Evaluation of different registers in Icelandic written media

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study[1] described in this chapter was to investigate the perception of Icelandic speakers of the difference between language registers in written media. By 'register' we mean: a set of lexical and/or grammatical variants used in a particular (written) text. By 'genre' we mean: certain types of (written) texts, defined by function, such as report, novel, newspaper etc.

In order to fulfil the aim, we investigated how Icelandic speakers (students and teachers) evaluated the suitability of certain written texts for specific media types, for example for the daily papers, whether they were able to account for their evaluations, and whether they could associate particular texts with their own language use. The experiment was designed to find answers to one over-arching research question:

> What (if anything) is happening to the (perceived) standard of Icelandic 'proper language use' (*vandað málfar*)?

Standardising a language is a way of controlling linguistic variation. Although linguistic variation is natural, there may be a desire to suppress it for reasons such as the wish to maintain national identity, for mutual comprehension, and/or because the dominant group wants to retain power over others. The standard language acquires prestige and its speakers 'attach values to particular words, grammatical structures and speech-sounds' (Milroy and Milroy 1991: 11), while non-standard forms may be stigmatised. According to Woolard and Schieffelin

(1994: 64), stigmatisation of non-standard forms 'derives from ideological associations of the standard with the qualities valued within the culture'. Standard language features are more likely to be found in the more prestigious written genres, such as newspaper editorials and textbooks, while examples of non-standard language features may be expected to occur more frequently in genres such as Facebook-comments and personal blogs, which are less planned, more personal and un-edited.

The Icelandic speech community[2] has often been described as linguistically conservative and stable, strongly adhering to lexical and grammatical purism underpinned by nationalist ideologies in the 19th and 20th centuries (see e.g. Trudgill 2002; Árnason 2003, 2006; Friðriksson 2009; Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson 2010; Leonard 2011; Leonard and Árnason 2011). In the 'deconstructive' age of globalisation in late modernity, the question arises as to whether more colloquial, informal, non-standard elements are now deemed increasingly appropriate for use in the public space, which might result in a greater range of language forms in areas that were formerly occupied by (older) formal standard written language.

While no previous research into Icelandic speaker evaluation of different registers is available for comparison, Icelandic sociolinguistics is by no means a neglected field. Researchers have found that, firstly, there has been a tendency in formal written genres in Icelandic to avoid English borrowings. Investigations into the ideological aspects of Icelandic language policy and purism have established that Icelanders on the whole have negative attitudes toward the use of English borrowings. However, there are generational differences in that respect, as people under 30 years are less negative toward English than older Icelanders are (Árnason 2006). Secondly, research into variation in Icelandic syntax (Thráinsson 2012) indicates that some new syntactic constructions are increasingly adopted by young speakers (ibid.), while these constructions are often frowned upon by many older speakers as non-standard usage.

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[2] In the present discussion we regard that Icelandic speakers in Iceland constitute an entity justly termed 'a speech community', following Kristinsson (2009: 287): 'Our understanding of "speech community" here is that we have a common speech community whenever people are using the same linguistic code, their social attitudes towards language are extremely uniform, and they share the same attitudes towards linguistic variation'. This understanding of the term 'speech community' is, above all, an attempt to demarcate this elusive sociolinguistic construct. Labov's principle 'that social attitudes towards language are extremely uniform throughout a speech community' (Labov 1972: 248), does not necessarily imply that all speakers of a single speech community are always in total agreement in their attitudes towards language and linguistic variation.

It seemed plausible, therefore, to hypothesize that evaluations of different registers containing these and other non-standard language features, vs. their standard equivalents, turn out to be different between a group of 18–21 years old students, and a group of older adults, i.e. upper secondary school teachers.

The hypothesis for this study was that 18−21 years old students on the one hand and their teachers on the other would have different judgements as to the appropriateness of different texts for different written genres.

In order to test the hypothesis, the following secondary research questions were formulated:

How do Icelandic students/teachers evaluate different registers in written texts? In which genres, such as daily papers or blogs (web logs), are certain registers of written texts considered suitable?

Which registers do Icelandic students/teachers claim to be willing to use themselves in different genres?

How do they account for their evaluations?

PUBLIC DISCOURSES OF STANDARD LANGUAGE AND THE MEDIA

Iceland is usually cited in the literature as a stable linguistic community (e.g., Trudgill 2002: 709). The norm that was selected for standard modern Icelandic was essentially Old Icelandic (Árnason 2003). There are no rival varieties in the sense that there are no geographical dialects to speak of; Icelandic is character-ised by relative linguistic homogeneity (Leonard 2011). As for language ideolo-gies, Iceland's literary heritage, along with the archaic characteristics of the Ice-landic language, contributed to a widespread consciousness among the Icelandic population about what they believed to be a unique language culture (Hilmars-son-Dunn and Kristinsson 2010: 213), and to a deep-rooted scepticism towards foreign language influence (Árnason 2006; Wahl 2008; Óladóttir 2009). Ice-land's prevailing purist and conservative language ideologies have had their share of criticism from some Icelandic scholars and intellectuals who claim that clinging to traditional standard language norms serves the goal of justifying the power and privileges of those who are better off (Pálsson 1996), and is likely to

hamper future development of the language (Kristmannsson 2004). Neverthe-less, opinion polls and interviews show that negative attitudes towards rapid language change and borrowings are still widespread among the Icelandic population.

A common Nordic opinion poll in 2002, which was a part of the research project 'Modern import words in the languages in the Nordic countries', revealed that Icelanders, along with Norwegians, had the most negative attitudes toward the use of English borrowings, and, along with the Faroese, the most positive attitudes toward the coining of neologisms in the native language, while the Danes had the least purist attitudes of the Nordic nations (Kristiansen and Vikør 2006: 203–204; cf. Kristiansen 2010). There were some generational differences in attitudes to English in Iceland (cf. above), i.e. people under 30 were less negative than older respondents towards the idea of English as the language of the workplace, English borrowings in Icelandic, English as the only language in the world, and young people self-reported to use more English themselves (Árnason 2006: 26). It was also found that those with higher education had the most negative attitudes to English borrowings while the least educated were more positive towards such foreignisms. This finding seems to indicate that purist attitudes in Iceland are strongest among the elite (Kristiansen and Vikør 2006: 212).[3] These purist attitudes seem to be in line with language practice: for example, as part of the above mentioned Nordic research project, it was shown that a corpus of newspaper language contained the lowest frequency of borrowings in the Icelandic material, i.e. 17 borrowings per 10,000 running words, compared with 111 borrowings per 10,000 running words in the Norwegian newspapers (the

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[3] As part of the above mentioned research project an attempt was also made to carry out a matched guise test in Iceland in which 361 participants were asked to evaluate an 'English coloured' guise (containing borrowings such as *í-meil* 'e-mail', *laptop*, *seiva* 'save', *dánlóda* 'download') compared to a 'pure' Icelandic guise (containing the Icelandic neologisms *tölvupóstur* 'e-mail', *fartölva* 'laptop', *vista* 'save', *hlaða niður* 'download') (Ewen and Kristiansen 2006: 34−35). The participants were asked to assess the guises with regard to 'the following personality traits: *ambitious*, *independent*, *pleasant*, *interesting*, *intelligent*, *relaxed*, *trustworthy*, *efficient*' (Kristiansen 2010: 80). The participants were told that the different guises were voices of applicants for a position as a news reader for an Icelandic radio channel. It turned out to be impossible for the Icelandic participants to accept the 'English coloured' guise as a potentially valid one for Icelandic radio news. This result may be taken as a corroboration of other evidence that the Icelandic speech community is a purist one. Accordingly, the Icelandic data 'must be treated as expressions of conscious rather than subconscious attitudes' (*ibid.*: 81). The data showed that the 'pure' Icelandic guise (i.e., the one using Icelandic neologisms such as *tölvupóstur* 'e-mail' etc.) scored higher than the 'English coloured' one (i.e., the one using *í-meil* 'e-mail' etc.), for all eight personality traits (Ewen and Kristiansen 2006: 39).

highest number of borrowings in the Nordic countries) (Graedler and Kvaran 2010: 33).

Despite the putative stability and homogeneity of Icelandic, a common element of language policy discourse in Iceland – amongst language enthusiasts, intellectuals, and also the general public – is the concern that there is instability in the language, that a perceived (golden age of) standard 'proper language usage' is disappearing (Friðriksson 2009). According to a poll in 1989, a third of the Icelandic population thought that Icelandic was endangered because of foreign language influence, and over a third thought that language use was getting 'worse' (Óladóttir 2009: 10–11). Examples of 'improper language use', often cited in this discourse, include foreign borrowings, old words assigned new meanings, old idiomatic expressions mixed up, increased use of the auxiliary *vera* 'be'+ infinitive of main verbs instead of older finite forms of main verbs, and simplifications in the declension of nominals. To explain the deterioration of the language (i.e. the perceived retreat from a common golden age standard) the 'usual suspects' turn up in the discourse: the influence of the internet, global English, and low-quality media language under foreign influence. Those accused of failing to do their job in maintaining Icelandic are usually teachers, parents, linguists, and media employees.

Such discourse is also common elsewhere, as in the grammar debate in UK (Cameron, 1995)[4]. Moreover, the issue of young people's media language, such as in instant messaging, is thought by many commentators as being the cause of a decline in literacy and the 'erosion' of the English language (see Thurlow 2007).

Written media, as well as spoken media, can be instrumental in establishing and consolidating a language standard, both linguistically and ideologically. Thus, any change in language standards in these media has implications for language standards generally, and the ideologies behind them.

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[4] In the early 1990s there was a big debate in England about teaching English grammar in schools. At that time, the conservatives favoured the teaching of standard English grammar, while the liberals, including linguists and teachers, preferred not to, claiming that formal grammar teaching had little effect on language practices. The teachers were blamed by the media for falling standards in schools and for widespread illiteracy (Cameron 1995: 85–93).

RESEARCH ON LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN ICELANDIC

Most research into variation in Icelandic has been on phonology and syntax. For example, researchers have mapped Icelandic pronunciation differences onto a few social background variables, notably geographical location, and have traced changes in these relationships between the 1940s and the 1980s (see Thráinsson and Árnason 1992). In addition, some researchers (e.g. Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling 2001; Jónsson and Eyþórsson 2003; Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson and Þórlindsson 1984) have done some mapping of syntactic variation onto social background variables. Since 2005, a team of linguists has been carrying out extensive research into variation in Icelandic syntax (Thráinsson 2012). In their project description they point out that, even if the difference between dialect and standard language 'does not really exist in Iceland […] to the extent that it does in most countries', it is generally assumed that 'there is considerable difference between "spoken language" and "written language", or between different types or styles of written language, or different genres of texts, although systematic investigation of these differences is just beginning' (Network for Scandinavian Dialect Syntax 2011).

One of the syntactic variants investigated in these studies has been found to correlate with children whose parents are less well educated. This variant, colloquially termed 'dative sickness', is a construction of a few impersonal verbs preceded (in neutral word-order) by dative-case subjects instead of their traditional accusative-case subjects. Example: *Mörgum* (dat.plur.) *hefur dreymt* (non-standard) vs. *Marga* (acc.plur.) *hefur dreymt* (standard) ('Many people have dreamt'). 'Dative sickness' is highly stigmatized as non-standard usage. It is one of the best-known sociolinguistic markers in Icelandic (Árnason 2005: 413). Its frequency in spoken and written Icelandic has been gradually increasing for the past three decades among young speakers (Thráinsson 2012). Another syntactic feature, which has recently been spreading in Icelandic, involves the use of the construction of an auxiliary verb *vera* 'be' + main verb in the infinitive, to denote continuous aspect. In standard usage this construction is limited to particular main verbs, governed by semantic constraints, whereas currently it is increasingly being used with other verbs, which is deemed non-standard. Example: *Leikstjóranum er að ganga vel* (underlined: finite form of auxilary *vera* 'be' + infinitive particle + infinitive of main verb) (non-standard) vs. *Leikstjóranum gengur vel* (underlined: finite form of main verb) (standard) ('The director is doing well').

Apart from a few discourse analysis studies (e.g. Hilmisdóttir 2007) there has been rather limited research on linguistic variation in Icelandic in relation to different communication settings, such as between planned (formal/written) texts and unplanned (informal/spoken) texts. Friðriksson (2009) carried out an investigation of the different frequency of some non-standard features in spoken versus written Icelandic, among other things, notably both 'dative sickness' and the construction auxiliary verb *vera* 'be' + main verb in the infinitive, mentioned above. He found that these features were marginal or non-occurring in written language, whereas both occurred in his spoken language data from the same people. Kristinsson (2009) studied variation in Icelandic radio language, particularly the difference between scripted radio news and unscripted radio talk shows. He found, for instance, the choice of the relative complementizer (*sem* versus *sem að* 'who, which, that') to correlate with planned versus unplanned texts. Thus, these and other studies have shown some linguistic differences between spoken and written texts and between informal and formal settings, most notably in the lexical domain (cf. Svavarsdóttir 2003, 2007; Kristinsson 2009) – but also partly in grammar (Friðriksson 2009; Kristinsson 2009).

As to vocabulary, there is a clear correlation between degree of formality and the amount of lexical borrowings in Icelandic usage (for examples and research overview, see e.g. Kristinsson 2009: 40–53). Common anglicisms in unplanned/ spoken language, e.g. *dílíta* ('delete'), are generally avoided in formal written texts, preference being given to Icelandic neologisms and other 'more genuine' Icelandic synonyms, e.g. *eyða* ('delete'). People may 'Icelandicize' and inflect the anglicisms, e.g. as *dílíta* ('delete', infinitive), *dílítum* ('(we) delete'), *dílítaði* ('(I, he, she) deleted') etc.; *seiva* ('save', infinitive), *seivum* ('(we) save'), *seivaði* ('(I, he, she) saved'), etc., but in general they do not appear in prescriptive dictionaries (cf. Svavarsdóttir 2008). Anglicisms that do find their way into the written language have been used for some time and have 'undergone considerable phonological and morphological adaptation' (Kvaran and Svavarsdóttir 2002: 87). A qualitative investigation, carried out by Óladóttir in 2002, found that the general perception of Icelanders, aged 27–36, was that the more formal situations and texts require the avoidance of foreignisms (Óladóttir 2009: 121).

In addition to borrowings, there are a number of other words in Icelandic (e.g. the adverb *rosalega* 'very', Svavarsdóttir 2007: 41–42, and the relative complementizer *sem að* 'who, which, that', Kristinsson 2009: 177–180) that tend to oc-

cur significantly more often in unplanned/ spoken language than in planned/ written usage.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire and participants

In order to investigate whether the perception of standard Icelandic is changing, a questionnaire was devised to be administered to Icelandic students and teachers in three different upper secondary schools in Iceland. The schools were chosen from different areas in order to have as broad a range of language users as possible: one in Selfoss, a town with a population of 6,500 (Statistics Iceland 2012) in southern Iceland, which also has in its catchment area many rural settlements and individual farms in southern Iceland, an area with about 5,000 inhabitants (ibid.); and the other two in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland – one in the western part of the city and the other in the east. About 200,000 people live in the Reykjavik area.

The questionnaire consisted of four versions of a text, each of which contained certain language features (i.e., systematically manipulated variables), which belong to standard usage and non-standard usage. A description of the four text versions and the differences between them is given in the next section.

The questionnaire was first tested by means of a pilot survey of eleven students and five teachers. It was subsequently reworked to correct some ambiguities and then administered to a class of about twenty five 18–21 years old upper secondary school students, and about fifteen upper secondary school teachers in each of the three schools. Total number of participants was 123, i.e. 80 students (65%), and 43 teachers (35%) The teacher group included teachers of vocational as well as academic subjects, thus they were not necessarily language experts. The sample of teachers was rather small for some statistical tests regarding comparisons between them and the student group. Despite this, some statistically significant differences were found[5].

The participants had to answer questions about their perceptions of the acceptability or suitability of texts 1, 2, 3, and 4 (see below) for different genres.

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[5] As is common practice in sociolinguistic experiments we report significant differences in terms of the probability level (p), with .05 as a pre-determined cut-off.

The options included other text types than those usually covered by the term 'media', i.e.:

- ☐ report/dissertation

- ☐ book

- ☐ printed daily newspaper

- ☐ web-based news

- ☐ blogs

- ☐ Facebook

- ☐ e-mail

- ☐ none of the above

The participants were instructed to look carefully at the language use in each of the four texts and to tick one or more boxes (as above, i.e. ☐ report/dissertation, ☐ book, etc.) according to the three following criteria:

'I would expect to see the language use in text [1,2,3,4] in…'
Miðað við <u>málnotkun</u> í textanum tel ég <u>líklegt að hann sé eða gæti verið</u> úr...

'I would consider the language use in text [1,2,3,4] appropriate for...'
Miðað við <u>málnotkun</u> í textanum fyndist mér að þessi texti <u>væri vel við hæfi</u> í…
'I would possibly write (shorter or longer) texts with this kind of language
 use myself if I were writing...'
Ég gæti <u>sjálf(ur) hugsað mér að skrifa</u> (styttri eða lengri) <u>texta með sams konar málnotkun og í textanum</u> ef ég væri að skrifa...

Moreover, the participants were asked to explain or support their judgements for each of the three questions ('please explain your answer(s) in a few words').

Texts

Four versions of a text (reproduced below) were created in order to trigger reader evaluations of the different registers that the texts were intended to represent, i.e. the four texts were exactly the same except for the variables, which were systematically manipulated. Differences between the texts are highlighted here, orththographic variation in *italicized boldface* (NB nothing was highlighted in

Text 1

Á milli þess sem Björk Guðmundsdóttir tjáir sig um orkumál á Íslandi, tekur á móti **rosalega** virtum verðlaunum í Svíþjóð og kemur fram á *fernum* tónleikum er hún önnum kafin í **stúdíói** við að taka upp og **mixa** nýja tónlist. Upptökurnar hafa að mestu farið fram á *Púertó Ríkó* og hafa þær gengið **þvílíkt** vel. Björk er bæði að taka upp efni á nýja plötu og lög fyrir **3D** mynd í leikstjórn *Michels Gondrys*. Myndinni er lýst sem **science fiction musical** og verður **sirka** 40 mínútur. *Marga aðdáendur* Bjarkar hefur dreymt um að hún sendi frá sér *eitthvert* lag í kvikmynd síðan hún var tilnefnd til Óskarsverðlauna fyrir lag úr „Dancer in the Dark" árið 2000. Leikstjóranum Gondry *gengur* vel og margir muna eftir „Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" **sem að** hann gerði árið 2004.

Text 2

Á milli þess sem Björk Guðmundsdóttir tjáir sig um orkumál á Íslandi, tekur á móti **mjög** virtum verðlaunum í Svíþjóð og kemur fram á *fjórum* tónleikum er hún önnum kafin í **hljóðveri** við að taka upp og **hljóðblanda** nýja tónlist. Upptökurnar hafa að mestu farið fram á *Puerto Rico* og hafa þær gengið **einkar** vel. Björk er bæði að taka upp efni á nýja plötu og lög fyrir **þrívíddar** mynd í leikstjórn **Michel Gondry**. Myndinni er lýst sem **vísindaskáldsögulegum söngleik** og verður **um** 40 mínútur. *Mörgum aðdáendum* Bjarkar hefur dreymt um að hún sendi frá sér *eitthvað* lag í kvikmynd síðan hún var tilnefnd til Óskarsverðlauna fyrir lag úr "Dancer in the Dark" árið 2000. Leikstjóranum Gondry *er að ganga* vel og margir muna eftir "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" **sem** hann gerði árið 2004.

Text 3

Á milli þess sem Björk Guðmundsdóttir tjáir sig um orkumál á Íslandi, tekur á móti **mjög** virtum verðlaunum í Svíþjóð og kemur fram á *fernum* tónleikum er hún önnum kafin í **hljóðveri** við að taka upp og **hljóðblanda** nýja tónlist. Upptökurnar hafa að mestu farið fram á *Púertó Ríkó* og hafa þær gengið **einkar** vel. Björk er bæði að taka upp efni á nýja plötu og lög fyrir **þrívíddarmynd** í leikstjórn *Michels Gondrys*. Myndinni er lýst sem **vísindaskáldsögulegum söngleik** og verður **um** 40 mínútur. *Marga aðdáendur* Bjarkar hefur dreymt um að hún sendi frá sér *eitthvert* lag í kvikmynd síðan hún var tilnefnd til Óskarsverðlauna fyrir lag úr „Dancer in the Dark" árið 2000. Leikstjóranum Gondry *gengur vel* og margir muna eftir „Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" **sem** hann gerði árið 2004.

Text 4

Á milli þess sem Björk Guðmundsdóttir tjáir sig um orkumál á Íslandi, tekur á móti **rosalega** virtum verðlaunum í Svíþjóð og kemur fram á *fjórum* tónleikum er hún önnum kafin í **stúdíói** við að taka upp og **mixa** nýja tónlist. Upptökurnar hafa að mestu farið fram á *Puerto Rico* og hafa þær gengið **þvílíkt** vel. Björk er bæði að taka upp efni á nýja plötu og lög fyrir **3D** mynd í leikstjórn *Michel Gondry*. Myndinni er lýst sem **science fiction musical** og verður **sirka** 40 mínútur. *Mörgum aðdáendum* Bjarkar hefur dreymt um að hún sendi frá sér *eitthvað* lag í kvikmynd síðan hún var tilnefnd til Óskarsverðlauna fyrir lag úr "Dancer in the Dark" árið 2000. Leikstjóranum Gondry *er að ganga* vel og margir muna eftir "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" **sem að** hann gerði árið 2004.

the questionnaire itself). When designing the texts, we were able to take into account the findings of the investigations into linguistic variation in Icelandic, as reported above, particularly the standard versus non-standard features of language use. Since the respondents were obliged to read and compare four text versions, a length of 12 lines for each text version was considered appropriate. The topic was the singer Björk. She and her music are common subjects for discussion in a variety of both written and spoken genres in Iceland.[6]

Two of the texts contained exactly the same grammar forms but different vocabulary, while the other two texts contained exactly the same vocabulary but different grammar forms, as shown below:

	Standard grammar	Non-standard grammar
Standard vocabulary	Text 3	Text 2
Non-standard vocabulary	Text 1	Text 4

Accordingly, the register used in Text 3 was expected to be perceived as appropriate for the most formal genres, while Text 4 was expected to be perceived as appropriate for the most informal ones.

Lexical and grammatical differences between the texts

Text 1 and Text 4 contain the borrowings **stúdíó** 'studio', **mixa** 'mix', **3D**, **science fiction musical**, **sirka** 'about'. They also contain the Icelandic relative complementizer **sem að** ('who, which, that'), and the adverbs **rosalega** ('very') and **þvílíkt** ('very'), all of which are typical of unplanned/spoken language, which is why these features are categorized as 'non-standard' for the present purposes, i.e. in the context of written genres.

Text 2 and Text 3 contain the Icelandic neologisms **hljóðver** 'studio', **hljóð-blanda** 'mix', **þrívídd** '3D', and **vísindaskáldsögulegur söngleikur** 'science

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[6] An English translation of the text is as follows: 'At the same time as expressing her views on energy policies in Iceland, receiving a highly respected award in Sweden, and giving four concerts, Björk Guðmundsdóttir is busy in her studio recording and mixing new music. Most of the recording has taken place in Puerto Rico, and has gone very well. Björk is recording material for a new album as well as songs for a 3D movie directed by Michel Gondry. The movie, described as a science fiction musical, will be about 40 minutes long. Ever since she was nominated for an Oscar for a song in *Dancer in the Dark* in 2000, many Björk fans have hoped that she would release a song in a movie. Gondry, the director, is doing well and many people remember his *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* from 2004.'

fiction musical', the adverb **um** 'about', as well as the relative complementizer **sem** ('who, which, that'), and the adverbs **mjög** ('very', commonly used) and **einkar** ('very', rather formal), typical of written language.

Text 2 and Text 4 contain one example of non-standard inflection of the numerical 'four': ***fjórum*** *tónleikum* 'four concerts'[7]; one example of a foreign name left without an inflectional ending in the genitive: *leikstjórn* ***Michel Gondry*** '(the) direction of Michel Gondry'; one example of the non-standard 'dative sickness' construction: ***Mörgum aðdáendum*** *Bjarkar hefur dreymt* 'many fans (dat.pl.) of Björk have dreamt'; one example of a non-standard form of the indefinite pronoun 'some', i.e.: ***eitthvað*** *lag* 'some song'; and one example of the expanded use of *vera* 'be' + infinitive: *Leikstjóranum Gondry* ***er að ganga*** *vel* 'Gondry the movie director is doing well' (lit. 'is-to-do well').

Text 1 and Text 3 contain the standard usage variants: ***fernum*** *tónleikum* 'four concerts'; *leikstjórn* ***Michels Gondrys*** '(the) direction of Michel Gondry'; ***Marga aðdáendur*** *Bjarkar hefur dreymt* 'many fans (acc.pl.) of Björk have dreamt'; ***eitthvert*** *lag* 'some song'; and *Leikstjóranum Gondry* ***gengur*** *vel* 'Gondry the movie director is doing well' (lit. 'does-well').

Text 2 and Text 4 also contain the non-standard orthographical form ***Puerto Rico***, and two examples of the non-standard double left quotation mark above line, **"** (the so-called American-English quotation mark). In contrast, Text 1 and Text 3 contain the standard Icelandic counterparts, i.e. ***Púertó Ríkó***, and two examples of the double left quotation mark in bottom of line, **„** (the so-called German-Icelandic quotation mark), in addition to the standard grammatical forms described above.

Data

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in this experiment. The qualitative data consisted of written comments by those participants who responded to the request to elaborate on their judgements for each of the three questions ('please explain your answer(s) in a few words'). The quantitative data consisted of values, which were manually copied from the questionnaires and inserted into a statistics program, of one binominal independent variable, i.e. 'upper secondary school student': yes/no; and 96 binominal dependent variables. For each of the four texts, there were three questions, containing eight options

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[7] In school grammar lessons, pairs such as *fjórir* vs. *fernir*, and *eitthvað* + noun vs. *eitthvert* + noun, have very often been cited as examples of 'incorrect' vs. 'correct' grammar.

each (4 x 3 x 8 = 96). The values of the dependent variables reflected whether the participant had ticked (value: yes) or not (value: no) in the option box for a particular genre (including the option 'none of the above'), when evaluating a particular text.[8]

RESULTS

General observations

Tables 1–3 show, per text version, the relative frequency of attributions to one of the eight options on the vertical axis. As expected, the participants responded differently to the three different questions. For example, 63 % of all participants would *expect* Text 2 to be from a printed newspaper (Table 1), 50% regard Text 2 as *appropriate* for a printed newspaper (Table 2), while 39% would consider writing *themselves* the lexical and grammatical variants of Text 2 for that genre (Table 3).

From the general observations on the respondents' evaluations, it is evident that the participants, as a whole, evaluate Text 3 (standard vocabulary and standard grammar) differently from Text 4 (non-standard vocabulary and non-standard grammar) with regard to the 'more formal' genres: reports/ dissertations, books, printed papers, web-based news, and the 'less formal' genres: blogs, Facebook, e-mail, respectively.

Indeed, for all four text versions, the first four genres (reports/dissertations, books, printed papers, and web-based news, as a whole) were evaluated differently from the next three genres (blogs, Facebook, and e-mail, as a whole). These two groups of genres are marked by different shades in Tables 1–3. For each text version, the darker box marks which of the two groups of genres got relatively more attributions.

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[8] In addition, some other background information about each participant was obtained and registered: gender; age; name of school / work place; number of years living in Iceland; reading habits: novels and non-fiction books (number of books per year), daily papers and online news (number of times per week), and web logs (never, sometimes, often); and if they use/read Facebook, and e-mail (never, sometimes, often). This data has not been analysed, yet some of the reading habits data are reported in the present paper.

Table 1: *'I would expect to see the language use in text [1,2,3,4] in...'.*

	Text 1 vocabulary: NS grammar: S	Text 2 vocabulary: S grammar: NS	Text 3 vocabulary: S grammar: S	Text 4 vocabulary: NS grammar: NS
report/dissertation	1	23	44	2
book	0	12	46	2
printed papers	17	63	66	5
web-based news	44	63	43	21
blogs	82	32	23	65
Facebook	32	12	5	61
e-mail	23	18	8	41
none of the above	1	2	2	5

Table 2: *'I would consider the language use in text [1,2,3,4] appropriate for...'.*

	Text 1 vocabulary: NS grammar: S	Text 2 vocabulary: S grammar: NS	Text 3 vocabulary: S grammar: S	Text 4 vocabulary: NS grammar: NS
report/dissertation	1	18	42	0
book	1	15	44	3
printed papers	10	50	58	6
web-based news	14	50	48	9
blogs	76	30	22	49
Facebook	36	8	8	50
e-mail	26	16	11	22
none of the above	6	11	4	18

Table 3: *'I would possibly write (shorter or longer) texts with this kind of language use myself if I were writing...'*

	Text 1 vocabulary: NS grammar: S	Text 2 vocabulary: S grammar: NS	Text 3 vocabulary: S grammar: S	Text 4 vocabulary: NS grammar: NS
report/dissertation	2	22	44	3
book	0	12	39	2
printed papers	5	39	54	3
web-based news	13	44	50	6
blogs	55	28	26	34
Facebook	28	11	14	34
e-mail	23	15	15	24
none of the above	28	21	8	39

Attributions of texts to different genres as a function of register.
Figures are percentages, S = Standard, NS = Non-standard

Comparing students and teachers

We will now look at the evaluations of the student and teacher cohorts to ascertain whether these two groups had 'different judgements as to the appropriateness of different texts for different written genres', cf. the hypothesis for this study.

Table 4: *'I would expect to see the language use in text [1,2,3,4] in...'*

	Text 1 voc: NS gram: S		Text 2 voc: S gram: NS		Text 3 voc: S gram: S		Text4 voc: NS gram: NS	
	Stud	Teach	Stud	Teach	Stud	Teach	Stud	Teach
N=	(80)	(43)	(80)	(43)	(80)	(42)	(77)	(42)
report/dissertation	0.0	2.3	30.0	9.3 **	37.5	57.1 *	2.6	0.0
book	0.0	0.0	15.0	7.0	41.3	54.8	1.3	2.4
printed papers	15.0	20.9	67.5	53.5	61.3	73.8	3.9	7.1
web-based news	42.5	46.5	68.8	53.5	46.3	35.7	20.8	21.4
blogs	82.5	81.4	26.3	41.9	23.8	21.4	63.6	66.7
Facebook	32.5	30.2	6.3	23.3 **	6.3	2.4	64.9	54.8
e-mail	21.3	25.6	8.8	34.9 ***	8.8	7.1	39.0	45.2
none of the options	1.3	0.0	0.0	7.0 *	3.8	0.0	2.6	9.5

Attributions of texts to different genres as a function of register

Figures are percentages, S = Standard, NS = Non-standard

Cross-tabulation Chi-square tests of independence   * $p \leq 0.05$,   ** $p \leq 0.01$,   *** $p \leq 0.001$

Table 4 shows that the students would not expect to see the registers of Texts 1 and 4, containing non-standard vocabulary, in the more formal genres. Cross-tabulations showed their evaluations to be similar to that of the teacher group. For example, 1.3% of students and 2.4% of teachers would expect to see Text 4, and no students and no teachers would expect to see Text 1, in a book, as in Table 4. Comments on the questionnaires from the students about Text 1 included: *því erlendu orðin og sletturnar minna á talmál* ('because the foreignisms remind me of spoken language') and *Nota nokkur ensk orð inn á milli* ('English words are used amongst [Icelandic ones]'), and about Text 4: *óformleg, vitlaus íslenska og mikið af slettum* ('informal, incorrect Icelandic and many foreignisms').

What Table 4 also shows is that both students and teachers evaluate Text 4 differently from Text 1, which is what we would expect, given that Text 4 contains non-standard grammar as well as examples of non-standard vocabulary,

while in Text 1 the grammar is standard. For example, 15.0% and 20.9% would expect to see Text 1 in printed papers, opposed to 3.9% and 7.1% for Text 4.

While student and teacher evaluations of Texts 1 and 4 were largely similar, there were greater differences between their evaluations of Text 2 (standard vocabulary and non-standard grammar), notably as to the genres reports/ dissertations, Facebook and e-mail. More students than teachers would expect to see Text 2 register in reports/dissertations, while more teachers than students would expect to see that register on Facebook and in e-mails. 7% of teachers would not expect to see Text 2 for any written genre, primarily because of the grammatical errors, as their comments on the questionnaires show. For example: *Málvillur í textanum* 'Grammatical errors in the text'. Comments from students on Text 2 included: *Engar slettur, formlegra mál, smá málvillur, foreldrar mínir myndu skilja þetta* 'No foreignisms', 'more formal usage', 'some minor grammatical errors', 'my parents would understand this'. As to Text 3, the only statistically significant difference between the student and teacher cohorts is that more teachers than students would expect to see such language use in a report.

Table 5: *'I would consider the language use in text [1,2,3,4] appropriate for...'*

	Text 1 voc: NS gram: S		Text 2 voc: S gram: NS		Text 3 voc: S gram: S		Text4 voc: NS gram: NS	
N=	Stud (69)	Teach (39)	Stud (69)	Teach (36)	Stud (69)	Teach (37)	Stud (66)	Teach (38)
report/dissertation	0.0	2.6	23.2	8.3	37.7	48.6	0.0	0.0
book	0.0	2.6	17.4	11.1	42.0	48.6	3.0	2.6
printed papers	14.5	2.6 *	58.0	36.1 *	50.7	73.0 *	6.1	5.3
web-based news	15.9	10.3	60.9	30.6 **	50.7	43.2	10.6	5.3
blogs	76.8	74.4	33.3	25.0	18.8	27.0	54.5	39.5
Facebook	37.7	33.3	11.6	0.0 *	7.2	10.8	59.1	34.2 *
e-mail	24.6	28.2	17.4	13.9	7.2	18.9	27.3	13.2
none of the options	2.9	12.8 *	0.0	33.3 ***	4.3	2.7	7.6	36.8***

Attributions of texts to different genres as a function of register.
Figures are percentages, S = Standard, NS = Non-standard
Cross-tabulation Chi-square tests of independence   * p≤0.05,   ** p≤0.01,   *** p≤0.001

Table 5 shows that 50.7% of students versus 73.0% of teachers evaluated Text 3 appropriate for printed papers. For Text 2, on the other hand, differences are 58.0% versus 36.1% for printed papers and 60.9% and 30.6, respectively, for web-based news. Only 2.6% of teachers (one participant) found Text 1 appro-

priate for printed papers while 14.5% of the students did. The differences between the two cohorts, as to their evaluations of newspapers and web-based news, are discussed in more detail below. The greatest difference in evaluations of Text 2 concerned the 'none' option. 33.3% of teachers claimed Text 2 would not be appropriate for any option, while all students thought it appropriate for at least one of the genres.

Teacher and student evaluations of Text 4 were largely similar for the more formal genres but somewhat different for the more informal ones. As is shown in Table 5, 54.5%, 59.1% and 27.3% of students considered Text 4 appropriate for the genres blogs, Facebook and e-mails, versus 39.5%, 34.2% and 13.2% of teachers, respectively. However, the difference is only statistically significant for the genre Facebook. The differences between the two cohorts can be attributed to the fact that 36.8% of the teachers evaluated Text 4 as inappropriate for *any* genre, versus only 7.6% of the students.

Teacher and student evaluations of printed papers and web-based news are shown in Figure 1. The teacher and student cohorts agree that Text 3 is more appropriate for printed newspapers and news on web than Text 4. Yet, the students do not make the same distinction as the teachers as to the appropriateness
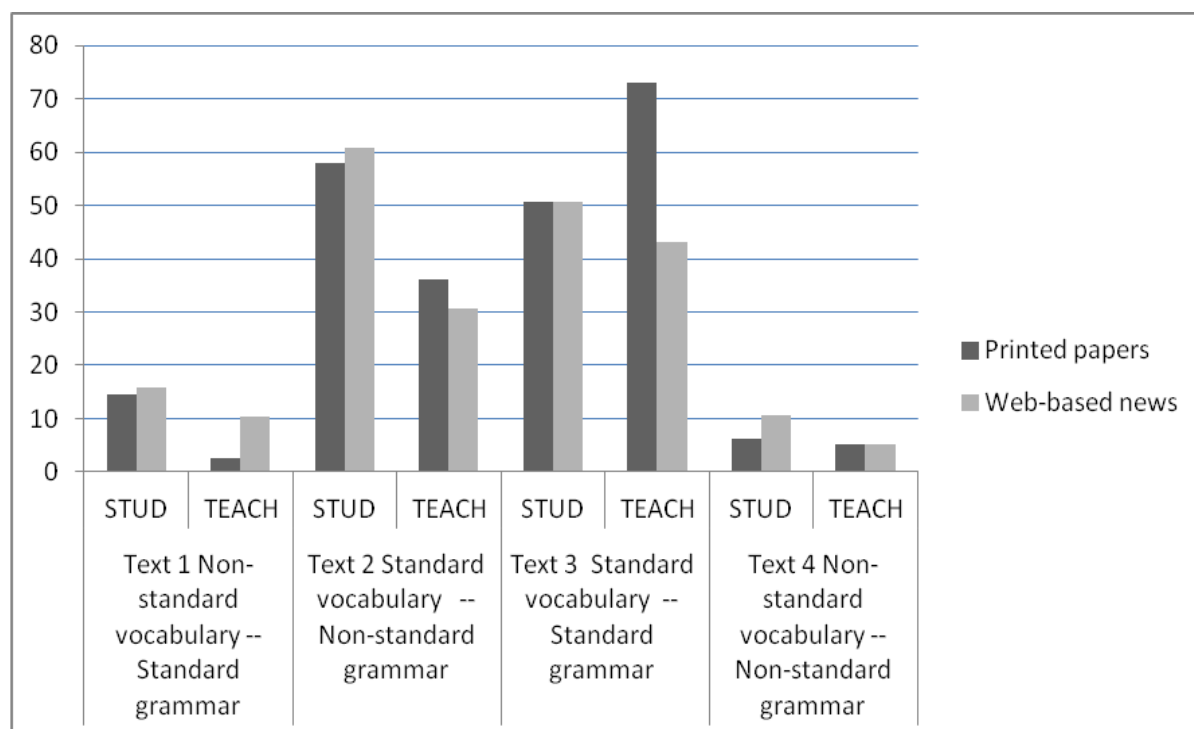
Figure 1: Students' and teachers' evaluation of the appropriateness of different registers for printed newspapers and for web-based news. Relative frequencies as percentages.

of Text 3 for the two different genres. According to the background questions inthe survey, the students read printed newspapers significantly less than the teachers do, while there were no significant differences between how often the student and teacher participants read web-based news. Thus we assume that while both cohorts have had similar exposure to web-based news, their different evaluations of printed newspapers may be influenced by different experience of that genre. Figure 1 also shows that Text 2 (standard vocabulary and non-standard grammar) is evaluated as more appropriate for newspapers and news on web, especially by the students, than the non-standard vocabulary and standard grammar Text 1. These results indicate that texts containing foreignisms and other words from the 'spoken language' are more immediately obvious to the respondents as being inappropriate for these genres, while non-standard grammatical features are either not noticed or not considered so important. The teacher cohort is more aware than the students of such grammatical 'errors'.

The final question posed was whether students and teachers would themselves write in the registers of the four texts. Table 6 shows which registers (Texts 1, 2, 3 and 4) students and teachers would choose to write in themselves for the different genres. The most striking difference between the two cohorts is that the highest percentage of teachers would not write in the registers of Texts

Table 6. *'I would possibly write (shorter or longer) texts with this kind of language use myself if I were writing...'.*

	Text 1 voc: NS gram: S		Text 2 voc: S gram: NS		Text 3 voc: S gram: S		Text4 voc: NS gram: NS	
N=	Stud (78)	Teach (42)	Stud (78)	Teach (40)	Stud (77)	Teach (40)	Stud (76)	Teach (40)
report/dissertation	0.0	0.0	32.1	2.5 ***	42.9	45.0	3.9	0.0
book	0.0	0.0	15.4	5.0	36.4	45.0	2.6	0.0
printed papers	6.4	2.4	50.0	17.5 ***	54.5	52.5	5.3	0.0
web-based news	17.9	2.4 *	56.4	20.0 ***	53.2	42.5	7.9	2.5
blogs	71.8	23.8 ***	37.2	10.0 **	27.3	25.0	44.7	15.0 ***
Facebook	33.3	16.7 *	15.4	2.5 *	14.3	12.5	47.4	10.0 ***
e-mail	24.4	19.0	19.2	7.5	13.0	17.5	32.9	7.5 **
none of the above	11.5	59.5 ***	2.6	57.5 ***	5.2	12.5	18.4	77.5 ***

Attributions of texts to different genres as a function of register.

Figures are percentages, S = Standard, NS = Non-standard

Cross-tabulation Chi-square tests of independence   * p≤0.05,   ** p≤0.01,   *** p≤0.001

1, 2 or 4 for *any* genre, whereas the highest percentage of students selected blogs, web-based news and Facebook, respectively. For example, for Text 2, 2.6% of students versus 57.5% of teachers selected the 'none' option. Far more students say that they would write in Text 2 register for printed papers and web-based news than the teacher cohort. Reasons given by the teachers for selecting the 'none' option for Text 2 included *ég myndi aldrei senda frá mér texta með svona villum (ekki viljandi a.m.k.)* 'I would never send anyone / publish a text containing such errors (at least not on purpose)'. Conversely, only 12.5% of teachers and 5.2% of students selected the 'none' option for Text 3, which indicates that a great majority of both groups consider Text 3 to be written in a register that they would use themselves for at least one of the options. However, some students made comments that reveal some negative opinions towards the register of Text 3, e.g.: *það er leiðinlegt að skrifa of formlega* 'it is boring to write too formally', and *ég myndi ekki nota of fínt mál í fréttir því aldurshópur er víður* 'for news, I would not use language which is too good because the age group is wide'.

Teacher and student evaluations of Texts 1 and 4 were largely similar for the more formal (impersonal, edited) genres, but dissimilar for the more informal (personal, unedited) genres. For Text 1, for example, no students and no teachers would write in that register themselves for a report or book, while 71.8% of students versus 23.8% of teachers would write in the Text 1 register for blogs. There is also, as previously mentioned, a huge difference in students' vs. teachers' willingness to write in Text 1 register at all. Again, for Text 4, the evaluations of the two cohorts are very different for the more informal genres (blogs, Facebook, e-mails). For example, 44.7% of the students versus 15% of the teachers would write in this register for blogs. Finally, we note that 18.4% of students versus 77.5% of the teachers opted for none of the options.

Notice at the bottom of Table 6 the percentages of teachers who selected the 'none' box. Over half say that they would not write in Text 1 and Text 2 registers for any genre, over three quarters say they would avoid writing in the Text 4 register, but only an eighth say they would not write in the register of Text 3 for any of the options. Far fewer students selected the 'none' option than the teachers. These data suggest that students are far less critical than their teachers in the sense that they seem to be more willing to write in all four registers for one or more genres.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis that we intended to prove false or true was that 18–21 years old students on the one hand and their teachers on the other would have different judgements as to the appropriateness of different texts for different written genres. While the participants on the whole do (1) associate written texts containing standard language features consistently with the more formal, more impersonal, more planned, more edited genres: reports/dissertations, books, printed papers or web-based news; and (2) associate texts containing non-standard language features consistently with the less formal, less impersonal, less planned, less edited genres: blogs, Facebook and e-mail, cf. Table 2, there are indeed differences in their evaluations which allow us to claim that our hypothesis has been confirmed. As regards texts containing either – and not simultaneously – non-standard grammar or non-standard vocabulary teachers responded differently from students as to the appropriateness of different registers for different genres.

It is evident that teachers are less inclined to relate non-standard language to any genre than the students. And also, while the appearance of foreignisms and other words mostly associated with 'spoken language' use (cf. Text 1 and Text 4) prompted both students and teachers to perceive such texts as inappropriate in formal written genres, a comparison of the evaluations of the 'mixed' registers of Text 1 (non-standard vocabulary) and Text 2 (non-standard grammar) shows that the teachers react more strongly to the non-standard grammar features than the students do. Out of the four text versions in the investigation, Text 2 prompted the greatest differences between teachers and students in evaluations of which registers to use for particular media. Tables 4–6 show that there are more instances of statistically significant differences between students' and teachers' evaluation of Text 2 than for any of the other text versions.

The teaching of Icelandic has traditionally entailed specifying the difference between 'correct' and 'incorrect' grammar, as well as the difference between 'spoken language' (non-standard) vocabulary, notably foreignisms, and 'written language' (standard) vocabulary. It is evident that the ideology of the speech community as to which vocabulary is appropriate for which genre is reproduced by most students. For example, students recognised that a borrowing such as *mixa* 'mix', which occurs in unplanned spoken language, should be avoided in formal written texts, according to the conventions of the speech community, preference being given to Icelandic neologisms, i.e., *hljóðblanda* 'mix' in this case. They also recognised that the colloquial adverb *rosalega* 'very' was not

appropriate for formal written genres. However, non-standard vocabulary was deemed by the students as appropriate in informal written genres.

As far as grammar is concerned, the students either have not yet been taught all standard forms of grammar, i.e. they have not learned the 'error status' of the grammatical deviations their teachers recognise – and therefore do not pick them up – or they have indeed recognised that the grammar of Text 2 is non-standard, but are, nevertheless, less concerned about it than the teachers are.

Students' comments on the grammar of Text 2 indicate that while some of them recognised the grammatical errors (Icelandic *málvillur*), many more claimed that the usage in Text 2 was good, while some even claimed that there were 'no errors', as a result of which they perceived Text 2 as appropriate for one or more of the more formal genres. These data suggest that the students indeed relate grammatically 'correct' language to the formal genres even if they have not recognised the 'errors'.

Since reading habits may influence how people evaluate written registers, we used the survey questionnaire to collect such information about the participants. The survey showed that the students read printed newspapers significantly less than the teachers do (χ^2=18.15, df=3, N=123, p=.000), while there was little difference between the groups as to the number of times they read web news. One can surmise that younger people are more inclined to read web-based news than printed news, whereas the teachers use both mediums to access news.[9]

From the teachers' perspective, at least, web news is not considered exemplary in terms of standard language use. Table 4 shows that about half of the teachers claim that they would expect to see the non-standard vocabulary of Text 1 and the non-standard grammar of Text 2 in web news, while Table 5 shows that far less of them (10.3% and 30.6% respectively) thought these registers 'appropriate' for web news. On the other hand, while a great majority of the teachers expected to see the standard language Text 3 in printed papers, only about a

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[9] The survey also showed that the teachers read more novels per year than the students do. There is a statistically significant difference (χ^2=46.55, df=2, N=107, p=0.000) between average percentages for each of the two cohorts: 69.2% of teachers versus 7.4% of students read more than five novels per year; 30.8% of teachers versus 77.9% of students claimed to read 1–5 novels a year; and all the teachers claimed to read at least one novel per year, while 14.7% of the students ticked the 'never'-box. (No correlations were carried out to find out whether *individuals* who read a lot behave differently from those who do not.) As is evident from Tables 4–6, there was no significant difference as to how students versus teachers attributed different registers to the genre 'books'. When reading into these results it should be kept in mind that the questions on register attribution did not make a distinction between 'novels' and 'non-fiction' books.

third of the teachers claimed that they would expect to see that standard language register in web news.

Our main research question was what (if anything) is happening to the (perceived) standard of 'proper' language use in Icelandic. Our results show that the students are more inclined than the teachers to use non-standard language in the more informal written genres. Moreover, the findings suggest that some non-standard Icelandic grammar forms are less problematic to the students than to the teachers for use in the more formal genres. However, it is very clear that there is a perception among 18–21 year old Icelandic speakers that borrowings are inappropriate features in formal written genres.

While Icelandic testifies to the correctness of Trudgill's (2002: 723) claim that small, tightly-knit communities have a greater chance of abiding by the norms, our experimental results seem to indicate that a change in conventional norms of standard grammar might be in progress in Icelandic.

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