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On Icelandic in North America

The cause of linguistic change and the mechanisms by which languages are simplified is not easily understood. Studies of morphological attrition in immigrant languages have generally been descriptive and influenced by Jacobson's (1968) regression hypothesis which states that the process of language attrition is the reverse of language acquisition. Jordens et al. (1989) suggest that if language attrition were a process of regression "we should expect a gradual disappearance of the differentiation of the morphological system" (p.180). This is not the case for observed change in North American Icelandic, specifically the morphology of impersonal verbs which seems to include three interacting processes. This and other attrition processes such as recategorization, relexification, in addition to regularization of paradigms in NAI suggest that a more complex mechanism may be involved in morphological change than the gradual process described in the literature.