠ PF UKF
(address: Dražovská 4, Nitra)

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