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PROBLEMS WITH ICELANDIC.

In 2010 air traffic over Iceland was disrupted by clouds of vapour and ash which followed an explosion in the volcano

Eyjafjallajökull.

The explosion itself was of relatively short duration, and in fact most of the problem was caused by two unrelated factors, which have now been investigated by experimental phoneticians.

First, thousands of television announcers all over the world attempted to pronounce, in quick succession, the two lateral affricates in the name of the volcano, causing considerable static electric charges and thereby disturbance to aircraft radio signals.

Second, as these announcers produced pronunciations such as

ay-a-fyattle-joo-cattle

most of the population of Iceland – normally so phlegmatic – suffered from uncontrollable fits of laughter, which further disrupted electronic communications.

In August 2014 there was another small eruption under a glacier in central Iceland. Here again, the problem was not the eruption itself, but the combination of a lateral affricate in the name of the glacier

Vatnajökull

and the inability of most computer keyboards to produce the character “ð” for a voiced interdental fricative in the name of the volcano

Bárðarbunga.

This produced much hot air which again disturbed flight routes more than the original eruption itself.

These two incidents led to airline companies losing large amounts of money due to flight cancellations.

Consultant linguists advised the airlines that language planning in Iceland was very strict. Accordingly representations were made to the Icelandic Language Institute (**Íslensk málstöð**) with the request that the pronunciation and spelling of place names should be simplified to make things easier for newscasters in future.

The response of the Icelanders has not yet been fully decoded since available translation software is unable to handle the characters “ð” and “þ”. However, the general meaning of their response is clear.