

**Language change vs. stability
in conservative language communities:
A case study of Icelandic**

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**Language change vs. stability
in conservative language communities:
A case study of Icelandic**

Finnur Friðriksson

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a study in language stability. Icelandic, which is regarded by many as a prime example of a stable language, is chosen as a vehicle for an examination of this field. A study, which involves a number of alleged ongoing changes in modern Icelandic, is conducted in order to determine whether or not the language can still be characterized as stable and, if the answer is positive, to identify the conditions which support this stability. The data used, which have been collected from a total of 108 informants chosen on the basis of a set of social criteria, consist primarily of informal group conversations which were analysed with respect to the relevant linguistic variables. 52 of the informants also submitted written material, not produced specifically for the purpose of the thesis, and this was analysed in the same way. Furthermore, all informants were interviewed to obtain information on their social background, the structure of their social networks, and on their attitudes towards and awareness of the alleged changes.

The results regarding language use indicate that Icelandic can still be characterized as a stable language. Thus, examples of the alleged changes appeared quite infrequently in the data and their distribution amongst the age groups included is indicative of stable variation rather than change in progress. With respect to attitudes and awareness, the informants generally display both a high level of awareness of the alleged changes and a high level of negativity towards them. Furthermore, a pattern emerges which indicates a relationship between attitudes and usage, such that an informant's negative attitude towards a given non-standard form decreases his or her likelihood of using it. The results also indicate that other factors, such as strong linguistic nationalism and a stability-oriented language policy, are instrumental in creating the sociolinguistic conditions in Iceland which support language stability, and it is argued that these conditions will generally result in language stability. At the same time, it is pointed out that other conditions, specific to other language communities, need to be taken into consideration before this generalisation is made.

Keywords: language stability, attitudes to language, linguistic nationalism, language planning, social networks, Icelandic, 'dative sickness', case inflections, 'new passive', 'am-to-frenzy'

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1. Introduction

Language change and variation are one of the main preoccupations of sociolinguistics. This becomes clear by taking the quickest of glances at introductory textbooks and handbooks in the field (see e.g. Coulmas, 1997; Coupland & Jaworski, 1997; Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, 2000) and is further testified by the fact that special handbooks on this particular sub-field have been published (see e.g. Chambers, Trudgill & Schilling-Estes, 2002). Neither does it require much reading in this sub-field to realise that one of its basic assumptions is that all languages display some signs of variation and that all languages change from one time to the other.¹ From this foundation, variationists proceed to study the processes and elements involved in variation and change and this has primarily been done by examining the relationship between, on the one hand, the development of various linguistic variables and, on the other, a number of social background factors characterizing the speakers in question at each time. Thus the interplay between change and factors such as age, gender, class and social networks has been extensively examined in the last few decades.

While it is thus generally acknowledged that all languages do change, it is also well-attested that the speed and extent of change can vary from one language to the other, as well as from one variety or dialect to the other of a given language. Some languages can even be said to be characterized by stability rather than change as, even though they do not reach a level of endless status quo, they display an extremely low rate and speed of change, at least when compared with most other languages. Stability can in this way be said to be the other side of the coin of change and this has been acknowledged by some sociolinguists who can in essence be said to regard language change as occurring under conditions which disfavour stability and then try to identify these conditions (see section 2.3). However, it is interesting to note that even though stability appears in some quarters to be viewed as the foundation for studying language change, studying stability in its own right seems to have been on the sociolinguistic agenda only to a very limited extent (see e.g. Marshall, 2004; Milroy, L. 1980; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Schilling-Estes, 2000, 2002; Trudgill, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2002). This fact can, in turn, be said to be the point of departure for this thesis.

1.1 Purpose of the thesis

Having just said that stability is the point of departure for this thesis, it should be noted that this was not the case at the outset. My original intention was to

¹ It should be noted that in my discussion I accept another standard sociolinguistic assumption, namely that all language change involves linguistic variation while variation does not have to lead to change (see e.g. Labov, 2001).

examine how change emerges and proceeds in a language characterized by centuries of high relative stability which is presently supported by a highly conservative language community. My vehicle for this examination was going to be Icelandic, which appears to be generally accepted as a prime example of a stable language (see e.g. Dixon, 1997; Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Trudgill, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2002), although both the public debate in recent years and some recent research (see chapter 4) suggested that changes, not the least of a morphological and syntactical nature, were seeping into the language at an increasing rate. On this basis, a pilot study was carried out which was to constitute the platform for a more extensive study. The results of this pilot study, however, indicated that I might be asking the wrong basic questions as there were hardly any clear signs of change to be found, although there seemed to be a strong belief that the language was changing quite dramatically.

These unexpected results from the pilot study caused me to change the focus and the basic questions upon which my work was to be based, and now two main dimensions can be discerned in this respect. First, in a relatively language specific context, I pose the question whether Icelandic is really currently undergoing a higher degree of change than before or can still be characterized as a stable language. This pertains to both spoken and written language, simultaneously keeping in mind that interesting differences may emerge between the two. Should it be the case that Icelandic is as stable as the pilot study suggests, a natural follow-up question deals with the factors which contribute to this relative stability. Seeking an answer to this question is particularly intriguing as Iceland has in the last century and a half undergone dramatic social changes which, on the basis of a corresponding development in several other language communities, could have been expected to lead to more extensive language change than seems to be the case. In addressing this question, factors such as nationalistic sentiments, language attitudes and language planning are added to the more traditional variables of age, gender, class and social networks in order to examine how this presumed stability has been maintained.

Of course, a full examination of the level of change in Icelandic in general can not be carried out within the scope of one thesis. Hence, a set of morphological and syntactic features which, according to either the public debate or previous research, show the clearest signs of potential change were selected for examination. On this basis, it was believed that these variables would function as indicators of the level of change vs. stability in modern Icelandic. The features in question are (for a detailed account see chapter 4):

- a) ‘Dative sickness’ and other ‘verb sicknesses’. This refers to a change in the case taken by the subject of so-called impersonal verbs.

- b) ‘Genitive avoidance’. A tendency either to use nominative, accusative or dative case where genitive is required in standard language or to use non-standard genitive case endings.
- c) Other case inflections. Claims have been made that the case inflectional system of Icelandic is showing general signs of instability in such a way that oblique cases are not used at all or a certain case is used where another is required in standard language.
- d) ‘New passive’. A change in the structure of passive sentences.
- e) ‘Am-to-frenzy’. A seeming expansion of the construction *vera að* + infinitive which in standard Icelandic is used with a limited set of verbs for continuous aspect.

While the combined results for these features give an indication of the general level of stability or change in modern Icelandic, each feature poses its separate sub-question regarding its general spread and distribution in social terms.

The second main dimension of this thesis is of a more general nature. Here I am referring to the fact that it is hoped that the results from this study, which is based on Icelandic material and circumstances, can be applied to a broader sociolinguistic context. Thus, while the former dimension pertains to Icelandic in particular and revolves around the claim that this language is still characterized by stability, the results from the study may also allow us to make some suggestions about the general nature of language stability as an aspect of language change and variation. In order to make such suggestions, some possible answers are here provided to questions regarding e.g. which sociolinguistic conditions need to be in place and even utilised if stability is to be achieved and maintained. Thus, it is asked here whether attitudes can play a direct role in stability or whether stability can be examined in much the same way as language change through categories such as age, gender, class and social networks. Then, by extension, the answers to these questions will be utilized to seek answers to questions relating to language planning and policy and how this can be carried out successfully.

In sum, therefore, this thesis can be said to have two main aims. On the one hand, an answer is sought to the question whether Icelandic can still be characterized as a stable language and, if so, which factors contribute to this stability. On the other, it is hoped that the results pertaining to the first aim can be used to determine to some extent the nature of language stability.

1.2 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In this first chapter the topic of the thesis is introduced and its main purpose and basic research question presented. The next three chapters jointly make up the theoretical and research background of the thesis. The first of these chapters consists of an overview of how language change and variation has been addressed by various theoretical frameworks. Here, the actuation and transmission of change is first discussed and then the stability aspect is placed within this context, especially as it has been approached within the social networks framework. The next chapter consists of an attempt to broaden the approach to stability as part of the field of variation and change. It is argued that stability is yet to be examined satisfactorily in its own right and that this can not be done through using only categories such as age, gender, class and social networks, even though these have proven useful in studies where change is the main focus. In order to broaden the perspective, language stability is here examined within the context of nationalism, language attitudes and language planning, all of which, it is argued, are potentially crucial to stability, at least in certain circumstances. The last of these background chapters then deals with the linguistic variables examined in this study as examples of apparent changes in modern Icelandic. The variables are defined in this chapter and the previous work that exists on them is reviewed.

The fifth chapter of the thesis consists of a description of the methodology used for obtaining, handling and analysing the data studied. This chapter is then directly followed by a presentation of the results emerging from the data. Here, the results pertaining to the strictly linguistic data, i.e. the linguistic variables, are presented first and this is followed by an account of the results regarding the informants' attitudes to language change in general and the relevant linguistic variables in particular. These two sets of results are then combined to see if there is any apparent relationship between the informants' attitudes and their language use. In the seventh and final chapter, the results are summarized and examined in the context of the research questions and the main theoretical assumptions presented in chapters 2 and 3. Finally, concluding remarks, consisting of some general assumptions based on the results, are presented along with a few suggestions for further research.

2. Approaches to change and stability

Language change has for several decades been a highly prosperous field of linguistic research. This is quite understandable not only because this is an interesting field in itself, but also because the answers to some of the most basic questions it poses have proved to be particularly elusive. Here I am mainly referring to the “hows” and “whys”, i.e. simply how and why does language change – or why does it not, but even the fundamental issues of what constitutes linguistic change and what its nature is have not been fully resolved.

These questions have divided linguists into several different camps, depending on how they want to approach them or even pose them. The main dividing line has traditionally been between proponents of internal explanations for change on the one hand and language external explanations on the other. The former (see e.g. Martinet, 1952; Ohala, 1993) have tended to focus primarily on structural elements in language and thereby try to assert which purely linguistic circumstances allow for or motivate change, which can in turn be driven by e.g. psychological or functional forces. The latter (see e.g. Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Weinreich, Labov & Herzog, 1968), on the other hand, see language change essentially as a social phenomenon which speakers rather than language itself are responsible for, even though certain linguistic circumstances may be more favourable to change than others. In recent years, however, the internal/external dichotomy has been questioned as there is evidence that rather than seeing the two types of explanations as mutually exclusive they have to be combined for almost any linguistic change we come across, if a full explanation is the desired target (Woods, 2001; Yang, 2000). Thus Andersen (1989) claims that this dichotomy is non-existent as language is a social phenomenon which cannot be separated from its social functions, at the same time as the categories of a society are embedded in its language. Sandøy (2003, p. 87) adds further weight to this unified view when he says that

Når ein prosess er gjennomført og vellykka, er det vanskeleg å seie kva som har avgjort prosessen, anna enn at det er tale om ein kombinasjon av ytre og indre krefter. ... Men vi kan leggje merke til at *kva* innovasjonane går på språkleg, er sosialt sett heilt tilfeldig. Det kan også seiast på den måten at det er sosialt forståeleg at ei ungdomsgruppe tek opp eit språkleg særdrag; men at innovasjonen konkret kjem til at dreie seg om *ll > dl*, kan ikkje forståast sosialt. Derimot er det språkleg sett ikkje helt tilfeldig kva som skjer med f.eks. *ll* når det først skjer. Berre visse alternativ er moglege, ikkje f.eks. ein overgang til *pp*!²

² When a process has been successfully carried out it is difficult to determine what was the decisive factor behind this. All that can be said is that a combination of external and internal forces is involved. ... Nonetheless we can note that it is quite arbitrary in social terms which linguistic aspects innovations affect. It is, in other words, socially understandable that a teenage group adopts a linguistic innovation, while it is not socially understandable that this

In this context, however, it is interesting to note that when some of the foundations for the present stronghold of external changes, i.e. modern sociolinguistics, were laid 40 years ago by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968, p.188) the view evident in Andersen (1989) and Sandøy (2003) was at their very heart, thereby indicating that this rift may have been unnecessary from the very beginning:

Linguistic and social factors are closely interrelated in the development of language change. Explanations which are confined to one or the other aspect, no matter how well constructed, will fail to account for the rich body of regularities that can be observed in empirical studies of language behavior.

We now turn to examining in more detail how the questions of language change and stability have been addressed within various theoretical frameworks. The first section of this discussion deals with the actuation and nature of change. This is followed by an overview of how the transmission of change has been approached. The third section addresses language stability in general, and the fourth studies in more detail how stability has been dealt with in the social networks framework. It should be noted that while I fully agree that a holistic approach – including both external and internal forces – is necessary for a full understanding of linguistic change and stability, the main focus of this thesis is on external factors and subsequently such factors will be at the forefront in the following discussion, even though other approaches are not excluded.

2.1 Actuation and the nature of change

We will start this discussion by looking at how the very first stages of linguistic change have been treated and thereby how the concept of change is viewed. Interestingly, despite the above-mentioned internal/external dichotomy regarding the general view of language change, most researchers in the field, regardless of their basic theoretical assumptions, seem to agree on one of the issues involved here. The issue in question relates to the actuation of change, i.e. its very first emergence. Here the general consensus appears to be that we have no way of capturing actuation in its strictest sense, i.e. setting up a principled way of observing the very first occurrence of a new linguistic feature which precedes change in the language or languages concerned, nor predicting when and where these features emerge. In this respect Lass (1980) is probably the most pessimistic in claiming that “[t]he irreducible fact seems to be that we can never observe the ‘exact’ moment when a change begins (except by accident –

particular innovation comes to be *ll* > *dl*. On the other hand, what happens to e.g. *ll*, if anything happens in the first place, is not completely arbitrary in linguistic terms. Only certain alternatives are possible and a change to e.g. *pp* is not one of them! (My translation)

and even then we would still have no way of knowing what we were actually observing)” (p. 95). Here it should be added that Lass's general view of the possibilities of explaining language change is anything but optimistic. Thus he initially claims that “there are at present no intellectually respectable strategies for explaining linguistic change” (p. xi), and later concludes that linguistic changes are no more explainable or predictable than changes in art styles, as both are cultural phenomena for which no specific cause can be determined. While I agree with Lass that language, and thereby language change, is largely a cultural phenomenon, I find the analogy to changes in art styles, or – for that matter – to changes in most other aspects of culture, less tenable as they seem to require conscious and intentional decisions made by the people involved in them, which only rarely seems to be the case in linguistic changes. Thus Labov (2001) points out that even if language and fashion have much in common, such as being the means for a presentation of a given individual's self, changes in fashion always require conscious decisions at some point, whereas linguistic changes are normally hidden, at least in their initial stages, from the people involved in them. It is also noteworthy that even though Lass's criticism of earlier attempts at explaining linguistic change is generally well-founded and points out significant weaknesses in other authors' argumentation, he makes no attempt to supply his readers with his own potential explanations. Admittedly, Lass is aware of this and argues for his right to criticize without offering something better instead. Still, I cannot help but feel that his criticisms would have gained further weight by doing just that.

From the discussion above it might be deduced that any closer examination of the actuation of change is futile. However, given that the focus of this thesis is language stability it seems necessary to gain some understanding of how these first potentially disruptive signs appear. For this purpose we now turn to a brief look at how this issue has been approached within various theoretical frameworks, starting with the sociolinguistic one.

2.1.1 The sociolinguistic approach

Sociolinguists who have dealt with actuation appear generally not to diverge greatly from Lass and others in that they find it impossible to predict what changes may happen in a language and where and when they will happen. This applies e.g. to James and Lesley Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J., 1992, 1993) whose standpoint in turn derives from the, by now, classic statement of the “actuation problem” made by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968, p. 102):

What factors can account for the actuation of changes? Why do changes in a structural feature take place in a particular language at a given time, but not in other languages with the same feature, or in the same language at other times?

Despite their admission that it is more or less impossible to predict anything about language changes, Milroy and Milroy refuse to give up completely and thus James Milroy (1993) says that it is just as inexcusable for linguists not to address the actuation problem as it would be for meteorologists to stop trying to improve their predictions, even though they may never reach the point where they can tell exactly where and when it is going to start raining.

James Milroy follows this up by presenting his approach to the actuation problem which steers past the difficulties with observing the first occurrences of new linguistic features. This approach is, according to Milroy, speaker-based rather than system-based as he believes changes originate with speakers of language rather than with language itself. This causes him to make a distinction between innovation and change, where speakers innovate, which may in turn lead to a change in the linguistic system, or, in Milroy's own words (1993, p. 221-222): “[w]e can describe *speaker-innovation* as *an act of the speaker which is capable of influencing linguistic structure*”. However, as speaker-innovation itself is more or less unobservable, just as Lass (1980) points out, we should rather try “to explain the conditions in which an innovation is unsuccessful in addition to those in which it is successful” (Milroy, 1993, p. 222) and in order to achieve this we should look for answers in the make-up of the society of the speakers in question.

It is interesting to note here that even though he does not address the question of actuation directly, Andersen (1989) comes up with ideas that in some ways resemble those of James Milroy. Thus Andersen prefers to speak of innovations rather than change at this initial stage to “refer to any element of usage (or grammar) which differs from previous usage (or grammars)” (p. 13) and even suggests that the term “change” should not be used at all, as in his view what really happens is that innovations are made and can then be found alongside corresponding traditional forms and either become traditional themselves or are rejected. Thus nothing really changes, one item merely replaces another. Andersen then goes on to argue that it is through a series of innovative acts that “any new entity gains currency and enters into competition with traditional entities in the usage of a linguistic community” (p. 14). Thus we here have a certain view of the nature of change, or innovation, as Andersen, would have it, but we are still no closer to the starting point of the innovation, i.e. actuation.

The approach adopted by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) to their own questions mentioned above is similar to that of Milroy and Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J., 1992, 1993) in most ways. Like Milroy and Milroy, Weinreich et al. (1968) believe that language change cannot be predicted without seeing this as an excuse for not trying to find the answers to how linguistic changes begin and proceed. They also see change as essentially a social phenomenon, rather than something intrinsically linguistic. However, they distance themselves even further from the very point of actuation than Milroy

and Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J., 1992, 1993) do, claiming that no distinction can be made between the origin of a change and the propagation of it. Instead, they appear to believe that the origins of a change lie in an already existing linguistic variation in the speech community which only leads to change when one of the features of the variation spreads throughout a part of the community in question. Labov (1972) later elaborated on this point and claimed that finding ultimate actuation and the sources for variation simply are not amongst the problems historical linguistics should deal with. It should rather focus on why some innovations, or certain instances of variation, catch on while others do not. Thus he ultimately poses the same question as Milroy and Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J., 1992, 1993) although he reaches this starting point by a slightly different route.

This tendency of Labov, James Milroy, Lesley Milroy, and others who work within their framework, to sidestep ultimate actuation or innovation has not gone uncriticized. Unsurprisingly, one of the critics is Lass (1980) who claims that the sociolinguistic techniques of the Labovian school only allow us to see what happens after the point of actuation rather than actuation itself which, according to Lass, is “what we are really after” (p. 95). I am not sure, however, how justified Lass is in his critique here, as both Labov (1972) and Milroy and Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J., 1992, 1993) seem to be aware of the shortcomings of their approach themselves and admit that at the present time they are unable to give an account of the point of actuation. Nonetheless, what their techniques for finding the conditions under which actuation or innovation does or does not succeed might, in the long run, provide us with answers to the riddle that is ultimate actuation. Furthermore, it can be questioned whether the very first instance of actuation is “what we are really after”. Of course it would be nice to be able to trace every change back to its very first instantiation, but this back-tracking seems to be more or less impossible to carry out. The same can probably be said about going the other way around. To be sure to capture actuation itself we would probably have to record every single speaker of a given community more or less continuously, make notes of every linguistic innovation each and every speaker makes (presuming, of course, that no one has previously used the forms they use) and then keep track of all of these innovations in order to see whether they catch on or not. Even if this were possible, it would be an extremely tedious and time-consuming business. Therefore, in realistic terms, actuation can only be “what we are really after” in a very roundabout way, which, to me, is satisfactorily exemplified by the approach of Labov and Milroy and Milroy.

2.1.2 Croft's evolutionary approach

Lass is not the only one to criticize the sociolinguistic approach to actuation discussed above and representatives of other frameworks that are less focussed on the role of the speaker have also presented their views. However, this critique often takes the same direction as that of Lass. Thus Croft (2000), though he has no problems with accepting the unpredictability of linguistic change, points out that Labov, Milroy and Milroy and others working within a similar framework presuppose that multiple variants exist in a given language without explaining how the variants arise. It is hard not to agree partly with Croft here; Labov and Milroy and Milroy have not provided us with solutions to the actuation problem. At the same time, however, it seems a little harsh to criticize them for failing to do something which they have never really set out to do. Indeed, Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) formulate the actuation problem and Milroy and Milroy (Milroy & Milroy, 1985; Milroy, J. 1992, 1993) take that as their starting point. However, none of them claim to have any solution to the problem and they freely admit that, at the moment, actuation can probably not be caught, as it were, in action. Nonetheless they hope that their approach of studying the conditions under which actuation is or is not successful will lead us closer to the prey, and this seems to be a reasonable hope. Furthermore, it seems that Croft may simply be mistaken in including Milroy and Milroy in his criticism, as they do not seem to presuppose that multiple variants exist in the same way as Weinreich, Labov and Herzog do. Rather, they acknowledge that there is some point of actuation; the problem is that it is nearly impossible to find this point.

Thus Croft's criticism also falls flat in the end, but when compared to Lass (1980), Croft nonetheless has a certain advantage in that he not only criticizes, but also makes suggestions as to how actuation and language change in general should be approached. He calls his approach evolutionary and sees several analogies between the biological evolution of animals and plants and language change. He shares the sociolinguistic view that the study of language should be based on empirically real entities rather than abstract systems. The entities he then bases his approach on are utterances, which he sees as the DNA of language, and language change occurs via the replication of these entities. As for actuation itself, which Croft prefers to refer to as innovation, he follows in the footsteps of Milroy and Milroy in clearly distinguishing it from transmission, which he refers to as propagation. Innovation, then, he sees as a synchronic phenomenon as "it occurs in speaker action at a given point in time" (2000, p. 5). Propagation, however "is a diachronic phenomenon: it occurs sometimes over a very long period of time, even centuries" (p. 5). Furthermore, Croft regards innovation as functional, as it involves the form-function mapping. According to him, the phonetic and conceptual factors argued for by the functional linguists we will come to later are responsible for this. On the other hand, he more or less joins the sociolinguistic framework in saying that social

factors are responsible for propagation. Conventions, or norms, in the sociolinguistic terminology, are also central to Croft's approach as "innovation is essentially language use beyond conventions ... and propagation is essentially the establishment of a new convention in a language" (p. 95).

From this basis, Croft moves on to propose a set of mechanisms which are responsible for innovation in a language, primarily of a grammatical kind. What these mechanisms have in common is that they are different kinds of form-function reanalysis by which Croft (2000, p. 118) means:

a nonintentional mechanism for innovation. Speakers' intended actions are towards conformity to convention, but the result is innovation, an unintended consequence. The unintended consequence of individual actions is due in part to the potential discrepancy between individual competence, which is constantly responding to use ... and the conventions of the speech community ... The innovations may be due to random low-level neural processes ... or by higher-level restructuring of the knowledge of form-function mappings in the grammar. Either way, innovations result from speakers attempting to conform to convention.

Moving on to the mechanisms themselves, Croft calls them hyperanalysis, hypoanalysis, metanalysis and cryptanalysis. Hyperanalysis is primarily a source of semantic bleaching or loss, as what it involves is that "the listener reanalyzes an inherent semantic/functional property of a syntactic unit as a contextual property" (p. 121) with the result that the syntactic unit loses some of its meaning or function. Hypoanalysis works, so to speak, the other way around as there "the listener reanalyzes a contextual semantic/functional property as an inherent property of the syntactic unit" (p. 126) with the result that the syntactic unit gains a new meaning or function. Metanalysis means that "the listener swaps contextual and inherent semantic values of a syntactic unit" (p. 130) and is thus seen by Croft as an instance of hyperanalysis and hypoanalysis occurring at the same time. Finally, cryptanalysis occurs when "the listener analyzes a covert semantic/functional property of a syntactic unit as not grammatically marked, and inserts an overt marker expressing its semantic value" (p. 134).

There is, of course, nothing wrong with these suggested mechanisms and Croft argues convincingly for how they can explain various kinds of (grammatical) changes. Thus he shows e.g. how hyperanalysis may lie behind the loss of governed oblique case in Russian and how metanalysis may lie behind the development of passives from 3rd person active forms in Masai. However, in light of the present discussion, Croft has a bit of a problem, the key phrase of which can be said to be "lie behind". In explaining what lies behind the changes he discusses, Croft essentially – and probably unknowingly – appears to be joining the sociolinguistic standpoint of Labov and Milroy and Milroy, which, by their own admission, aims for explaining the conditions under which innovations are successful as well as the conditions under which they are

not, rather than trying to find actuation itself. With this, Croft also seems to be more or less criticizing himself in pointing out the flaws in the reasoning of Labov and Milroy and Milroy. Croft's approach gives us valuable insights into what the speakers may actually be doing when they innovate and shows us under which conditions these innovations can be achieved. That is, we have a clear picture of what may “lie behind” the changes and what happens during them, and this picture becomes even clearer when other suggestions, such as Labov's (1994) thoughts about mechanical factors lying behind phonological change, are taken into consideration. What we still do not know, however, are the answers to the questions posed by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) in their original statement of the actuation problem. Why do these changes (or innovations) happen when they do? Why do they happen in some languages but not in others where the same conditions are present? Furthermore – if one wants to understand actuation in the strictest sense – when exactly did the very first instance(s) of the innovations take place? Here, Croft is no closer to the target than others before him.

2.1.3 The functional approach

The above shortcoming in Croft's (2000) argumentation – provided that one wants to call it a shortcoming, considering the general agreement there seems to be on the impossibility of tracking down the very point of actuation – also appears in work of this kind carried out within the functionalist framework. This may not be so surprising, as the functionalists of course share Croft's belief that innovation is a functional phenomenon. They differ from Croft, however, in that they regard linguistic change in general as functional. In simple terms, this implies that, by changing language, speakers are fulfilling a certain function, such as resolving ambiguities in the language in question, in order to reach a higher degree of efficiency in communication. Thus Gvozdanovic (1997b, p. 71) claims that language users:

transmit their messages aiming at clarity and efficiency, and in any case avoid unclarity which would hamper communication. In each communicative phase, language users evaluate their tool – the language – as to its effectiveness for their particular needs in relation to the shared language habits of the community. The evaluation measure is thus set by the effectiveness of the actual language in conveying messages as weighed against structural and sociolinguistic acceptability.

The evaluation of the language that Gvozdanovic mentions is, naturally enough, a cognitive process and this process can, according to Eliasson (1997, p. 55), be divided into a number of steps:

- (i) contextual scanning, (ii) grammatical or lexical lookup, (iii) extraction of the pivotal difference between the ambiguous element and

a possible grammatical or lexical equivalent, and (iv) confirmation or rejection of the attempted match by comparing the extracted difference to the structural change of a potentially relevant linguistic rule.

As for other basic standpoints, it seems that functionalists share Weinreich, Labov and Herzog's (1968) view that no distinction should be made between the actuation of a change and its transmission; Dressler (1997), for example, sees this distinction as overly simplistic, both because there can be so many types of phases in the spread of an innovation and because he believes the very origin of an innovation to be of little importance, as most innovations do not catch on. Furthermore, functionalists align themselves with others who have been discussed so far in that they see change as something that occurs in communication amongst speakers rather than in the linguistic system as such, even though the system may enable the change (Gvozdanovic, 1997a). This point is further emphasised by Keller (1997) who presents it as a principle that "[o]ne should strictly differentiate between propositions about speakers and their way of using their language, and propositions about language" (p. 14). This, in fact, appears to be a more or less necessary prerequisite for the functional school of thought and how function is understood there as Keller (1997, p. 14-15) goes on to explain that

- The claim that speakers have goals is correct, while the claim that language has a goal is wrong.
- The claim that change is a function of use is correct, while the claim that change has a function is wrong.
- The claim that speakers use their language functionally, that is, purposefully, is correct, while the claim that language has a function is questionable.

From this Keller develops the argument that linguistic change is the result of a so-called invisible-hand process, where the speaker makes a choice from the linguistic means available to him or her, and this rational choice, which also is functional in that it is intended to raise the level of efficiency, can lead, unintentionally, to a change.

As was mentioned before, this approach faces the same problem as does Croft's evolutionary approach when it comes to grasping actuation. What we have here is essentially a possible glimpse of what lies behind linguistic change, but once again we are no closer to the very starting point of it, nor why it happens when it happens rather than at some other point in time. It should be noted, though, that functionalists – at least those of them who follow Dressler – are probably quite justified in not taking this critique too seriously, since to them actuation itself appears not to be the real issue.

What functionalists might have to take more seriously than my remarks above are the important questions raised by some of the authors previously discussed about the functionalist framework in general. Thus Lass (1980)

refuses to accept functional explanations for a number of reasons. He starts his criticism by saying that explanations of this kind are “always irreducibly *post hoc* (in the sense of being totally non-predictive), and the functions invoked often seem rather fishy and devoid of principled support” (p. 69). He also points out that a function can be read into practically any change so “that almost anything can be a supporting example, and nothing can be a counter-example” (p. 71). Perhaps most seriously, however, he claims that change can not be functional, as this rests on the underlying assumption that the aim of change is to make the language reach a stage where it is “‘adapted’ or ‘fit’” (p. 85). However, all languages continue to change continuously regardless of the stage they have reached, at the same time as they all appear to be quite successful as a means for communication, and thus it seems to Lass that it makes little sense to regard any language in a given state as “‘pathological’ or ‘maladaptive’” (p. 87) and in need of improvement. Thus linguistic change cannot have any specific function. Finally, Lass points out that functional explanations for change do not match very well with the findings – which we will come to later – of Labov, Milroy and Milroy and others that change proceeds in small steps. He says that for a change to be transmitted from speaker to speaker the functions motivating it would also have to be transmitted and asks how this can be the case if the functions are in some sense natural. Also he finds it hard to believe that functional motivation can spread “as a matter of class-consciousness, imitation of prestige models, and so on” (p. 97), as appears to be the case with the changes themselves.

From the above, it probably comes as little surprise that both Labov (1994) and Milroy and Milroy (1985) join Lass in criticizing functional explanations for change. What Labov is primarily opposed to, at least as far as sound change is concerned, are the functional ideas mentioned above about speakers making intentional choices from the linguistic means available to them in order to put across their meaning in as efficient a way as possible. With his own quantitative studies as his basis, Labov (1994, p. 549-550) writes that:

we must be skeptical of all arguments that claim to explain linguistic changes through the speaker’s desires or intentions to communicate a given message. There is no reason to think that our notions of what we intend or the intentions we attribute to others are very accurate, or that we have any way of knowing whether they are accurate ... If functional theories of language change and variation are theories of intentions, they will be leading us down a very slippery path indeed.

What Labov's own results show is in most ways the opposite to functionalist claims; in their choice of variants speakers do not pay any attention to whether or not they are maximizing the information they put across. Rather, this choice is carried out in a mechanical fashion where phonetic conditioning and repetition of the preceding structure are the main determining factors.

As for Milroy and Milroy (1985) their critique more or less treads the same path as do the criticisms of Lass (1980) and Labov (1994). In particular, they agree with Lass in his complaints about the lack of predictability for change provided by functional explanations, and also point out their weakness mentioned above by claiming that they fail to address the actuation problem as it was originally formulated by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968). Milroy and Milroy (1985) admit that functional explanations may be valuable in certain cases of change, but say that they can not explain why changes of the same kind were not avoided in other instances.

To me, the critique of Lass (1980), Labov (1994) and Milroy and Milroy (1985) seems quite reasonable as functional explanations do not, for example, improve the predictability of linguistic change in any way, and it seems unreasonable to view the intention to maximize information as lying behind change, if only because – even if we allow for intentional factors – we often try to diminish the information we put across and this does not appear to make our language any less usable or functional. Perhaps, however, Lass (1980) is a little harsh in his claims that functionalistic explanations can only apply if the starting point of a language is “pathological”. Here he seems to assume that what functionalists are claiming is that languages go, as it were, from bad to good. I am not sure this is what is meant; to me it seems that functionalists are rather claiming that languages can go from good to better. Nonetheless, I agree with Lass, Labov (1994) and Milroy and Milroy (1985) that it is not the desire to “improve” language which lies behind linguistic change.

2.1.4 The formal approach

The last theoretical framework which should be discussed here is the Chomsky-inspired formal one. In fact it has very little to say on the topic of actuation, which is probably a result of the Chomskyan legacy which allows little room for linguistic variation and change. Also, if these themes are to be studied at all, the Chomskyan school adopts a view of them that differs in its very foundation from the frameworks discussed earlier and places itself at the extreme internal end of the internal/external dichotomy. Thus, e.g. Faarlund (1990) says that “[e]xplaining linguistic change ... means to explain changes in the grammatical system, not changes in the actual linguistic behavior of individual speakers” (p. 31). This is of course the direct opposite of Labov and Milroy and Milroy who, as we have seen, see linguistic change as a social phenomenon enacted by speakers, or, in the words of Milroy and Milroy (1985, p. 345): “it is not languages that innovate; it is speakers who innovate”. As this line of thought is central to this thesis, the formal framework is of little further relevance. On this basis the discussion thus far can be summed up by saying that the standpoint taken here is in accordance with that of Weinreich, Labov and Herzog and Milroy and Milroy in that language change, and thereby the actuation of such

changes, are viewed first and foremost as social phenomena. Within this framework, however, I agree with the distinction made by James Milroy (1993) between innovation and change and his comment about the obligation of linguists to address the actuation problem, however unreachable the final target may seem to be. Given the focus on stability in this thesis, this seems to be a necessary standpoint as accepting the impossibility of stumbling upon actuation may well result in our failing to observe it, if and when we actually have the opportunity to do so; the chances for which should be proportionally higher when, as is the case here, studying a stable language in a language community highly sensitive to signs of change. This acceptance of Milroy's distinction between innovation and change is reflected by the structure of this chapter, as these are the final words in a separate section dealing with actuation and the general nature of language change. The next section, however, focuses on how linguistic innovations are spread throughout a given society from some point *after* their first emergence. From what has been said above it seems reasonable to refer to this as "transmission" and to keep it apart from "actuation".

2.2 Transmission of change

As was seen above, there is some debate about the role of the speakers of a language in the actuation of change and the extent to which speakers can be seen as part of the general nature of linguistic change. As we move into the field of transmission, however, there seems to be little doubt that for a change to spread throughout a linguistic community, or a part of it, its speakers have to be involved. This means that transmission is first and foremost a social or sociolinguistic phenomenon. As a result of this, the discussion now focuses almost entirely on the ideas proposed within the sociolinguistic framework where Labov and Milroy and Milroy are in the forefront. Most other theoretical schools have left this issue more or less untouched.

2.2.1 Labov and leaders of change

To start with Labov, he can be said to have in his latest major work (2001) summarized most of his earlier findings to support his views on the social aspects of linguistic change. This leads him to a final conclusion which he presents in the form of two principles (2001, p. 516):

The Nonconformity Principle: *Ongoing linguistic changes are emblematic of nonconformity to established social norms of appropriate behavior, and are generated in the social milieu that most consistently defies those norms.*

...

The Constructive Nonconformity Principle: *Linguistic changes are generalized to the wider community by those who display the symbols of nonconformity in a larger pattern of upward social mobility.*

In reaching these conclusions, Labov appears to begin at his original starting point, which was stated by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968), and further emphasized later on by Labov himself (1972). Thus he commences his search for how changes are transmitted throughout a given society from a presupposed existence of multiple variants. How these variants arise does not seem to interest him as much, but he nonetheless makes the point that, at least as far as his extensive data on the linguistic situation in Philadelphia is concerned, the lower working class appears to be the main source of innovation, which, he argues, is due to the fact that this is the class that shows the greatest degree of nonconformity in urban communities. This, of course, fits in well with his Nonconformity Principle. Note, however, that not even here Labov seems to concern himself with innovation in the strictest sense, as he says that he believes the innovations of the lower working class are at the forefront in the early stages of change rather than claiming directly that it is here that actuation can be found. After this, he leaves these “early stages” of change more or less behind and focuses on tracing the processes of transmission that follow them.

In this search, Labov's main interest appears to lie in identifying the leaders of change. Here, the central idea is that of social networks, the use of which was originally introduced in linguistics by Lesley Milroy (1980) and subsequently further adapted to the field by her and James Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992). Their work will be discussed in some detail shortly, but for the time being a definition of social networks useful for linguistic purposes can be found in Croft (2000, p. 240):

a group of speakers defined by their social links with each other ... Networks vary in density (how many individuals know each other) and multiplexity (in how many different domains the individuals know each other). Individuals have relatively strong or weak ties, defined in terms of density, multiplexity, and intimacy of links with other individuals in the network.

In the social networks Labov studied in various parts of Philadelphia, certain persons appear to lead ongoing changes. Note that being the leaders of change does not here mean to be the innovators, or the first ones to use a specific linguistic form, but to be amongst those who use the most advanced form of the change in question. In the case of Philadelphia this means e.g. that the leaders use more fronted variants of certain vowels than most other speakers do in a change process where vowels are fronted. But being the leaders of linguistic change in a social network of course also means that other members of the network tend to follow in their footsteps and try, consciously or not, to reach the leaders' advanced forms. The question then arises just who these leaders are.

Labov's answer is that they are those who have a position of, what he calls (2001, p. 364), “*expanded centrality*” in their social network. This means that these people are very central and somewhat prestigious figures in the network in question, at the same time as they have frequent interactions with people outside their immediate locality. Also, most of these people tend to be women who have achieved a respected social and economic position in their networks. This they appear to have achieved by having resisted adult authority and norms in their adolescence, at the same time as they were aware of what they needed to do to move upwards in their local society. Taking up the linguistic forms that originate in the lower (working) class is an aspect of resisting adult authority, but as the women grow older and secure themselves a prominent spot in their networks they maintain these forms and affect their surroundings by being someone who the people around them look up to and frequently interact with. As for the general social location of these women, they tend to be in the upper working or the lower middle class, where there is room for both nonconformity to the norms of the classes above as well as for social movement up towards them.

Having thus located the leaders of linguistic change, Labov turns his attention to another aspect of the general issue. Here we come to what he refers to as transmission, or the transmission problem, which relates to the fact that for linguistic change to occur “[c]hildren must learn to talk differently from their mothers, and these differences must be in the same direction in each succeeding generation” (2001, p. 416). According to Labov, historical linguistics has never really taken up this question and, accordingly, he goes through his material to see if a solution can be found. What he comes up with is that the relationship between children and their caretakers, who usually are women, as well as the relationship between children and their slightly older peers, are crucial factors in this process as children are at first primarily influenced by their caretakers' linguistic behaviour. Somewhere between the ages of 4 and 8, however, children start to see their role-models in children who are one or two years older than they are. Labov also points out that the different social activities in which language is used are almost equally important factors and claims that children quickly become aware of how language varies stylistically, depending on the formality or informality of the situation in question. What all this results in are a number of principles of transmission, according to which the original linguistic development of children is based on the linguistic patterns of their caretakers who transmit linguistic variation to their children as stylistic differentiation on the formal/informal dimension. The children in turn make, on the one hand, a connection between formal variants and instruction and punishment and, on the other, a connection between informal variants and intimacy and fun. They also come to realize that informal variants are associated with lower social status in the community and unconsciously relate them to nonconformity to adult norms. Some take this nonconformity further than others, and those are the leaders of

linguistic change who, as adults, further promote the changes by maintaining the nonconforming linguistic forms, at the same time as they make sure that their social mobility remains intact.

What we have now is, in a sense, a two-dimensional picture of the transmission of change. On the one hand, Labov (2001) has given an account of how the changes get going with the aid of certain people who are prominent in their social network. On the other, he has tried to show how children can learn to talk differently from their mothers, which is essential for a change to occur. What seems to be missing, however, is an account of how the changes spread throughout a given society after they have, so to speak, left the “safe haven” of the original leaders. Labov does not really address this question and seems to be content with claiming that changes are advanced and generalized by upwardly mobile young people – primarily women – of the upper working and lower middle classes, until they become the community norm. Just how this comes about remains unanswered, although Labov indicates briefly that the central members who lead changes in one network are likely to influence central members of other networks through their frequent interactions with people outside their immediate locality. In this way, changes spread gradually throughout the wider society. Nonetheless, this is only a suggestion rather than an empirically based result. Thus, although Labov gives strong support to his two original Nonconformity Principles, a third principle might be needed (and examined) to complete the picture.

2.2.2 Milroy and Milroy and social networks

It was mentioned in the previous section that Lesley Milroy and James Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 1980, 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) introduced and adapted the use of social networks to linguistics. From this it comes as no surprise that social networks are quite central to their approach to language change, no less than in Labov’s search for leaders of change. In her first examination of the effect of social networks on linguistic circumstances, Lesley Milroy (1980) relied primarily on the pioneering work of Bott (1971) who, on the basis of her studies of working-class families, came to the conclusion that close-knit networks have a strong norm-enforcing function, or as Bott herself expresses it (1971, p. 60):

When many of the people a person knows interact with one another, that is when the person’s network is close-knit, the members of his network tend to reach consensus on norms and they exert consistent informal pressure on one another to conform to the norms, to keep in touch with one another, and, if need be, to help one another.

Milroy (1980) applied these ideas to her linguistic data from Belfast and found that close-knit networks there are likely to contribute strongly to the

maintenance of its urban vernacular, even though it does not conform to the official standard. This is because close-knit networks are resistant to external pressures and tend to create their own norms and values, amongst which are vernacular norms which in turn are “able to symbolize solidarity and loyalty to a set of values of a non-institutional kind” (p. 194). Another result of this is that each speaker’s usage of language reflects his or her standing in the local community, so that the closer the speaker lies to the vernacular speech norms, the more integrated he or she is into the local networks. Milroy then provides some strong evidence in support of her arguments which clearly shows a strong correlation between the level of integration into the local networks and closeness to the vernacular norms.

After having thus given an insight into how close-knit networks might have a positive effect on language stability, Lesley Milroy, along with James Milroy, turned her attention also to the role played by networks in language change (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985). In fact, this follows quite naturally from Lesley Milroy’s original work on language stability; if this is supported by close-knit networks one would assume that language change is aided by more loosely knit networks. Building on evidence both from their own work in Belfast and from work carried out elsewhere, Milroy and Milroy (1985) claim that this is indeed the case. To be a little more precise, they hold that the loosening of networks enables linguistic changes to take place as thereby the norm-enforcing powers of the networks grow weaker and they become less resistant to external pressures.

This also leads to some differences between the approaches of Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985) on the one hand and Labov (2001) on the other. Thus Milroy and Milroy (1985) do not conform to Labov’s (1980, 2001) characterization of the leaders of linguistic change, saying that it is impossible for an individual to be a central member of a close-tie community at the same time as he or she has a large number of strong outside contacts since the strong ties in fact constitute the definition of the speaker’s in-group. Based largely on the work of Granovetter (1973) on how people looking for new jobs found information through their various contacts, i.e. their social network, Milroy and Milroy (1985) instead use their Belfast data to propose the idea that it is through a number of weak ties outside the local community that Labov’s leaders play such a crucial part in spreading linguistic changes. Milroy and Milroy also make a special point of the fact that here they are talking about the diffusion of change rather than its innovation. The people characterized by Labov (1980, 2001) are likely to be what Milroy and Milroy (1985) call early adopters, i.e. people who are amongst the first to adopt linguistic innovations which they pick up via their weak ties to the innovators, and then spread them through their social salience and weak ties to other groups. The group that Milroy and Milroy call innovators, are, on the other hand, people who are marginal to other groups and have many weak ties to them. They are

often seen as underconforming to the point of deviance, and through their fleeting encounters with others in a similar position to them in their social groups, they pick up innovations which soon spread along the edges of various networks and are then adopted by their central members who ensure their further diffusion through their position. It should be noted here that, as Croft (2000) points out, Milroy and Milroy's (1985) innovators are not the people who actually come up with the linguistic innovations, but rather give them their first social value. Therefore, Croft's suggested term "introducer" might be more appropriate. Note also that the process described above is of course dependent on there being a great number of weak ties within the community in question as such communities are more susceptible to outside influence than are communities whose members are bound together by strong ties.

The argumentation above leads Milroy and Milroy to propose a general principle of linguistic change (1985, p. 375 (Milroy and Milroy's capitals)):

LINGUISTIC CHANGE IS SLOW TO THE EXTENT THAT THE RELEVANT POPULATIONS ARE WELL ESTABLISHED AND BOUND BY STRONG TIES, WHEREAS IT IS RAPID TO THE EXTENT THAT WEAK TIES EXIST IN POPULATIONS.

This principle is then further supported with a number of examples, both from Belfast and elsewhere. Thus they e.g. point out that young women from the Catholic community of Clonard in Belfast seem to be in the forefront of the backing of /a/ despite being central members of a close-knit group. As it happens, the women in Milroy and Milroy's study were all employed in one way or another by a city-centre store which was located on the sectarian interface and served both Protestants and Catholics. This put the women in a position where they had frequent contact with people on the edge of their network who also provided them with weak links to other communities. This, according to the Milroy and Milroy, resulted in the women having more weak-tie encounters with back [a] users than strong-tie encounters with non-back [a] users, which in turn meant that the women were in an ideal position to adopt the innovation in question.

In some of their later work, Lesley and James Milroy (Milroy L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1992) have further developed their ideas on social networks and tried to combine this approach with the more traditional approach of using socioeconomic class in order to create an integrated sociolinguistic model, partly as a response to the calls of e.g. Rickford (1986) for the need of conflict models of social class. As Milroy and Milroy (1992) point out, the two approaches just mentioned have often been thought to be irreconcilable, but they nonetheless propose a model that integrates them both and depends on linking a consensus-based microlevel of network with a conflict-based macrolevel of social class. The need for a model of this kind stems, according to Milroy and Milroy, from the fact that it is very difficult in practical terms to carry out any principled

analysis of loose-knit networks. At the same time many people, especially in the urban middle and upper working classes, contract weak ties. This makes it necessary to take ties of this kind into account if we want a detailed description of sociolinguistic structures. Furthermore, Milroy and Milroy point out that class differences in small communities tend to emerge when the proportion of multiplex relationships declines. This in turn opens the way for a two-level sociolinguistic theory which links small-scale structures such as networks with larger scale and more abstract social structures, i.e. classes, which determine power relationships at an institutional level.

To create this link between network and class, Milroy and Milroy (1992) go via Granovetter's (1973) notion of weak ties to use Højrup's (1983) description of the different levels of society in terms of so called life-modes. This Milroy and Milroy (1992) do since, even though taking weak ties into account in analysing networks enables the delineation of some economic, political, and cultural groupings in society, much remains to be said about how the networks can be the source of the economic and political power that leads to conflict and inequality in society. In linguistic terms this means, as Milroy and Milroy (1992, p. 19) put it:

That powerful networks have the capacity to impose their linguistic and cultural norms on others, whereas powerless ones do not but can merely use the resources of the network to maintain and at best renew their own linguistic and cultural norms. Therefore, to supplement network analysis we need a social theory such as Højrup's which can explicitly link a network analysis of subgroups within society to an analysis of social structure at the political, institutional, and economic levels.

As for the life-modes that form the basis of Højrup's (1983) theory, there are three of them: Life-mode 1 is the life-mode of the self-employed who make little distinction between work and leisure activities. Here social relationships, such as family ties or cooperative relations among colleagues, bind the people together into a cohesive unit as everyone is involved in keeping the production rolling. As a result close-knit networks are likely to develop in this life-mode.

Life-mode 2 is that of what can be called ordinary wage earners, whose main purpose with work, if one is to believe Højrup, is to obtain an income which enables him or her to spend what free time there is in a meaningful way. Here both loose-knit and close-knit networks can develop; in many cases the wage-earner is mobile in that he is prepared to sell his labour to a "higher bidder" than the current employer and this in turn means that he cuts off his existing strong ties. In other cases, however, wages are low and the wage-earners are forced to demand enough to survive. This leads to a sense of solidarity amongst them, crystallized in e.g. labour unions and close-knit networks of working-class neighbourhoods.

Finally, in life-mode 3 one finds highly skilled wage-earners who hold professional or managerial positions. Here the boundaries between work and leisure become blurred as almost anything a person in this life-mode does is aimed at improving his or her career prospects. Along with this comes a social and geographical mobility which means that people here tend to form many loose ties, especially of a professional kind, even though they may at the same time have relatively close-tied networks at a more personal level.

This, then, Milroy and Milroy (1992) combine with the network analysis developed by social scientists, such as Bott (1971) and Granovetter (1973), to draw a picture of the macro- and microlevels of sociolinguistic structure where people from life-mode 1 and the relatively poor wage-earners from life-mode 2 form mainly strong ties which in turn lead to the maintenance of a non-legitimized linguistic code. People from life-mode 3 and relatively affluent wage-earners from life-mode 2, on the other hand, form mainly weak ties which are open to external influences, including the legitimized linguistic code associated with higher and more official levels of society which is thus likely to be dominant in these groups. Milroy and Milroy (1992) hope that using this integrated model (p. 23-24) “will further enable us to specify the conditions in which the linguistic norms of the groups are likely to be focused or diffuse, and the conditions in which they are open to, or resistant to, change”.

As we have seen, there are some differences in how Labov (2001) and Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) approach language change. Having said that, I do not think too much should be made of these differences. Admittedly, Milroy and Milroy seem to have developed their ideas somewhat further in that their focus is on networks as a whole and how changes flow through them rather than on finding the individuals primarily responsible for transmitting change, as seems to be the case with Labov (2001). Due to this, Milroy and Milroy’s (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) approach appears to be more generally applicable to various kinds of linguistic communities. Furthermore, I am not entirely convinced that Labov’s leaders really are leaders in the sense of being responsible for spreading change throughout the society. As was seen above, Labov (2001) bases this categorization on the leaders’ position in their networks and on the fact that they generally show the most advanced forms of the changes in question, which other speakers in their surroundings are assumed to imitate. However, the most advanced forms do not have to be the most desirable ones to imitate, despite the standing of their users in the local community, and might even be considered odd by deviating too sharply from the local standard. Also, although the so called leaders have a prominent position in their networks and interact frequently with many other people within them this does not necessarily mean that they are always seen in a positive light. As Labov points out, the leaders in his studies have a nonconforming background and current social mobility in common which can

probably lead to envy and disapproval in their communities just as well as admiration. The leaders might, in other words, be seen as a threat to the shared values of the community rather than their role-models. Thus it is not impossible that the remaining members of a given network advance rather gradually and, at the same time, spread their changes through imitating each other whilst trying to create a communal norm. Then, presumably through weak ties with members of other networks, the changes spread into the wider society.

Despite these qualms and my support for the approach proposed by Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992), there is more that unites the two approaches than divides them, as both Labov (2001) and Milroy and Milroy indicate. Thus they share the same basic standpoint of society being the basis for linguistic change, and it is quite possible that my criticism of Labov's (2001) ideas miss the target entirely, since the differences between them and those of Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) could well be simply the result of divergences likely to occur between the societies of Philadelphia and Belfast which are the primary sources of data for the two approaches. Both approaches could, in other words, be quite right in their respective contexts. This seems, somehow, quite sensible for even though most societies probably consist of some kind of networks, it is unlikely that their structure is exactly the same in any two societies. This in turn means that the "network-approach" of Labov (2001) and of Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) needs to be specially adapted to whatever society is being studied at any given time. At the same time this adaptation would probably further develop the general framework that Labov and Milroy and Milroy stand for.

2.2.3 Further sociolinguistic applications of social networks; some examples

Many have followed in Labov's (2001) and Milroy and Milroy's (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) footsteps and there are numerous studies which use their approach of using social networks or combining them with more traditional sociolinguistic categories such as age, gender and class in order to track the diffusion of change in a given linguistic community. One of the best known examples of this is Eckert's (1988) study of teenagers in high schools in the suburbs of Detroit. In these schools she identified two main types of networks, the members of which she labelled Jocks, on the one hand, and Burnouts, on the other. Jocks were highly engaged in the school community and were both ambitious in their studies, as they saw high school as a preparatory stage for college, and took part in a broad range of social and academic activities such as sports and school politics. Burnouts, on the other

hand, generally intended to stop studying after high school and carried out most of their social activities outside the school grounds.

When Eckert (1988) then started looking at the spread of the backing and lowering of (uh) amongst her subjects she saw a significant correlation between network affiliation and the progress of the change as Burnouts overwhelmingly led the way. This Eckert relates to Burnouts being outsiders to the school community who thereby “have both greater exposure to urban speech and greater motivation to adopt variants associated with urban speech than Jocks” (p. 202). Jocks’ contacts, on the other hand, are limited to peers from their own community and are thus not exposed to urban speech to the same degree. The differences in attitudes between the groups further add to their linguistic differences, as Burnouts largely resist adult norms, including linguistic standards, whereas Jocks embrace them.

Another interesting aspect of Eckert’s (1988) study is that there was only a loose correlation between her subjects’ network affiliations and their parents’ social class as, even though Jocks tended to come from middle-class families and Burnouts from working-class families, there were plenty of cross-overs. As Chambers (1995) points out, this provides some of the best evidence for social networks and social classes being independent social entities.

Other well-known examples include Lippi-Green’s (1989) study of linguistic behaviour in the small Austrian village Grossdorf which is in many ways similar to Eckert’s (1988) work. Here too linguistic change, in this case in the pronunciation of short /a/, is the main topic and again its progress appears to depend largely on the network structure of the society in question. In Grossdorf, Lippi-Green studied three different aspects of the local networks, namely the degree to which her subjects were related to the core families of the village; whether they were locally employed in traditional work environments or employed outside the village in non-traditional employment; and the level of the subjects’ participation in voluntary associations, i.e. how involved they were in the local social activities. There were some differences in the extent to which these different networks affected linguistic behaviour, but on the whole Lippi-Green concludes that (1989, p. 228) “[t]he higher the degree of integration into *all three networks*, the greater the conservatism; the poorer the integration, the higher the degree of innovation”. This is, of course, much the same conclusion as Eckert came to; those inhabitants of Grossdorf who are less integrated in the local networks are more likely to be exposed to and adopt external norms in the same way as Burnouts who are not as integrated into the networks of the school itself are more likely than Jocks to adopt norms originating outside the school.

To broaden the picture somewhat, it should be pointed out that this network-based approach has not only been used to study change in a single language but also to elucidate the patterns of language shift and maintenance. Thus Boyd (1994) uses social network analysis to explore the relationship between the networks and the language maintenance of various groups of

immigrants (English-speaking Americans, Finnish-speaking Finns, Turkish-speaking Turks and Vietnamese-speaking Vietnamese) in the Nordic countries. Three main questions were asked; first, based on the work of e.g. Bott (1971) and Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, L. 1980; Milroy & Milroy 1992), it was hypothesized that dense, multiplex and ethnically homogenous networks would preserve linguistic norms in the same way as they preserve other norms and values. The results confirmed that this was the case, as the ethnically homogenous networks identified did indeed correlate strongly with language maintenance. The second question concerned the effect of network size and multiplexity on language maintenance and here the results show no direct relation between the two. The third question dealt with whether or not there were any differences between the immigrants' networks, depending on whether they lived in urban or rural areas, and whether these differences had any effect on language maintenance. In this case only two groups could be studied, namely Finns living in urban Gothenburg, on the one hand, and rural Finnmark, on the other. The results show clear differences between the networks of these groups, which emerge e.g. in that the Finnmark Finns had denser networks than the Finns in Gothenburg, while the latter group had larger networks. This is in line with earlier work of similar kind and on this basis one would assume that the Finnmark Finns would be more prone to language maintenance than their counterparts in Gothenburg. The results, however, indicate the opposite and this Boyd (1994) explains with the aid of e.g. network ethnicity. The Finns in Gothenburg had more ethnically homogeneous families and kin networks than the Finnmark Finns, which should be an aid in language maintenance. Also, due to the rather high number of Finnish inhabitants in Gothenburg, the Finns there could relatively easily choose to socialize primarily with other Finns whereas Finns in the more sparsely populated Finnmark were often forced to interact primarily with the majority population if they wanted to have any connections to other people at all. However, Boyd argues that language shift is a tradition in Finnmark, and if that is the case the hypothesis about rural environments being more norm-preserving than urban ones still stands strong.

Boyd's work is also noteworthy in that while it prefers social networks to social classes as an analytical tool, due to difficulties in applying the latter in a unified way to the different groups of immigrants, it also points out some of the problems with using network analysis in studies of this kind. The biggest problem in this respect seemed to be how to operationalize concepts such as density and multiplexity as interview questions, since the different cultural groups tended to perceive the questions in different ways. Of course, this problem does not become as acute when a limited part of a single culture is analysed for its networks, as is the case in e.g. Lippi-Green's (1989) study, but as soon as one starts to analyse and compare two or more groups that are in relevant ways distinct from each other, one has to be aware of the fact that whatever differences in norms there may exist between them may also extend to

differences in how they understand questions about e.g. friendship and frequency of contact.

2.2.4 Further developments

We have now seen how the network-based approach of Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 1980, 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) and Labov (2001) has proved to be useful in explaining some aspects of language variation and/or change. However, while most seem to agree that social network analysis has in this way answered many of the questions left unanswered by the traditional approach of correlating linguistic variation with standard social factors such as age and gender, suggestions have been made that the picture is in no way complete and can in fact not be completed by looking at social networks alone. Rather, if a full account of the interaction between language and society is to be achieved, even more detailed analyses are required that include a closer examination of human interaction than the study of social networks can offer on its own and thereby also call for other aspects of society to be taken into consideration. This has not the least been pointed out by James Milroy (1993). Note, though, that suggestions of this kind are generally presented as a complement to social network analysis rather than a substitute for it.

Let us start this account by looking again at Croft's (2000) ideas, who, despite not working in a sociolinguistic framework and believing actuation of change to be functional, as was mentioned above, resembles Labov (2001) and Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J. 1992, 1993; Milroy, L. 1980, 2002a; Milroy & Milroy 1985, 1992) in that he believes transmission of change to be an effect of society. With this in mind, it is not surprising that Croft (2000) accepts most of Labov's and Milroy and Milroy's ideas as his starting point and rather focuses on adding a few aspects to them. Thus he e.g. suggests that individuals who are members of a strong-tie network have a stronger sense of social identity than individuals who primarily have weak ties to a number of networks. The latter may not feel that they belong to any group in particular which may result in them being more variable in their usage of language and often using, and thereby introducing, outside variants in networks of which they are only marginal members.

Croft (2000) also uses the idea of social identification to account for how the direction of change is determined. Here he points out that referring to power or prestige is not enough. Even though it may more often be the case that variants used by the more powerful parts of the community are propagated into the less powerful parts than vice versa, there are enough examples of covert prestige inverting this role of power to indicate that prestige itself does not determine the direction of changes. Croft claims that we should rather look for how individuals wish to identify with one social group over another, with the

result that they replicate the linguistic variant of that group. Here, there is room for variation in this preference as speakers often wish to identify with a more powerful group, especially, Croft argues, speakers with weak ties to a local network who are therefore in doubt about their social identity. At other times, however, speakers may want to identify with less powerful groups, especially those who are members of a strong-tie network where a vernacular is used.

Finally, Croft's (2000) ideas on how the transmission of change starts should be mentioned. Here he claims that since a listener must try to separate the social intentions of the speaker from each other and from his or her intention to be understood, the listener may come to reanalyze an innovation, which does not adhere to prior conventions of the community, as a social indicator. The result of this is that the innovation is no longer taken as an error, but as a social variant in the mind of the listener who may then move on to replicate the innovation in another context, intending his listeners to understand it as having a social value. If this happens, transmission has begun. Perhaps a little warning note should be added here; through his belief that linguistic intentions play a part in transmission, Croft appears to be perilously close to the functional ideas on the actuation of change that are most severely criticized by Lass (1980) and Labov (1994).

Some of Croft's (2000) ideas are indirectly reflected in a more systematic way in the work of Penelope Eckert, who is undoubtedly one of the leading proponents within sociolinguistics of this expanded approach to language change. She has further analysed her previously mentioned data from a high school in Detroit to create what she refers to (2000, p. xiii) as "a quantitative study of variation embedded in ethnography". This is to say that she not only looks at the statistically quantifiable correlation between her informants' gender, class and social network membership on the one hand and linguistic variation on the other, but also includes the informants' subjective experiences, accessed through ethnographic study, to get a more complete basis for explanation of variation and change. This approach, or framework, is based on identifying and studying so-called communities of practice within the linguistic community examined, but this is a concept Eckert borrows from Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Adhering to their interpretation she defines it as follows (2000, p. 35):

A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise. United by this common enterprise, people come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices – as a function of their joint engagement in activity. Simultaneously, social relations form around the activities and activities form around relationships. Particular kinds of knowledge, expertise, and forms of participation become part of individuals' identities and places in the community. It is not the assemblage or the purpose that defines the community of practice; rather, a community of practice is simultaneously defined by its

membership and the shared practice in which that membership engages.

Eckert then applies this concept to her earlier identified groupings of Jocks and Burnouts and shows how linguistic variation between them can be explained by not only looking at the social categories involved, but also at the relationship between speakers' participation in the social practices of the groups and their linguistic practices. In this way Eckert found that the leaders of innovation and change in this context were girls that can be called extreme Burnouts, i.e. girls whose entire style and way of life, including makeup, clothes, musical tastes, activities outside school, etc, stood in stark opposition to the conservative norms found in both their high school and the wider society. Using somewhat radical linguistic forms was simply part and parcel of being a member of this community of practice. The social practices found in the communities of practice amongst Jocks tended, on the other hand, to embrace more standard and conservative societal values, and this was reflected in their speech.

This approach may appear to be quite a dramatic break from the network-based procedure discussed above, but Eckert points out that it should not be regarded in such a way. Thus, she states that community of practice is (2000, p. 40) "inherent in Milroy and Milroy's adaptation ... of Højrup's life-mode analysis in the construction of a model that encompasses class and social network", and that she introduces the concept to linguistics not to replace existing constructs but rather (p. 40) "because it focuses on the day-to-day social membership and mobility of the individual, and on the co-construction of individual and community identity." Furthermore, she points out that the view of variation she presents through including communities of practice is not at all new. Rather, it has been evident since the very beginning of quantitative studies of variation. Labov's famous study of Martha's Vineyard, for example, shows clear signs of how informants' orientation to and engagement in the local community is linked to their linguistic behaviour. The problem, according to Eckert, is more that (p. 44)

the study of variation is implicitly a study of social practice, but is built on a theory of structure. Since structure and not practice has been the primary object of study, data on variation do not include robust accounts of practice. Thus when practice is frequently invoked as explanation ... the explanation is not based on an examination of practice in that community, but on general accounts of class-related or gender-related practice.

Eckert's aim, therefore, is to (p. 44) "incorporate a broader view of change into the account of variation, treating language as a process that is actually inseparable from social process." On the whole, therefore, Eckert's approach is not a break from the framework of Labov and Milroy and Milroy but rather a highly useful complement to it.

Recently, attempts have been made to combine the social networks approach and the subjective information provided by approaches such as communities of practice (Marshall, 2004; Dodsworth, 2005). In his study, Dodsworth (2005), claims that neither social networks nor communities of practice are sufficient on their own. In the case of communities of practice, he argues that this is due to the framework's rooting in subjective experiences which means that it (p. 226) "cannot claim the level of replicability that quantitative studies generally can, and they do not facilitate cross-community comparison." To this Dodsworth adds that qualitative studies tend to be based on inferred rather than directly observed information which is often interpreted in an unstructured way. He does not, however, point out the shortcomings of the social networks approach, but here it can be assumed that the fault is to be found in its neglect of subjective experiences. The solution to this Dodsworth sees in an approach which combines (p. 226) "the interpretive power of subjective perceptions with the replicability of quantitative data" and thus objectifies subjective information in order to make it quantitatively analysable in a similar fashion to social networks. To reach this target, Dodsworth presents what he calls attribute networking. The information about these networks is obtained through ethnographic interviews regarding the interviewees' local communities and their perceptions of the social processes and categories they have experienced. These are then encoded in such a way that the nodes (p. 227) "represent socially meaningful characteristics of people in the community, and a tie between two nodes indicates the perceived co-occurrence of the two characteristics that those nodes represent". Finally, individual networks are aggregated to obtain a model of the social structures in the community as perceived by the informants. The figures from this analysis can then be correlated with linguistic data to track patterns of variation and change.

Having thus described his general approach, Dodsworth proceeds to apply it to the town of Worthington in Ohio, displaying the links between two linguistic variables and the informants' attribute networks, i.e. their accumulated perception of the social structure of the community. The results show e.g. that there appears to be a connection between community involvement as reported, directly or indirectly by the informants, and the use of an older or a newer variant of the definite article "the" before vowel-initial words, in such a way that those informants who are involved in the community are less likely to use the newer variant than are those who show no community involvement. Similarly, the total results on linguistic variation split the population into two rough groups, where one seemingly wants to hold on to the traditions and closeness found in Worthington, whereas the other goes in the other direction even though it may be aware of the local characteristics.

These results obviously indicate that the attribute network proposed by Dodsworth may be a useful tool. Nonetheless, while I would certainly not dismiss his findings, it seems doubtful that the same conclusions could not have

been reached with the tools that are already at hand, and here I am of course mainly thinking of social networks and communities of practice. Furthermore, in discussing the two main groups of speakers mentioned above, Dodsworth points out that there is some variation within them in terms of both the use of linguistic variables and in ideology and concludes – by referring to Eckert – that (p. 250) “the use of the linguistic variables differs across individuals as they construct their own styles”. The same conclusion does, in other words, seem to be reachable whether or not subjective experiences are objectified. Thus it seems that the notion of attribute networks needs to be further developed before it sheds any new light on language change and variation.

Marshall’s (2004) approach is in many ways similar to that of Dodsworth (2005). The main difference appears to lie in what Marshall sees as the source of the need to improve the existing frameworks. Thus while Dodsworth does not single out the flaws of social networks, Marshall claims that they are only of limited use in accounting for linguistic variation. This he bases on a study he conducted on the waning Scots dialect used in Huntley, a rural village in northern Scotland. There he found little correlation between the informants’ social network scores and their language use, whereas a so-called mental urbanization index, a tool developed by Marshall to systematize the subjective orientations of his informants – just as Dodsworth’s attribute networking –, appears to account for much of the linguistic variation in Huntley, as there emerged a strong correlation between the informants’ level of loyalty to the local culture and their use of the local dialect.

On the basis of these findings and his argument that a sufficient approach to dialect maintenance would have to consider all potential factors involved in language change, Marshall develops his ideas further and presents what he calls a (2004, p. 233) “composite dialect maintenance index” which includes the attitudinal elements of his mental urbanization index, as well as the more traditional aspects of social networks, age, gender, location and class, at the same time as it leaves the door open for other possibly relevant factors.

My view of Marshall’s approach is essentially the same as my view of Dodsworth’s (2005). While his results cannot be doubted, the extent to which they are the offspring of systematizing and quantifying subjective information is unclear; would not – again – the more qualitative approach of e.g. Eckert (2000) have provided the same results, possibly even more nuanced? One possible benefit of Marshall’s (2004) approach is that it allows for a relatively quick gathering of data as the mental urbanization index is based on yes/no answers to ten questions about the informants’ orientation towards urban/rural culture. The drawback of this should be fairly obvious, however, as these set questions can hardly provide researchers with the same range and depth in information as does a more qualitative approach. On the whole, therefore, I am not entirely convinced that Dodsworth’s (2005) and Marshall’s (2004) quantitative

approaches to data that is essentially qualitative are as useful as their originators claim them to be.

Even though the subjective experiences incorporated in the communities of practice discussed above certainly add a valuable aspect to studies of language change, they are not the only social factor which has tended to be neglected. Thus Britain (1997, 2002) points out that space has by and large been left unexamined by the sociolinguistic camp although it is of direct relevance to key concepts such as social networks and communities of practice. To establish this connection, Britain draws some parallels between Milroy and Milroy's (Milroy, J., 1992; Milroy, L., 1980; Milroy & Milroy, 1985) ideas about social networks and Giddens' (1984) sociological theory on the role of routinization in the perpetuation of social structure. According to Giddens, humans reproduce routinized daily activities by their very performance which means that routines tend to lead to system preservation and norm-enforcement, much in the same way as social networks do. However, Britain argues, our routines are, just as social networks, spatially constrained in physical, social and perceptual terms and by investigating these spatial effects we can get a clear view of how they affect the (2002, p. 653) "construction, maintenance, and change of speech communities of practice". Britain then goes on to display how a cluster of dialect boundaries has emerged in the Fens in Eastern England partly due to various spatial features, such as distance between the various settlements in the area and relatively poor infrastructural connections between the two main towns which are separated by a number of rivers and drainage channels that are sparsely bridged. This division is then further accentuated by the public transport system in the area. In Britain's view, these spatial factors combine with more purely social ones and can, through their recreation by routinization by locals, account for the dialect boundaries.

Similar claims regarding the importance of geographical aspects can be found in the work of Horvath and Horvath (2001). Here they try to establish how concepts, such as space and place, from contemporary geography can account for the spread of vocalized /l/ in a number of Australian and New Zealand cities. With place effects Horvath and Horvath refer to (2001, p. 53) "the ensemble of sociolinguistic conditions within a speech locality ... [P]lace [thus] addresses the effects of linguistic and social conditioning within particular speech localities". Space effects, however (p. 53), "refer to the relationship between speech localities ... [and] [s]pace focuses attention on distance proximity, or location". These features are then used to explain the major isogloss that emerges between Australia and New Zealand in their results, which they see as a place effect created by the distinctive national identity of New Zealanders, which in turn is largely focused on language differences. Another interesting aspect of Horvath and Horvath's work is that it is a multilocality study that aims at tracking the spread of a linguistic variable in a number of locations, rather than displaying its patterns of variance in a single

location. This alone underlines the potential importance of including spatial considerations in the analysis of data.

As Britain (2002) hints at, indirectly including the concept of space in studies of language variation and change also forms a bridge to work dealing with dialect and language contact, which in turn offers some additions to the social aspects that may be required for a full understanding of change and maintenance. Among these aspects are of course contact itself and the level it reaches, both between speakers of different dialects and of different languages, but as Trudgill (1989, 1992, 1996, 2002) has pointed out, this combines with the strength of the local social networks involved to govern the rate of change. Thus, while high-contact, relatively loosely knit language communities can generally be said to be open to change due both to pressure from outside contacts and the lack of norm-enforcement, the opposite equally generally holds for close-knit communities which do provide norm-enforcement. At the same time, communities of this kind are typically insular rather than central and thus subject to a relatively low level of contact from outside. However, Trudgill makes special mention of the fact that even though comparatively isolated language communities are less prone to linguistic change than are those that are more central, this does not mean that no changes at all can occur in the former. What changes there are, however, tend not to be the result of external pressures through contact but are rather internal innovations which are, so to speak, allowed by the lack of external influences. In simpler terms; as there is little external threat, there is room for internal playfulness. Trudgill's claims on this matter gain strong support from Schilling-Estes' (2000, 2002) work on two relatively isolated language communities in U.S.A. which showed a relatively high level of linguistic innovation despite the lack of external pressures.

Above, we saw how using the concept of space in sociolinguistics calls for an examination of contact for a fuller view of language change and maintenance. Lesley Milroy (2002b) takes this a step further by pointing out that contact in turn calls for attitudinal and ideological factors, similar to those previously discussed, to be taken into consideration in the study of change. As was seen, e.g. in the discussion of Marshall's (2004) mental urbanization index above, speakers align themselves to different degrees to their local dialect according to their general orientation to their home community. Other aspects that are directly linked to this contact framework are e.g. migration and mobility, both of which can have a direct effect on social networks and the socialized routines discussed by Giddens (1984). However, the largest overall impact of contact studies may, as Milroy (2002b) suggests, be that contact places dialects or languages in a broader context of interaction with other dialects and languages instead of viewing each dialect or language as an almost autonomous entity without any external links, as is often the case in standard sociolinguistic descriptions of speech communities.

If we now try to briefly sum up the views of language change discussed above, it certainly seems that sociolinguistics has given itself a daunting task in its quest for a full explanation of language change and the transmission of it. Thus, we can seemingly no longer be satisfied with only analysing language variation in terms of its correlation with the standard categories of age, gender and class, and, while it is certainly a powerful broadening of the approach, just adding social network analysis is not enough either. Rather, we need to combine these quantitatively based frameworks with more qualitative studies which pay attention not only to our informants' general social behaviour; their attitudes and ideologies, but also take into consideration spatial effects as well as aspects of contact and mobility. Furthermore, we might even have to try to systematize the subjective part of our data to be able to grasp the full extent of change.

There may appear to be little hope in attempting to establish a single framework which incorporates all these social aspects – and all other aspects that have not been included but may well turn out to be relevant. Indeed it is tempting simply to say that any given society at any given time is too complex a structure to be fully understood, and this would include the linguistic patterns it exhibits. The ever-changing nature of society – and language – adds further weight to this. Even if we may hypothetically reach a point where we fully understand the workings of a given society, it is likely to change shortly after that point thereby calling for further work and further adaptation of the frameworks used. This, however, should not be used as an excuse for not trying to reach this target, just as the seeming impossibility of finding the point of actuation should not stop us from trying (Milroy, 1993). The least we can do is to consider carefully, for every single study carried out, which aspects are really relevant. It is of course conceivable that aspects such as space and contact have little relevance in certain communities. We might even purposefully exclude them, but this does not mean that we can take for granted beforehand that any social aspect is not important if we want to understand the interplay between language and society.

2.3 Stability

In the discussion above, it is interesting to note that a certain aspect pertaining to language variation and change stands out by being by and large absent. Here I am referring to the opposite of language change, i.e. language stability.³

³ Note that in using the term “language stability” I am purposefully making a distinction between it and the term “language maintenance”. The latter has mainly been used in connection with the maintenance/shift dichotomy to describe how a given language is maintained by its speakers in the face of external pressures exerted by speakers of another language. This can be seen as an instance of language stability but as that term (i.e. “language stability”) is used here, it also encompasses the level of stability found in a language in

Admittedly, some of the frameworks mentioned in the last section have stability as their explicit starting point. Thus Marshall (2004) appears to view his composite dialect maintenance index essentially as a framework for explaining the stability potential of dialects. Similarly, Milroy's (Milroy, 1980) study of Belfast, which forms the basis of Milroy and Milroy's social network approach, was in the first instance aimed at identifying the social conditions which support the stability of the local vernacular. Milroy and Milroy (1985) also apply their technique to a somewhat wider context when they briefly explore the differences in the development of English and Icelandic. As is well-known, English has changed frequently and quite radically throughout the centuries, whereas Icelandic has remained largely unchanged since the thirteenth century. This Milroy and Milroy relate to the fact that the strong-tie networks that have existed in England have frequently been disrupted and replaced by weak-tie networks through e.g. invasions and the rise in the importance and population of London, whereas Iceland remained a stable rural society, more or less based on the strong ties of well-established kin and friendship networks. Furthermore, the strong ties in Iceland were, according to Milroy and Milroy, maintained over long distances which prevented the emergence of divergent dialects. A few more examples of direct discussions of stability can be found. Thus, within his discussion on the effects of contact, Trudgill (1989, 1992, 1996, 2002) frequently mentions the relative stability of Icelandic and Faroese as examples of the results of geographical isolation and a low level of contact. Similarly, Schilling-Estes' (2000, 2002) work mentioned above is in essence a study of language stability, even though her points of examination are non-contact induced innovations in isolated communities. Finally, to include an example not directly belonging to the frameworks above, Dixon (1997) seems to align himself with Trudgill (1989, 1992, 1996, 2002) in claiming that a language that has no immediate neighbours is likely to be relatively stable. Here again, Icelandic is taken as an example but according to Dixon the strong literary tradition in Iceland has also been crucial in preserving the language. Other factors that generally need to be taken into consideration are speakers' attitudes and what official language policy there may be in a given linguistic community.

Apart from these examples, stability tends not to be discussed specifically. Even in those studies which are explicitly stability-oriented, the focus tends to shift rather quickly towards change and tracking it in relation to various social aspects. This is quite understandable in many ways. Change is by nature more dynamic than stability and it is easy to see how observing features in motion is generally more interesting than observing static features. Also, it is a basic sociolinguistic assumption that all languages change and then it follows naturally that one of the key occupations of the field is to document the patterns

relation to social conditions that support or unsettle it in its own "home" linguistic community without necessary reference to language contact.

that emerge in these changes. At the same time, however, this last point strongly suggests that stability is interesting in itself. If change is natural or ever-present in language, stability is by implication unnatural or exceptional and such features are interesting, not only in themselves, but also because by studying them we may be further enlightened about the natural state, which in this case is change. Having said that, it should be underlined that language stability is rarely taken to mean total stability, i.e. no change at all over an unlimited period of time. Even in highly stable languages some change occurs, albeit more slowly than in most others. Thus, rather than viewing stability and change as binary oppositions, they should probably be regarded as the opposite ends of a scale. It nonetheless seems clear that the stability end of this scale has been much less examined than the other end, and it is on the basis of this assumption that the primary focus of this thesis now turns to stability. Hitherto, we have seen how change and a number of social aspects interact, and in a similar fashion the following sections will examine how social aspects – some of which have already been discussed in connection with change – and stability are interrelated. We shall see a number of questions emerge during this discussion, one of the most interesting of which can be said to relate to the opposite of Schilling-Estes' (2000, 2002) finding that isolated close-knit communities show some level of linguistic innovation: can a language community remain stable in linguistic terms even though at least large parts of its social surroundings change radically in a way that would lead linguists to predict language change? If the answer to this question is positive, it follows that an explanation must be sought.

As can be seen in the discussion above of how stability has been approached, Iceland is frequently taken as an example of a highly stable language community. This seems, in turn, to be a natural reflection of the general view that, since the 9th century, when the island was first settled, Icelandic has undergone only minor changes, at least when compared to most other languages. On a more anecdotal note this view has been confirmed to me – a native speaker of Icelandic – in academic as well as more general circles outside Iceland. My informal conference discussions, for example, have a strange way of revolving around the non-changing nature of Icelandic, without my intending them to do so, and foreign friends and acquaintances tend to spend a considerable part of our dinner conversations talking about how fascinated they are by – and even envious of – the stability of Icelandic. This view is in turn largely mirrored amongst the general public in Iceland, where it seems to be taken for granted that Icelandic is a stable language although, as we will come to later, threats loom here and there. When it is added that this common view is by and large a reflection of the real state of things – Icelandic certainly has a long tradition of relative linguistic stability – it seems clear that this language and the linguistic community it is spoken in can be seen as an ideal case in point when discussing language stability.

2.4 The question of the stability of Icelandic

As shown above, Milroy and Milroy (Milroy, J., 1992, 1993; Milroy, L., 1980, 2002a; Milroy & Milroy, 1985, 1992) are the main proponents of the social network approach and their main ideas relating to change and stability have already been discussed. However, since they mention Iceland as a prime example of a stable language, the stability of which they regard primarily as the result of centuries of strong and stable social networks in the Icelandic community (1985), a closer look at these claims is a natural starting point here.

It should be mentioned directly that, at least as far as the period between the first settlement and the middle of the 19th century is concerned, I generally agree with Milroy and Milroy's (1985) analysis of how stable, close-knit social networks have contributed to the stability of the Icelandic language. However, it seems to me that their conclusion is founded on less than safe grounds. This is due to the fact that the evidence they base it on is drawn from the Icelandic Sagas which were written primarily in the 12th and 13th centuries. To use this material as evidence for the development of Icelandic, from the beginning of the settlement in Iceland at the end of the 9th century until the time of writing of the Sagas, is probably quite justifiable, even though there is an ongoing debate in Iceland – in academic circles as well as among the general public – about the reliability of the Sagas as a historical source. However, there is a gap of about 700 years between the writing of the last Sagas and the present, and attributing the stability of Icelandic during all of this period to the societal patterns described in the Sagas is in all probability a little too simplistic. As is pointed out by Trudgill (1989, 1992, 1996, 2002), Iceland may have been largely isolated from the rest of the world for long stretches within this period, which means that external influences probably did not play any major part in either disturbing or maintaining the societal structure. Nonetheless, the society by no means stood still all this time, and even the extremely short summary, provided by Durrenberger (1995), of the centuries following Iceland being taken over by Norway in 1264, points out a few events which are likely to have at least upset whatever established networks there may have been: “The weather got colder, the agriculture got worse, there were plagues and volcanic eruptions, and the Danes had taken over both Norway and Iceland” (p. 9).

Milroy and Milroy's (1985) approach is probably also too simplistic as regards the language itself, as it indirectly indicates that hardly any linguistic changes occurred at all. Admittedly, it does not seem to be their purpose to provide the finer details but rather only a very rough overview. Nonetheless it is important to remember that the stability of the Icelandic language is relative but not absolute. There have certainly been some changes, especially in terms of phonology and vocabulary, which seem to be relatable to societal factors which function in unison with social networks. Thus Sandøy (2003) points to a number of phonological developments which took place more or less simultaneously in

Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Norway between the 12th and the 14th century – in other words, partly in the Saga period – and argues that they can be largely explained by looking at the contacts there were between these areas at this time, but Sandøy claims them to have been stronger than many believe. For Iceland's part, he singles out the country's commercial contacts with Norway. Until 1400 an annual average of ten Norwegian ships visited the country carrying approximately 400-500 people. Many of the Norwegian merchants returned year after year and tended to spend a considerable amount of time in Iceland. Some of them also lived with Icelandic families and a few even settled in Iceland and got married there. There are also accounts of Icelandic chieftains, including dozens of Norwegians in the groups that rode with them to Alþingi, the old Icelandic national assembly. As for Icelanders, it was common for them to travel with the merchant ships back to Norway, where they often spent a whole winter before returning to Iceland. Many also used Norway as a springboard for further travels in Europe. To this account it can be added that Árnason (1979) mentions that some of the most significant changes in the phonological system of Icelandic took place in the 13th century, on the one hand, and the 16th, on the other, but both centuries were quite turbulent in an historical perspective. Árnason does not, however, explore this link any further.

To return more directly to social networks, some of the points made by Durrenberger (1995) in the quote above should perhaps be elaborated on a little. Thus it can be mentioned that a volcanic eruption in Öräfajökull, in southern Iceland, in 1362 meant that the neighbouring areas were completely uninhabitable for decades afterwards. In 1783-1784 the so-called Skaftáreldar, a volcanic eruption, also in the southern part of the country, left behind it the largest amount of lava ever recorded in any volcanic eruption in the world. The lava field, which covered 580 km², destroyed large farming areas and caused great parts of southern Iceland to be more or less deserted. Furthermore, ashes and poisonous gases spread all over the country, killing 40% of the cattle in the country, 48% of the horses and 75% of the sheep, and this inevitably led to famine. A year later, in 1785, the situation further deteriorated when smallpox broke out. The result of all this was that in 1787 Iceland had 38,500 inhabitants after having had 48,800 prior to the eruption of Skaftáreldar. With this in mind, it is probably not surprising that the disasters came close to resulting in Iceland being deserted for good, as serious suggestions were put forward about moving the entire Icelandic nation, which by this time was under the Danish crown, to Jutland in Denmark (Júlíusson, Ísberg & Kjartansson, 1989). There were also a number of eruptions in the era described in the Sagas, some of which caused severe damage and forced people to move from their farms.

To this we can add that Iceland suffered much the same plagues as did the rest of Europe. This includes the Black Death which caused havoc in the beginning of the 15th century and an outbreak of smallpox which killed round about 12,500 people, or 25% of the population, in 1707-1709. From all this, it

should be clear that there have indeed been plenty of events which could easily have affected social networks in Iceland. Nonetheless, I believe that the general conclusion that Milroy and Milroy (1985) come to is correct, and what has been said above is not intended to be an argument against it; I merely want to point out that their reasoning should have been built on more evidence than the Sagas alone.

Having said this, the question of course remains why Milroy and Milroy (1985) are probably right in claiming that the stability of close-knit networks was a key factor in maintaining the stability of the Icelandic language through several centuries. Unfortunately, with the exception of Milroy and Milroy – who do not closely analyse the networks they refer to – and a recent study of the networks of Icelandic members of the Danish administration in Iceland in the 19th century (Hreinsson, 2003), no work appears to exist on social networks in Iceland, whether it be in a contemporary or historical context.⁴ Hence, what follows consists mostly of my own speculations and interpretations of a series of historical events. Space limitations also prevent me from giving any detailed account, but if one rushes through Icelandic history from the days of the first settlement until at least 1850-1900 and tries to infer how the society was structured in terms of networks, it seems likely that the general pattern remained much the same throughout this period, despite dramatic events of the kind discussed above. Thus, even though the Norwegian take-over in 1264 officially meant the end of the old chieftaincy system – on which Milroy and Milroy (1985) base their conclusions – and the loss of much of the political power of the chieftains, they remained in most cases the most prosperous farmers in their respective home regions and had most of the other farmers in the vicinity tied to them, either through kinship or socio-economic connections. Also, even though Alþingi now lost most of its legislative powers and was to function principally as a court of law until 1874 (Þorsteinsson & Jónsson, 1991), when, in the midst of Iceland's struggle for independence from Denmark, it regained its legislative role for matters specifically pertaining to Iceland, it still served as an important meeting point for what can be called the Icelandic elite. The same can be said about the smaller local “þing” or assemblies which, with some simplification, can be said to have functioned as preparatory assemblies for Alþingi, much as they did prior to the Norwegian take-over. This pattern took on various forms through the centuries, but its basic structure nonetheless remained the same. This will in turn have allowed for the maintenance of strong social ties over long distances – at least as far as the more prosperous spheres of the Icelandic society were concerned – which Milroy and Milroy see as one crucial aspect of the stability of the social networks, and thereby the language, through their imposition of linguistic, as well as other, norms.

⁴ Personal communication with Þórólfur Þórlindsson, Professor of Sociology, University of Iceland, 2002-01-14.

Another important aspect is the immobility, in social as well as geographical terms, of the rest of the population. As was mentioned above, most Icelandic farmers and their families were tied to a local leader through kinship or economic dependency. These ties were not a one-way street, however, as, of course, the political and economic situation of the leaders depended largely on the support and incomes they could get from their landholdings. The farmers, in turn, often employed workers who generally had few legal rights and often had little freedom of movement. All in all, though, as Milroy and Milroy (1985) point out, networks of this kind imposed a pattern of exchange and obligation between the different layers of society. One of the results of this informal social structure is likely to have been the imposition of linguistic norms which outweighed the disturbing factors of distance and terrain. As for the geographical side of the coin, Iceland was – and still is, to some extent – by no means an easy country to travel in. Without any roads, cars, airplanes and other modern commodities people are not likely to have travelled without having had a good reason to do so, as Iceland is both mountainous and has numerous fast-flowing rivers which will not have been crossed without taking certain risks. Furthermore, ships and boats appear not to have been used to any extent as a means of communications between different parts of the country, despite their importance in terms of commercial and political contacts with other countries. This general immobility should have had a stabilizing effect on the network structure in Iceland and caused the establishment of close-knit networks, rather than loose-knit ones, as people were more or less bound to communicate primarily with their family and the neighbouring kin and farmers. That these isolating factors did not lead to the establishment of different linguistic norms and thereby a splitting up into several different dialects can, on the other hand, and if Milroy and Milroy are correct, probably be explained by what was said above about the fairly frequent contacts between people in the higher societal ranks who in turn had relatively direct and informal contacts to their local communities.

Despite all this I am not entirely convinced that the strength of long-distance ties was as crucial in linguistic maintenance in Iceland as Milroy and Milroy (1985) suggest. This is simply because I find it doubtful that they could have been as strong as suggested by Milroy and Milroy, at least if one keeps in mind Granovetter's (1973) definition of the strength of ties on which Milroy and Milroy (1985) seem to base their thoughts. There may well have been a sufficiently high level of emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocal services included in the long-distance ties to make them fairly strong, but I doubt that the amount of time characterizing them, or at least the frequency of contacts between the people involved, will have been enough to make them as potent as they would have needed to be to make a telling contribution to linguistic stability. For example, Alþingi was held only once a year until 1800, as were most of the local assemblies, and, as mentioned above, the geographical

conditions in Iceland discouraged any unnecessary travelling. For these reasons – while I agree with Milroy and Milroy that the stability of the Icelandic networks was the foundation of the linguistic stability – I believe that the discussion of the reasons behind this social stability needs to be more nuanced.

One way of reaching this target may be to take a larger-scale look at Icelandic society in previous centuries in much the same way as Højrup (1983) analyses modern societies (see section 2.2.2. above). The living conditions in Iceland were more or less the same all over the country and the national economy was based almost solely on farming and some fishing in coastal areas. This seems to have led to the same way of living in all parts of the country, with the reciprocity networks described above quickly emerging. Through this reciprocity, most members of society – local leaders and petty farmers alike – were equally involved in the same battle for keeping their production going and little distinction is therefore likely to have been made between work and leisure. Thus, almost every member of the society is likely to have been involved in a lifestyle corresponding to life-mode 1 in Højrup's terminology, as, even if local leaders and farmers differed in terms of status and wealth, they essentially belonged to the same unit which was based on the farms in their home area. Then, as the basic living conditions were not to change for centuries this societal structure is likely to have continuously renewed itself (cf. Britain, 1997, 2002; Giddens, 1984), not the least as there was no strong institutional power which meddled with it in any direct way. Through these similarities in living conditions throughout the country, there rather seems to have emerged a balance between the different areas which included the creation of the same sets of values and norms and thereby also linguistic norms. Here again the absence of any strong central authority will have played an important part, as the society as a whole was built on mutual dependencies which will have diminished the effect of whatever potentially conflict-creating factors there may have been. As for the political institutions there nonetheless were, assemblies and similar meetings between the local leaders are likely to simply have helped in maintaining the societal balance, rather than creating strong ties between the élite, as the leaders will probably have exchanged information about the situation in their respective areas and are likely to have sought a certain balance in the power structures amongst themselves.

To end this discussion by also taking a closer look at the disasters I mentioned above as having had the potential to disrupt the social networks in Iceland, it seems that they may not have caused so much damage in this respect. Thus, when people had to flee from their farms because of volcanic eruptions they are not likely to have ventured any further than necessary and probably used their already existing network, rather than breaking it up, by seeking help amongst people they knew who lived immediately outside the area directly affected by the eruption in question. Also, plagues tended to hit some areas harder than others and in some places the existing networks are likely to have

been more or less wiped out in their entirety rather than just being disrupted. Those who survived the plagues and decided to move away from particularly affected areas are likely to have gone about this in much the same way as when volcanic eruptions occurred. A third possibility was of course to move abroad in times of hardship, which was quite common in the 15th century when many moved to England following the Black Death (Júliusson, Ísberg & Kjartansson, 1989). This, however, is more likely to have resulted in a few empty nodes in the networks the emigrants left behind rather than in them dissolving completely. All in all, therefore, events like the ones discussed here are not likely to have changed the general pattern of social networks in Iceland, despite causing some turmoil. Having said that, it should be emphasized once again, however, that this is an extremely simplified picture and my speculations, unfortunately, cannot be based on any scientific research into the social networks that may have existed in Iceland.

I have mentioned a few times above that I believe Milroy and Milroy's (1985) account of social networks to be applicable to the linguistic stability in Iceland until the middle of the 19th century. However, if the period until ca. 1850 is likely to have been characterized by general stability of the social networks in Iceland, a quick glance at the country's history since then reveals that during this time the opposite pattern is the most probable one. Most Icelanders will probably regard the start of the struggle for independence from Denmark in the 1850s as the most significant event of the time. What is probably more important, however, in terms of the country's network structure is that at about the same time fishing became an increasingly important part of the national economy at the expense of farming. Consequently, more and more people left the countryside in the following decades to move to the small fishing villages that were scattered along the coastline. Thus Akureyri, in the northern part of country, grew from about 250 inhabitants in 1870 to ca. 1,700 in 1920, and the development was much the same in Ísafjörður, in the Western Fjords, which reached 2,000 inhabitants in the same period. However, it was Reykjavík which particularly benefited from this urbanization, as it quickly became the most important town for the Icelandic fishing industry. At the same time, nearly all the political and official institutions that Iceland slowly took charge of from Denmark had their headquarters there. This meant that the population of Reykjavík grew from 2,000 inhabitants, or 3% of the entire Icelandic population, in 1870 to 17,700, or 20% of the entire population, in 1920 (Júliusson, Ísberg & Kjartansson, 1992).

This development can be said to have continued until the present day, with one important adjustment. In the past two decades or so the fishing industry's importance has diminished somewhat at the expense of other industries, tourism and information technology. As most of the companies in these relatively new branches are located in the greater Reykjavík area, the capital continues to increase its population while the villages around the country,

almost all of which are dependent on the fishing industry, grow smaller or barely manage to hold their own. Thus the greater Reykjavík area presently has about 196,000 inhabitants out of a total population of 312,000, while e.g. the fishing village of Patreksfjörður, in the Western Fjords, has been reduced from about 1,000 inhabitants in the late 1960s to about 650 today. Even Akureyri, which is the largest town outside the greater Reykjavík area, and is not as dependent on the fishing industry as are most other towns and villages, can only boast growing from about 15,000 inhabitants to about 17,000 in the last decade.

To this it should be added that Iceland has, from around 1850, evolved from being a largely medieval society to becoming a highly modernized nation, a development which is especially due to the aftermath of the British and American occupation during the Second World War which opened up the country to external influences to a far greater extent than had previously been the case. In combination with the short overview of Iceland's recent history, this should make it clear that social network structures in Iceland must have undergone some radical changes. Thus, not only have the reciprocal networks characteristic of the farming society more or less vanished, but the personal and family networks are likely to have changed as well. Now each household usually consists of only the core family, i.e. parents and their children, instead of children, their parents and grandparents as well as farm labourers. To some extent, Iceland is also likely still to be undergoing changes in its networks, due to the above mentioned growth of Reykjavík and the decrease in importance of the fishing industry.

Despite this urbanization pattern, the probable resulting changes in social networks and the external pressures that follow from the relatively sudden immersion of Iceland in the wider world in the form of e.g. mass tourism, information technology and a wealth of Anglo-American cultural influences (television, film, music), the Icelandic language appears to have held its own and remained relatively stable from ca. 1850 until at least the last decade or so. In this period the language thus contradicts the predictions made in the social network approach, and while this does not necessarily imply that it should be discarded completely as an explanatory tool for this maintained stability of modern Icelandic, it ought at least to be complemented with other factors.

Some of these other possible factors were mentioned by Helgi Guðmundsson (1977) in a short article published around 30 years ago. Here he presents 25 points in what he refers to as the external conditions of the development of Icelandic and clearly regards them as possible explanations for the linguistic stability in Iceland. All these points are in essence sociolinguistic and should be elaborated on to clarify the picture of sociolinguistic conditions in Iceland at various times, thereby hopefully making a useful contribution to the study of language stability in general. This holds especially as Guðmundsson himself does in fact little else than mention them with little or no further examination of just how they contributed to stability. An interesting aspect in

this respect is the sheer number of points Guðmundsson presents along with the claim that they are likely to interact in various ways to produce stability. This indicates that, in much the same way as change, stability needs to be studied with a combination of various approaches if the complete picture is to be captured. Having said that, it should be noted that most of Guðmundsson's points primarily refer to the time before the middle of the 19th century and are thus mainly valuable in a historical perspective as possible compliments to Milroy and Milroy's (1985) network based conclusions, without having too much bearing on the present situation. For our present purposes, however, the last three points mentioned by Guðmundsson may well be crucial factors in maintaining stability in modern languages, including Icelandic, even though Guðmundsson mainly discusses them in a historical light. These points are language policy, attitudes to language and purism. We turn to a closer look at these and other related factors in the next chapter.

2.5 Summary

This chapter has discussed the nature of language change and stability in general and specifically in Iceland. It started with a discussion on the actuation of change and how this has been approached by various frameworks. Here it was established that while the very point of actuation may not be a reachable goal, researchers should nonetheless try to come as close to it as possible in their search for a full understanding of change. At the same time a basic assumption of this thesis was presented, namely that actuation should be regarded as a social action which is carried out by speakers rather than by language systems. This line of thought is then maintained in a discussion on the further transmission of change or linguistic innovations. In this process, social networks are presented as a key element and an important addition to the traditional social categories of age, gender and class, as there is strong evidence that networks that are primarily based on weak and unstable ties are susceptible to change while close-knit networks with strong ties are norm-enforcing and thereby normally sustain linguistic stability. Despite this, there are still unanswered questions about change processes and therefore the discussion also includes an overview of some further developments of social networks theory in relation to language change, and of other frameworks which have been set up in attempts to complete the picture. These frameworks emphasize the role of e.g. communities of practice, geographical aspects and language contact in the workings of language change.

In the chapter it is also pointed out that even though some of the frameworks dealing with language change are claimed to be structured so as to deal primarily with language stability this aspect is rarely treated in practice. Rather, change is the sole focus of most studies within this field. Here it is suggested that this has led to a neglect of stability and that this should be

rectified if a full explanation of language change is to be reached. On this basis, the main focus of the thesis turned to stability and the social aspects which may be interrelated with it. For this purpose, Icelandic is singled out as a case in point, as in the little work that discusses stability in its own right, Iceland is generally taken as an example of a highly stable language community.

Having thus established the stability perspective of the thesis, a closer look is taken at how the social networks framework, which is one of the few to have made an attempt of the kind, approaches stability on the basis of the Icelandic example. It is found that the tight and stable social networks that previously existed in Iceland are likely to have significant explanatory value as regards the stability of the Icelandic language until ca. 1850. After that time, large-scale societal changes in Iceland are likely to have unsettled existing social networks, but at the same time the language has remained relatively stable, at least until the last decade or so, thereby contradicting the predictions made by the social networks framework. This in turn calls for other factors to be studied as complements to social networks. These aspects will be dealt with in the next chapter.

3. Stability: a broader approach

The previous chapter established that regardless of whether we are studying language change or stability, we need a broad social outlook to be able to approach a full explanation. Thus we have seen that only looking at the traditional sociolinguistic categories of e.g. age, gender and class and correlating them with linguistic variation only brings us some way along the road without reaching the final destination. If we attend more specifically to language stability, the first thing to notice is of course that this field primarily suffers from a general lack of investigation. Furthermore, the main framework, i.e. social networks, that has been used on the few occasions stability has been studied in particular seems not to be sufficient in all cases, as shown by the discussion above about the stability of Icelandic despite radical changes in the country's social networks during the past 150 years or so.

This narrow angle from which stability has been studied – on the few occasions that it has specifically been examined at all – calls for a broadening of our perspective. Accordingly, the next three sections aim at doing so by discussing a few factors on a macro level which are potentially crucial to language stability. First we will look at the interplay between language and nationalism to explore how nationalistic ideologies and thinking can have a stabilizing effect on language. This discussion will then be followed up by a similar debate on attitudes and the part they can play in stability. Finally, we will turn our sights to language planning and policies which, in some cases, have a clear agenda of stability and sometimes even succeed in that respect. More often than not, planning and policies of this kind include a strong puristic element and therefore purism is also discussed in this context. In all three sections, special attention is paid to our case in point, i.e. Iceland, in an attempt to establish how these factors have contributed – and still contribute – to the relative stability of the Icelandic language. At the end of the chapter its findings are summarized.

It should be emphasized that the division of these factors of nationalism, attitudes and planning into three separate sections in this thesis is primarily an artificial split made in an attempt to make the discussion of each field clearer and more focussed. This should by no means be regarded as an indication of the three fields being separate entities without any internal connections. Rather, these factors are closely related and often interact with each other in a variety of ways. Thus, to give but a few examples, there is often a strong nationalistic element in language planning, and linguistic attitudes can be nationalistically flavoured at the same time as they may influence language planning to a greater or a lesser extent. Accordingly, the discussion of each factor includes frequent links to the other two. Furthermore, it should be noted that through the interaction of these factors it becomes clear that most levels of society can play their part in language stability – or change for that matter. Thus, while language planning is primarily in the hands of some official authority, its decrees need to

be accepted by the general public in order to have the desired result. At the same time, nationalism may arise and affect a language both at an official and a public level and attitudes can of course be found both in the official and the public sphere. These different levels of society then interact in various ways through these different factors to become part of a broader ideological field of which language is an integral part.⁵

3.1 Nation, nationalism and language

As already stated, this section examines how nationalism can affect and contribute to language stability. To do this, we first need to look at the concepts of nation and nationalism in order to see how they have been defined to then turn to some concrete examples of the interplay between nationalism and language. This is followed by a discussion of how this interplay has materialized in an Icelandic context.

3.1.1 The concept of the nation

While most people would probably claim to have a clear sense of what a nation is putting this “sense” into words in the form of a formal definition is likely to be quite problematic. This is reflected in the abundant literature that exists on the nature of nations and nationalism, where most authors refer to the difficulty with determining just what a nation is and tend, somewhat tentatively, to present a working definition suitable for the framework in which they operate. As a result, there does not seem to be any general agreement on any one definition, but rather a multitude of possible approaches, varying in complexity and width. Thus, to give some examples, an early attempt at defining the concept of nation is Renan’s claim from 1882 that a nation is defined by the will of its members to coexist through what he called a “daily plebiscite” (Renan 1990, p. 19). This definition is in a sense both narrow and broad at the same time; narrow as it only includes one defining criterion, i.e. the will of the members of a nation, but broad as this will and the reasons behind it may be very multi-faceted. A century later, Gellner can be said to expand on Renan’s idea in presenting what he regards as a makeshift and temporary definition (1983, p. 7):

Two men are of the same nation if and only if they *recognize* each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artefacts of men’s convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given

⁵ For an interesting general overview of language ideology see Woolard (1998). For more specific discussions on particular instances see e.g. Wingstedt (1998), who examines the effect Swedish language ideology has had on minority languages in the country, and Bokhorst-Heng (1999), about the effects of an ideological campaign in Singapore. Finally, Philips (1998) discusses how language ideologies materialize in institutional settings.

territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it. It is their recognition of each other as fellows of this kind which turns them into a nation, and not the other shared attributes, whatever they might be, which separate that category from non-members.

Here, however, Gellner's own words above about this being a makeshift definition should be kept in mind. Thus he not only presents this as one of two possible definitions – the other claiming that a nation rests on a shared culture – but also goes on to claim that both are inadequate and that a formal definition should probably not be attempted at all.

Other well known attempts at approaching a definition include Anderson's (1991) suggestion that the nation (p. 6) "is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." He further explains this by saying that he sees the nation as imagined as (p. 6) "even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Note the resemblance here to Gellner's (1983) words above about nations being artefacts of men's convictions, loyalties and solidarities. Anderson, then, also elaborates on the other key concepts in his definition, saying that the nation is limited as it has finite boundaries which separate it from other nations; that it is sovereign as the concept of it stems from a time where "the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm" (1991, p. 7) was destroyed; and that it is a community, since it is conceived as a comradeship regardless of its possible internal differences.

To also present a fairly multi-layered definition, Smith (1991, p. 14), on the basis of an analysis of the fundamental features of national identity, comes to the conclusion that a nation is "*a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members*". Like most before him, however, Smith presents this only as a working definition, the main asset of which might be to reveal the complexity of the concept. Another asset is that a definition of this kind sets the nation and the national identity apart from the state, which consists only of public institutions rather than the cultural and political bonds signified by the nation. This is no less important an asset than the former, judging by similar remarks made by several other theorists in the field on the importance of keeping apart the concepts of nation and state.

Most of the attempts to define the concept *nation* come from historians, anthropologists and other social scientists. The definitions discussed thus far all come from these fields and it might therefore be appropriate to present as a final example a more linguistically oriented approach. An instance of this can be found in Haugen (1966). He certainly regards the nation as a political unit in which an

individual identifies his ego with others in the same nation while separating it from those outside it, and in this way his thoughts resemble those discussed above. He adds, however, that loyalties of this kind require intense communication within the nation, which in turn calls for a single linguistic code to carry it out. Thereby, Haugen accentuates the role of language in the make-up of the nation more heavily than do theorists in most other fields do, although it should not be forgotten that the latter generally appear to view language as an integral part of e.g. the common culture they see as a central national constituent.

As can be discerned from the tentative attempts presented above at defining *nation*, this concept is quite a problematic one. This is evident not only in the definitions themselves but equally so in the authors' more general discussions about the concept and the general nature of the nation. Thus Anderson (1991) mentions three paradoxes which theorists working in this field have found hard to deal with. The first of these is (p. 5) "[t]he objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists". By this he seems to refer to the fact that while nations as we know them today are primarily a product of the last two centuries, much of their foundations – at least in ideological terms – can in many cases be traced to some "golden age" of the nation in question or an ancient common past, in terms of e.g. culture and language, of the people belonging to that nation. The second paradox refers to (p. 5) "[t]he formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept". Here Anderson is talking about the seeming unavailability of belonging to a nation and claims that, in much the same way as we all have a particular gender, we all have, or belong to, some nation or other. The third and final paradox deals with the contradiction between the political power of nationalism, on the one hand, and its philosophical weakness, on the other. This, according to Anderson, is to say that while nations and nationalism have undoubtedly been a major force in shaping modern society the "ism" in question does not seem to have produced the same number of great thinkers or as clear a theoretical basis as most other "isms" have. All in all, these paradoxes yield a certain ambiguity to the concept of nation which makes it less easy to approach than is desirable.

While preparing his readers for his definition of the nation, Smith (1991) also addresses a few problems with the concept. He points out that in essence the broad definition he presents is based on two different conceptions of the nation which have their roots in two different parts of the world. On the one hand, there is a Western or civic model to which the national components of historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members and common civic culture can be traced. As the West has played a leading role in the modern world as a whole – at least as seen by the West itself – these components have also become central in most non-Western models of the nation. However, a few other elements which incorporate certain non-Western characteristics can be traced to another model which originated in Eastern Europe and Asia. Smith calls

this model “ethnic” as in it the nation is primarily viewed as a community of common descent. This is to say that while the Western model allows us as individuals to choose which nation we belong to, the ethnic one assumes that our “nationhood” is determined at birth. Other aspects of the ethnic model include an emphasis on vernacular languages, customs and traditions which largely take the place occupied by the law in the Western model.

Some other scientists who are not primarily occupied with defining the nation as a whole, but rather discuss specific aspects of it, have also commented on the difficulties inherent in this phenomenon. Thus e.g. Barbour (1996) claims that it is not only difficult to define the concept *nation* as its position as an entity in the real world poses a number of questions as well which in turn place the category of nation in doubt. According to Barbour, this problematicity stems partly from the fact that there appears to be – both in the definitions of the nation above and in the minds of the general public – “a notion of a prototypical nation consisting of a culturally and racially homogeneous population, whose cultural homogeneity is manifest by the use of a single, distinct language, and which exclusively occupies an independent sovereign state” (1996, p. 29). Barbour concedes that there are examples of nations which at least come close to fulfilling these criteria but maintains that all we can say with certainty is that nation-states exist while the existence of nations is more questionable. To support this he identifies key points in some of the proposed definitions and mentions e.g. that there are very few nations that have the clear “historic territory” of Smith’s (1991) contribution in this regard; it seems to be more common that there is some dispute about the legitimate extent of this national fundament. Here Barbour points to Northern Ireland as an example and asks whether it is British territory or not. Conversely the majority population in e.g. Scotland and Catalonia regards itself as a separate nation even though its “historic territory” does not form the basis of a nation-state.

In his further discussion, Barbour (1996) points out how some other central parts of the prototypical nation may not be so central. One example is that the common myths and historical memories present in Smith’s (1991) approach arose, in many cases, after the establishment of the nation in question rather than being constitutive in its formation. Finally, in the modern world both mass culture and economy seem to be becoming increasingly global rather than bound to specific nations. At the same time there often appear to be greater cultural and economic cleavages between citizens of the same nation than between citizens of different nations.⁶

⁶ “Citizen” is the term used by Barbour (1996) in this discussion. It may be somewhat confusing, however, to talk of citizens of nations in this context, as citizenship is usually bound to states and thus Barbour’s usage of the term here might be taken to imply that nation and (nation-)state are one and the same thing. As seen above, however, Barbour himself makes a clear distinction between nation and state, claiming e.g. that (p. 29) “the nation or

On the basis of this discussion, Barbour (1996) comes to the conclusion that “states” and “ethnic groups” should be used as primary concepts while Anderson’s (1991) term “imagined communities” should be reserved for nations. This, in turn, poses the question just how clear a break Barbour’s (1996) approach really is from the more standard, or prototypical, definitions. Gellner (1983), for example, sees nations as artefacts and even Smith (1991), whose definition is the main aim of Barbour’s (1996) criticism, says that behind the “models of the nation stand certain common *beliefs* about what constitutes a nation as opposed to any other kind of collective, cultural identity” (1991, p. 13, my italics). There thus appears to be some consensus on the artificial or imagined nature of the nation; just what is included in this imagination is more debatable.

In sum, it seems clear, therefore, that the nation should be viewed more as a mental construct than a physical real world entity. Furthermore, this mental construct can be made up of several and quite varied constituents. To me it also seems probable that it is exactly this potential multi-faceted and fluid nature of the nation we should hold on to, rather than trying to find a strict “once and for all” definition. We have seen in chapter 2 above how different language communities call for different approaches when studying the social aspects of language change and stability and this seems to be transferable to the studies of “the nation”. This is to say that rather than approaching this field with a predetermined definition in mind, each particular nation (to the extent this exists as a physical entity at all!) should be observed and defined on its own basis. The definitions that emerge in this fashion can then be matched with one another in order to seek a common denominator which may be regarded as a core of the concept of nation.

As a final point in this discussion of the nation, it should be noted that even if this concept is elusive and a source of frequent disagreement, there appears to be a greater consensus on when the nation as an entity in the modern sense emerged. This emergence is largely an effect of sentiments arising with the Enlightenment and the American and the French Revolutions. National sentiments did certainly exist before this time, and some of those who adhere to the Western or civic model of the nation hold that a nation appears as soon as some individuals declare that it does and then set out to build the foundations for this claim. This would mean that there was e.g. such a thing as an English nation well before the late 18th century as several English writers in the 16th and 17th century wrote about their own or their characters’ love or pride for England. It has, however, been pointed out that this conception of the nation stems from and only reached the élite in the respective “nations”. Sentiments of this kind had as yet not spread to the general public and therefore they cannot be regarded as national. It was only with the Enlightenment and the American and the French

‘named human population’ may share the state with other more or less comparable populations”.

Revolutions that an awareness of the nation as an entity started spreading to the masses, and most scholars accept this time as the point of emergence of the modern nation (Oakes, 2001).

3.1.2 Nationalism

From the difficulties described in the previous section with regard to defining the nation, it follows that the concept of nationalism is also somewhat elusive. However, defining nationalism does not seem to have been as urgent a matter as defining the nation, possibly because many appear to view the former as part and parcel of the latter and are content with regarding it as e.g. “an expression of the nation” (Oakes, 2001, p. 16).

This, of course, does not mean that no formal attempts have been made at defining nationalism. Thus Gellner (1983, p. 1), who, of the theorists discussed in the previous section, probably pays closest attention to the concept of nationalism as such, suggests that “[n]ationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”. He then elaborates on this by saying that (p. 1) “nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state ... should not separate the power-holders from the rest”. Smith (1991) reaches a similar conclusion and says that nationalism is essentially a movement to defend the interests of a nation and its political independence. Interestingly, however, what these attempts at definitions boil down to is remarkably close to Oakes’ (2001) more casual comment above, about nationalism being an expression of the nation. Note also that in claiming e.g. that nationalism is a movement to defend the interests of a nation (Smith, 1991) or “an expression of the nation” (Oakes, 2001, p. 16), the authors in question appear to regard nation as a prerequisite of nationalism. This view seems to gain some support from a historical glance at the emergence of nationalism, which we will come to shortly. First I would like to add that the definitions above probably need to be more nuanced, since their emphasis on nationalism as a political element which may defend the interests of a nation, renders them highly official in tone which indicates that nationalism is determined by and primarily belongs to elitist or official levels of society. However, as Oakes (2001) points out, nationalism also exists among the general public. Oakes argues further that this folk nationalism should be distinguished from the more official kind, as the distinction is useful in explaining the dichotomy discussed above of Western or civic vs. ethnic models of the nation (Smith, 1991). To this I would like to add that this distinction also appears to be fruitful as, in the same way as a nation can only emerge when the notion of it has spread to all layers of society, it can only be fully expressed through a nationalism that is a mixture of official and more public elements.

This last claim about nationalism becoming, as it were, complete only when reaching throughout a nation gains some extra support by the fact that nationalism in the sense discussed here emerged more or less simultaneously with the nation in the modern sense discussed above (Oakes, 2001). Thus, even if e.g. the English notion of nation mentioned in the previous section may have evoked nationalistic sentiments amongst the élite, it was only in the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the American and the French Revolutions that they became more generally spread and even the very term “nationalism” only arose in France in the 1790s (Judge, 2000). This can in turn be related to the large-scale societal changes of the late 18th and the 19th century; this being the period of the industrial revolution which led to massive urbanization and a general shift in the western world from an agrarian society to an industrial one (Hearder, 1988). According to e.g. Gellner (1983), then nationalism became part of this modernization process as it called for a higher level of education and literacy amongst the citizens of the modern states for them to function properly. The general view was that this goal was best reached by a common educational system which was in turn based on a perception of a homogeneous culture of the state in question. This ultimately allowed nationalistic sentiments to reach the masses, or at least larger portions of society than before. Note here that Gellner distinguishes between the state and the nation in much the same way as Smith (1991) does, but at the same time he argues that the existence of the state is a necessary prerequisite for nationalism to arise as (Gellner, 1983, p. 4) “[i]f there is no state, one obviously cannot ask whether or not its boundaries are congruent with the limits of nations”. Thus nationalism only emerges (p. 4) “in milieux in which the existence of the state is already very much taken for granted”.

Having thus briefly examined the nature and origin of nationalism, a quick glance at the importance of nationalism in the modern world might be in order. As Barbour (2000a) points out, nationalism is only one of many motivating factors in human behaviour, and other loyalties are often easier to comprehend. Thus it seems to be a universal human trait to protect one’s immediate family and, in some cases, even the extended family or tribe as these entities are essential for the survival of the individual. In a similar fashion, Barbour claims that devotion to one’s religious beliefs can be seen as a natural defence mechanism which protects one’s entire world view. It seems unreasonable to maintain that nations are as essential to the individual’s survival, physically and/or ideologically, as are the family and the basic system of beliefs. Despite all this, nationalism appears to be a particularly powerful behavioural motivator and, as Barbour (2000a, p. 2) points out, it has the “power to arouse passionate loyalties and hatreds that motivate acts of extreme violence and courage; people kill and die for their nations”. Nations are even (Barbour 2000a, p. 4) “generally the only units in whose defence the exercise of violence is legitimate”.

Barbour argues that the importance of nationalism stems from what he sees as a fundamental human need to belong to a community of some kind. Earlier

more primary communities met this need, but they have been replaced by the nation through economic and social change. Barbour is more vague about just why nations, rather than some other unit, came to take over this role and mostly refers to some of the theoretical work discussed above which indicates that nations were more or less an unavoidable result of the social and economic conditions at work in the process of modernization from the latter part of the 18th century. Despite claims he made in his earlier work, mentioned above, about how globalism may cast some doubt on the general existence of nations, Barbour also points out that this trend has as yet not managed to undermine the strength of national loyalties, even though international companies and organizations have largely replaced nations as the core of economic and political organization. This last claim gets support from Oakes (2001, p. 149) who states that while globalization exists it “is limited to specialised, usually technological, fields. Moreover, by bringing disparate cultures into close proximity, global interdependence may only serve to emphasise differences and provoke ethnonational reactions to increased external pressures”. To this it can be added that Carmichael (2000a) mentions that even though globalization may have somewhat obscured the foundations for nationalism, there is still an abundance of examples of violence, ethnic cleansings or other destructive political phenomena, e.g. in Northern Ireland and former Yugoslavia, that spring from nationalistic sentiments and differences. Here we are of course touching upon an extremely negative aspect of nationalism, and as Oakes (2001) points out, it adds further confusion to the debate on nationalism that it sometimes takes on the dimension of an extreme right-wing ideology. However, and to end this section on a more positive note, Smith (1991) comments that even though nationalism has the potential to pit culture-communities against each other, its benign effects should not be forgotten. In this context he mentions nationalism’s (p. 18)

defence of minority cultures; its rescue of ‘lost’ histories and literatures; its inspiration for cultural renaissances; its resolution of ‘identity crisis’; its legitimation of community and social solidarity; its inspiration to resist tyranny; its ideal of popular sovereignty and collective mobilization; even the motivation of self-sustaining economic growth.

Smith then goes on to say that this testifies to the ambiguous power of nationalism and its relevance to most people in the world. As we will see in the next section, these words are directly applicable to the relationship between nationalism and language.

3.1.3 The interplay between nationalism and language

We have now seen that the concepts of the nation and nationalism are in many ways unclear and disputable. However, almost regardless of how we prefer to

approach these features, it is quite evident that they can be and often are reciprocally linked to language in a strong way. By this I mean that nationalistic sentiments and ideologies can affect language in a variety of ways and are e.g. frequently the foundation on which language planning rests, both concerning standardization or the structure of a given language, and matters relating to bi- or multilingual situations on a national level where the official status of each of the involved languages is determined. At the same time, language has often played an integral part in the construction of a nation and is a fundamental element in nationalism in most of its various guises.

This relationship between language on the one hand and nations and nationalism on the other is in fact evident, either directly or indirectly, in most of the definitions of the nation discussed in section 3.1.1 above. Thus, in one of his two provisional definitions, Gellner (1983) mentions a common language as a potential means of creating a category of persons who on that basis may go on to become a nation. In the other definition he says that people are of the same nation only if they share the same culture and then says that culture here “means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating” (p. 7). Language is not explicitly mentioned here, but that it is involved should nonetheless be perfectly clear. Its involvement should be equally clear, albeit in a similarly indirect way, in Smith’s (1991) definition of the nation which rests, among other things, on common myths, historical memories and a mass, public culture. Finally, Haugen (1966), quite understandably for a linguist, claims that the loyalties through which individuals identify with other members of their nation while they separate them from others are in many ways bound in language.

Language is thus – or at least can be – a key element in the general distinction of “us vs. others” which aims at determining which factors demarcate one group of people from another in a meaningful enough way to create the foundations of the formation of nations (Barbour, 1996, 2000a; Duszak, 2002; Oakes, 2001). That language could indeed play this role was observed well before the emergence of nations and nationalism in the modern sense. A clear example of this can be found in Sweden and Denmark where language has played an important role as an identity marker at least since the middle of the 16th century, when the Bible was translated into both Danish and Swedish. This role was further strengthened by the two countries’ constant struggle for dominance in Scandinavia and the closeness of their languages; by choosing different paths for standardization not only the minor differences between the languages could be emphasized but also the differences between the two nations. This trend can be said to have reached its peak in the late 17th century, following the Swedish takeover – from the Danes – in 1660 of the districts of Blekinge, Halland and Scania in what is now southern Sweden. While the dialect spoken in these regions, especially Scania, at this time should probably be regarded as an intermediary between Swedish and Danish, this did not satisfy the Swedes and

they launched a linguistic reschooling of the area which was aimed at “Swedifying” it. This reschooling was highly successful and only two generations later the area appears to have become Swedish both in terms of language and identity (Vikør, 2000). Other early examples of an awareness of the importance of language in the national identity can be found e.g. in England where George Puttenham wrote in 1589 that “After a speech is fully fashioned to common understanding, and accepted by consent of a whole country and nation, it is called a language” (quoted in Haugen 1966, p. 926).

As we approach the modern concepts of the nation and nationalism, the origins of the view that language is central to them can primarily be traced to Germany of the late 18th and early 19th century. Then, in an apparent reaction to the rationalistic outlook of the Enlightenment and a growing Francophobia following the Napoleonic wars, the key figures of Herder, Fichte and von Humboldt formulated some of the key ideas behind the building of the German nation as well as several other nations. To them language was at the very heart of what Herder called the “Volksgeist” and von Humboldt termed the character of a nation. For a language to obtain this status it was imperative that it was, so to speak, the private property of the nation in question. This is to say, they saw linguistic homogeneity as the main determining factor of the nation (Anderson, 1991; Oakes, 2001). As has just been mentioned, these ideas were the driving force in the making of both the German nation and a number of others, although more often than not the ideology of homogeneity was expanded to include e.g. culture and history alongside language.

Let us now examine and exemplify in slightly more detail how language has played a part in the creation of modern nations, as well as in separating one nation from the other. When this is done it quickly emerges, as Barbour (1996) points out, that this role of language has taken two main shapes. One the one hand, language can be instrumental in the construction of nations within pre-existing states and, on the other, it can be one of the main reasons or means of justification for nations which do not have their own independent state to strive towards that target.

France is often taken as an example of the former case. The statehood of France has been unquestionable for centuries, even though its present territorial border is the relatively recent result of a long history of expansion. However, the status of France as a nation has been more disputable throughout its history as the French state has long included a number of regions the inhabitants of which could make strong claims of a separate nationhood on the basis of e.g. a common language and a common culture. This diverse nature of France was addressed by the French state in the wake of the French Revolution, and in this official attempt to unify the nation language was of the highest importance. Somewhat paradoxically, when placed in a more modern context, the source of this emphasis on language seems to have been the revolutionary ideal of equality. An important element of this equality was that everybody should speak the same

language, primarily in order for education to become more generally accessible and to ensure effective communication throughout society so that it could function on a national level. As for the choice of language for this purpose, there never seems to have been any doubt that it should be French which was at this time well-established as the language of the élite and had already undergone considerable standardization. In the process of reaching this status, French had come to be seen by its speakers as a superior language that allowed for clearer and more elegant expression than other languages. Speakers of French do not seem to have been alone in this belief, as by the 18th century French had become the language of international diplomacy. Considering the atmosphere of this period, French was quite a natural choice for unifying the nation, and it was in fact seen as a highly democratic act to share this superior and elitist language with the general population. The state then set out to impose French in all its regions on the basis of an ideology of “one language, one nation, one state”, the French language thus being the very symbol of a unified nation. Other languages were simply forbidden (Judge, 2000) .

It should be noted that imposing a language throughout a nation is of course not achievable overnight. The revolutionaries planned to set up primary schools throughout France to teach the French language, but as the ensuing period was by no means calm, much due to the reign of Napoleon I, it was only in the late 19th century that primary education became free and compulsory. At the same time, while languages other than French were officially forbidden that did not mean that they disappeared entirely as many continued to use them at least for everyday purposes. Even today, the French state contains a number of linguistic minorities, such as Basques, Bretons and Catalans, who through their very existence shed some doubt on the concept of a unified French nation. However, to the extent that this nation does exist, the French language is still very much its main national symbol (Judge, 2000).

As for the latter shape outlined above, language has, since the emergence of the modern concepts of the nation and nationalism, on numerous occasions been the driving force behind attempts of creating a state for a population which regards itself as a nation. Thus nation-states as diverse as Norway, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine and Turkey were all formed largely on the basis of their respective languages (Oakes, 2001). However, a linguistically based struggle for creating an independent state has not been successful on all occasions. This can be seen e.g. in Catalonia which is still officially part of Spain, despite Catalan aspirations towards independence which are rooted in a mid-19th century literary movement (Mar-Molinero, 2000).

Having given these examples of the possible effect of language on nationalism and the foundation of nations, it should be emphasized that this link is by no means a natural law. There are e.g. several examples of independence struggles in which language plays only a minor role if any. The Basque Country is a point in case here. While the language is undeniably very distinct and could

thus serve to set the Basque nation apart from both Spain and France, it has fulfilled this function only to a very limited extent. This is possibly a result of the fact that the Basque language is quite dialectally fragmented. The Basques nonetheless appear to have a strong national identity but this is based on “race” rather than language (Mar-Molinero, 2000). The situation in Scotland is in many ways quite similar to this, even though the Scottish demands for independence appear to be much more benign than are those of the Basques. There seems to exist a clear Scottish national identity, but the Scots language plays a very limited role in it. Of greater importance are various institutional features, such as a separate legal and educational system (Barbour, 2000b).

In addition to this, it should be noted that not all populations which can stake a national claim on the basis of language do this to such an extent that an independent state is the ultimate goal. Thus, following a previous trend of decay, the health of the Breton language is currently improving at the same time as separatist national sentiments appear to be on the wane. The language therefore helps to maintain a regional rather than a strictly national identity (Judge, 2000). All in all, therefore, Hannesdóttir (1999) is probably right in indicating that even though it may be tempting to make generalizations, such as that language is particularly important for the national identity of young nations, there tend to be too many exceptions for them to be useful.

This discussion of the interplay between language, on the one hand, and nations and nationalism, on the other, has hitherto circled primarily around the effect the former entity has had on the latter. However, as was indicated in the beginning of this section, this relationship can be turned around as nationalism can directly affect language in various ways.

Nationalistic effects on language are particularly evident in the process of standardization. The nature of standardization will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage (section 3.3.1), but a few points should be made here in relation to nationalism. A particularly notable one is that when languages are standardized, especially when this is a part of the construction of a nation, this often takes the shape of creating an apparent sense of continuity from one historical stage of the language to another. This is primarily achieved by including in the standard under construction certain elements that stem from earlier stages of the language in question or are even archaic. The main aim of this is to further enhance the nationalistic sentiment evoked by a sense of a common culture, based on a common source which can be traced through an unbroken historical chain. That this continuity and the common source from which it stems are in many cases largely fictitious is, on the other hand, often simply swept under the rug. Strategies of this kind were central e.g. in the linguistic standardization which accompanied the previously mentioned imposition of the French language throughout the French state following the revolution (Judge, 2000; Oakes, 2001). Interestingly, arguments emphasizing this continuity can still be heard in quite modern times, as was the case when the so-called Toubon Law was promulgated

in France in 1994, but this law asserts the centrality of the French language in France and affects the status of other languages spoken in the country (Durand, 1996).

This French strategy has a counterpart in the standardization of Nynorsk in Norway in the latter part of the 19th century. The chief proponent of Nynorsk was Ivar Aasen who spent several years travelling around Norway to study its rural dialects. Through using them as his linguistic basis, he believed he could codify a language which created a continuity between the emerging Norwegian nation of his time and medieval Norway which, importantly, was an independent state before entering a union with Denmark and Sweden shortly before 1400 which meant that political power passed to the Danish monarchs (Vikør, 2000).

Another field where nationalism can clearly affect language emerges in bi- or multilingual situations. As seen above, the effects of nationalism materialize primarily in the internal structure of the language concerned in a monolingual situation. In a bi- or multilingual situation, however, nationalism rather affects the status of the languages concerned and how they – or, rather, their speakers – relate to each other. Examples of this can be found in most corners of the world, as the truly homogeneous nation-state where all citizens speak the same language is a very rare phenomenon. Two cases which are relatively close at hand can be found in, first, Wingstedt's (1998) study of Swedish minority language policies towards the Saami and Finnish-speaking Tornedalians, which shows that even though these policies are currently officially pluralistic they have arrived at that point via a prior nationalistically motivated ideology of assimilation. The second example is the well-known case of Serbian and Croatian, which prior to the dissolution of Yugoslavia were officially regarded as a single language, Serbo-Croat. Since then the languages have been subjected to corpus planning in order to increase the differences between them. This is in turn largely a result of the mutual hostility between the two nations involved (Carmichael, 2000b).

Through the discussion above it should have become clear that a sense of homogeneity in linguistic terms is often felt to be imperative in the demarcation of nations. Behind this sense lurks the common view that languages are easily distinguishable entities. While this may be true in some cases, it can not be said to be anything like a general tendency. Rather, as Barbour (1996) points out, demarcating one language from another is generally a complex issue. What constitutes a language, on the basis of which a nation may be founded, and what only constitutes a dialect is more often than not determined on e.g. political and religious grounds rather than linguistic ones. Therefore, while nation-building is undeniably often based on proclaimed distinct languages, we should be aware of the fact that this basis is frequently somewhat artificial. Note also the circularity of definitions which becomes evident here as, at the same time as what constitutes a separate nation is often defined on the basis of a common language, what constitutes a separate language is often defined on the basis of the language in question being used by a given nation.

Having now seen how nationalism can affect language, a certain aspect is noticeable mainly through its absence. For some reason the effects of nationalism on language stability are hardly touched upon at all in the literature, in much the same way as stability receives little attention in the theories of language change and variation discussed in chapter 2. This is somewhat intriguing for, as shown by Haugen (1966), the ideal goal of standardization, which is often inspired by nationalistic sentiments, is to minimize variation in form and create a standard which has e.g. only one spelling and one pronunciation for every word. This goal is most easily reached if the language in question has a high degree of stability, and one would assume that once the standard is reached it should in itself contribute to future stability. There is, in other words, at least a potential link between nationalism and stability as is further shown by e.g. the previously mentioned attempts in France (Durand, 1996; Judge, 2000; Oakes, 2001) and Norway (Vikør, 2000) at creating a sense of linguistic continuity which clearly include a strong, albeit implicit, element of stability. That stability has, nonetheless, not been studied to any extent from this perspective is, however, possibly explained by Haugen (1966) when he claims that even the most stable of norms are bound to change with new generations. We are, in other words, back at the basic sociolinguistic assumption that all languages change which seems to have led to the overwhelming emphasis placed on studies of variation and change at the expense of stability. I would, however, like to repeat the claim originally made in section 2.3 above that stability is interesting itself and worthy of examination. A good starting point for this, when it comes to the links there may be between nationalism and stability, is the Icelandic case again.

3.1.4 “Land, þjóð og tunga, þrenning sönn og ein”⁷? Nationalism and language in Iceland: a brief history

The Icelandic part of the title of this section is taken from a poem written by a well known poet, Snorri Hjartarson, in 1952 (Hjartarson, 1992, p. 62) and is frequently presented as an embodiment of the general Icelandic belief that there is a strong link between the Icelandic nation and the Icelandic language. Using the poem in this way may have become a bit of a cliché, but it is nevertheless a good summary of the largely linguistically driven nationalistic spirit found in Iceland from the middle of the 19th century until well beyond the point of publication of the poem. To understand how this link between the nation and its language emerged, a quick historical glance at the status of Icelandic until the mid-19th century is probably in order.

The years 874-930 are generally referred to as the age of settlement in Iceland. The settlers came mainly from the western or south western parts of present-day Norway, but there were also some from both other parts of

⁷ “Country, nation, language, a trinity true and one.”

Scandinavia as well as from Nordic colonies in e.g. the Faroe Islands and the Scottish Isles. There are therefore likely to have been some dialectal differences between the settlers and some of them probably even spoke e.g. Gaelic. However, while the available sources provide little or no information on the process itself, the language used in them is a clear testimony to the fact that a Nordic norm, based primarily on one or a mixture of dialects used in western Norway, quickly developed.⁸ This language then appears to have been adopted throughout the society for most or all domains, official or private, and it was to maintain this position throughout the Middle Ages as witnessed by e.g. the Icelandic sagas. The only exception to this total dominance was the religious sphere, but following the Christianization of Iceland in the year 1000, Latin emerged as an ecclesiastic language without, however, removing Icelandic from that domain. Furthermore, what ground Latin gained in the first centuries of Christianity in Iceland, Icelandic quickly regained following the reformation in 1550 (Hannesdóttir, 2004).

From the first stages of settlement until the 16th century, Icelandic was thus unquestionably the language used in Iceland by the Icelandic population. However, the tide was to turn somewhat in the 17th and 18th century. While it is commonly argued that Iceland had until this point largely maintained its linguistic continuity, primarily through a relatively high level of literacy and general knowledge of the medieval literature, Icelandic had failed to incorporate new domains of usage to any extent since its earliest days and faced increasing problems in terms of its status as opposed to that of Danish. In the 17th and 18th century the Danish crown tightened its administrative grip on Iceland, and one of the results of this was that the Danish language was increasingly used in all official matters, as well as in commercial contacts, while Icelandic was increasingly limited to more private spheres. Furthermore, what ideological movements, technological discoveries etc. were introduced in Iceland in those times were communicated primarily through Denmark and in Danish (Hannesdóttir, 2004). It should be noted here that Iceland fell into Norwegian hands in 1264 and then followed Norway in the abovementioned union of Norway, Denmark and Sweden which meant that from then on Iceland was governed by Denmark. That this did not lead to an earlier imposition of Norwegian or Danish for official purposes can probably be explained both by the rather limited contacts between Iceland and its rulers during the first centuries of colonization and by the fact that there was a high degree of mutual comprehensibility between the Nordic languages, at least well into the Middle Ages (Vikør, 1993). This latter point is testified indirectly, e.g. by the well-

⁸ The most commonly held view is that Icelandic stems from a mixture of the various Norwegian dialects that the settlers are likely to have spoken. See e.g. Benediktsson (1964) and Guðmundsson (1977). Recently, however, this view has been disputed by Árnason (2003a) who argues that one Norwegian variety, spoken by a particular group or élite amongst the settlers, became the basis for the Icelandic standard.

known fact that Snorri Sturluson, the famous 13th century Icelandic writer and historian, uses the term “Danish” to refer to the whole of North Germanic. Furthermore, it is only in 1558 that the term Icelandic is used in writing for the language spoken in Iceland (Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). Initially there will thus have been little need to distinguish between the language of the rulers and that of the ruled.

The effects of this later rise of Danish were felt in two main dimensions. First, the functional division between Danish and Icelandic meant that, at least in the circles which had immediate contact with the Danish authorities, Icelandic became branded as a low status language. The second dimension can be said to be regional as Danish was naturally used most in Reykjavík, the centre of the Danish administration in Iceland, and in the small trading posts that were scattered around the Icelandic coast (Hauksdóttir, 2001; Ottósson, 1990).

It is against this background that the Icelandic linguistic nationalism can be measured. However, before we move to a discussion of its prime, lasting from the mid-19th century onwards, it should be mentioned that an element which can be called linguistic pride can be found in Iceland, at least as far back as the early 17th century. In 1609 Arngrímur Jónsson, called “hinn lærði”, or “the learned”, published his book *Crymogæa* which was a description of Iceland and its people (Jónsson, 1985). In this work, Jónsson was the first to point to the continuity of the Icelandic language, which he saw as the language previously spoken throughout the Nordic countries. He can also be said to have laid some of the first foundations for the renowned Icelandic purism which will shortly be discussed in more detail. A century and a half later, the poet Eggert Ólafsson followed in Jónsson’s footsteps. In 1752-1757 Ólafsson travelled throughout Iceland, commissioned by the Danish Academy of Science, and later wrote a journal about these travels. At this time Danish had become firmly established as the main language of administration and commerce in Iceland and was therefore seen by some as a general threat to Icelandic. In the journal, Ólafsson comments on this issue. During his travels he found that while claims made about the imminent extinction of Icelandic were far too strong, the language used in coastal areas, particularly the trading posts, had become quite mixed with or contaminated by foreign words, especially Danish and German. The inland areas, however, were still by and large purely Icelandic in linguistic terms (Ferðabók, 1978). On the basis of these findings, and inspired by Enlightenment ideals imported from Germany via Denmark which aimed at educating the general public through the medium of its own language rather than e.g. Latin, Ólafsson set out to revive Icelandic with its, in his view, glorious past as a model (Ottósson, 1990).

These first signs of linguistic pride have been interpreted as examples of a national awareness emerging in Iceland before the rise of nationalism in the modern sense described in section 3.1.2 above (Karlsson 1999, 2004) and later they certainly inspired more directly nationalistic movements. However, care should be taken not to place the two in the same category. Jónsson’s pride in the

history of Icelandic can probably be traced to the spirit of humanism of the time, which included a strong interest in antiquity that in an Icelandic context meant the settlement and the saga periods. Similarly, and as mentioned above, Ólafsson was inspired by the Enlightenment, and the pride he expresses for the Icelandic language was part of a broader agenda of improving the general living conditions of the Icelandic population through enlightening it (Ottósson, 1990). However, neither Jónsson nor Ólafsson make any claims of a more modern nationalistic nature which present a separate language as a strong foundation on which to build independent/sovereign nations and nation-states (Kristjánsdóttir, 1996). Claims of this sort only emerged in the 19th century as Iceland started its fight for independence from Denmark.

We have already seen above (section 3.1.2) how nationalism emerged towards the end of the 18th century in the wake of the American and the French Revolutions. As was often the case with ideological movements in those times, nationalism took a few decades in reaching Iceland via Denmark. Thus it was only after 1830 that its weight really started to be felt there. At that point, the original nationalistic agenda had been further sharpened, both by the freedom movements which followed the July Revolution in France in 1830 and the Romantic movement. In Denmark these developments led to a weakening and eventually, in 1849, the end of the absolute reign of the king and a national-romantically sparked conflict between him and the German duke of Holstein about supremacy over Schleswig, which was Danish territory but German-speaking in large part (Ottósson, 1990; Vikør, 2000). This, in turn, opened the question about the status of Iceland and its population in the Danish crown and, inspired by similar responses in various other areas where nations emerged as such (or as nation-states) in the decades prior to the Icelandic fight for independence, the answer provided by political leaders in Iceland was clear: Iceland was a nation in its own right which was clearly shown by its separate language which could, in turn, be traced through an unbroken thread to the age of settlement and had served as a means of documenting the equally continuous Icelandic history shared by the Icelandic nation. Hence Iceland should be granted its sovereignty (Hálfðanarson, 1996).⁹

Two steps towards this conclusion should be mentioned specifically. The first was taken, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, by a Dane, namely the well-known linguist Rasmus Rask. He was a great admirer of Icelandic who, without any external help, learnt the language well enough to be able to write the first usable grammar of Icelandic in 1811. In it he praises the purity of Icelandic and

⁹ It can be added here that the development in Iceland arguably reverses the order presumed by Gellner (1983), Smith (1991) and Oakes (2001) above in their definitions of nationalism. As noted earlier, they apparently view the concept of nation as a basis for nationalism. In the Icelandic scenario described above, however, it seems just as likely that, through being imported from abroad and adapted to Icelandic circumstances, nationalism alerted political leaders in Iceland to the possibility of regarding Iceland as a separate nation.

comments that purity is to language what independence is to the state. What Rask did not know at the time were the differences that had emerged between the Icelandic of his time and the Icelandic or Nordic of prior times. Thus he did not distinguish between the two and regarded the medieval grammar he described simply as equally descriptive of the then modern Icelandic. Rask spent the period 1813-1815 in Iceland and then realized that his grammar may not have been perfectly accurate. In fact, his reaction after the first few days in Iceland has become famous; in a letter to an Icelandic friend he wrote that Icelandic was on the brink of extinction and would become incomprehensible to everyone in Reykjavík in 100 years and vanish in the rest of the country in another 200 years. However, Rask's views were somewhat modified when he had spent more time in Iceland and travelled around the country as he then discovered that the condition of Icelandic was relatively healthy in most parts (Ottósson, 1990).

Despite thus discovering that his grammar may have been slightly archaic, Rask was reluctant to make changes to it as he feared that by pointing out the discrepancies between older and newer forms of Icelandic he might diminish the foreign interest and impressions there were of Icelandic and Icelanders. It can also be said that through equalling medieval grammar with newer versions of it, Rask provided the leaders of the Icelandic independence movement with one of their strongest weapons. His grammar became one of the most important models on which the ensuing reconstruction of Icelandic was based during the process of re-establishing it as a truly national language, on which the existence of the Icelandic nation was claimed to rest (Hannesdóttir, 2004; Ottósson, 1990).

The next crucial step towards consolidating the link between language and nation in Iceland was taken by a group of four men, most often referred to as "Fjölnismenn" after the periodical *Fjölnir* which they published 1835-1839 and 1843-1847. Inspired by the Romantic movement, they published a number of articles on contemporary matters of both a practical and cultural nature, natural science and literature, with the aim of starting a romantic national awakening. In these articles, the emphasis on Icelanders' cultural heritage and the country's magnificent nature is nearly omnipresent and the Fjölnismenn were amongst the first to expressly claim that the existence of the Icelandic nation depended primarily on its language. Accordingly, they followed in the footsteps of Jónsson, Ólafsson and Rask and can be said to have conclusively determined and defined the strong puristic element of Icelandic language policy which had gradually been built up prior to their emergence on the stage and has been followed quite strictly ever since. As before, Iceland's "golden" linguistic past was the model on which the Fjölnismenn built their approach, but they placed greater emphasis than their predecessors on modernizing the language through creating indigenous terms so that the language would be better equipped for usage in all domains, including administration and commerce. It should also be mentioned that, apart from the medieval literature, the Fjölnismenn, in typical romantic fashion, regarded the vernacular language used by the rural population in Iceland as an

example on which to base the revival of Icelandic (Ottósson, 1990). As testified by both Ólafsson and Rask, the language of the farming population was less “contaminated” by Danish influences, and since the Fjölismenn shared this view this strategy is quite understandable considering the general atmosphere of the time.

Due to their contributions, the Fjölismenn have become widely regarded as the founders of the Icelandic branch of nationalism which was at the heart of the fight for independence and seemed to survive more or less intact at least until the last decade or so. In particular, this epithet has been attached to one of the members of the group, Jónas Hallgrímsson. He was both a poet and a natural scientist and his highly romantic poems on the beauty of Icelandic nature and the lyrical heights of the medieval language are by many seen as the very embodiment of Icelandic romanticism. Still today, Hallgrímsson is a household name amongst the general Icelandic public where he is frequently referred to as “þjóðskáld”, i.e. national poet. However, despite this prominent position held by the Fjölismenn in modern debates on Icelandic nationalism and the fact that the views they presented were certainly mirrored by the leaders of the Icelandic independence movement, it appears that their immediate impact in their own time was very limited. In particular, they seem not to have affected the political climate to any extent as, even though their writings contain the first clear indications of the belief that Iceland should be granted a greater degree of sovereignty from Denmark, they were generally not politically oriented (Kristjánsdóttir, 1996; Ottósson, 1990). Therefore, it was only when the nationalistic agenda of the Fjölismenn was largely stripped of its romantic ideals and adapted to the more practical political considerations of the fight for independence that their impact was truly felt.

Jón Sigurðsson, who in the 1840s quickly rose to prominence as the political leader of the independence movement in Iceland, was a key figure in this adaptation of the nationalism of the Fjölismenn to the political scene. Thereby he also seems to have played a crucial role in disseminating nationalistic sentiments throughout large parts of the Icelandic nation, which accordingly regarded itself as such to an ever-increasing degree. In the demands for a greater degree of independence that Sigurðsson and his followers placed on the Danish crown, they certainly emphasized the role of the Icelandic language as a key element in defining the Icelandic nation and thereby its rights. However, Sigurðsson’s motives appear to have been more practical than purely nationalistic and romantic; he needed something to convince both the Icelandic population and his Danish adversaries of the undeniable status of Iceland as a nation, and for this purpose its language and history were the perfect weapons. This was particularly appropriate as the Icelandic language and early history symbolised the country’s original independence and literary golden age which in the political discourse were in sharp contrast with the stagnation and backwardness which were frequently claimed to have characterized the better part of the time since the

Norwegian take-over in 1264 (Kristjánsdóttir, 1996). Note also that in realizing the need to make both the general public and more official spheres of society aware of the nationhood of Iceland, Sigurðsson reflects the view discussed in section 3.1.1 above, that we can only talk about a nation in the modern sense when the conception of it has spread to all levels of society.

There has been some debate on how quickly the nationalism which emerged with the Fjölnismenn and the fight for independence spread throughout the Icelandic population to such an extent that there appeared a general consensus on the nationhood of Iceland. Thus Karlsson (2004) claims that this consensus was established shortly after 1850, i.e. in the initial stages of the fight for independence, while Hálfðanarson (2001) argues that it was only in 1944, when Iceland finally broke its ties with Denmark and became an independent republic, that this stage was reached. For my purposes, however, it is probably more important to note that a combination of Sigurðsson's politically oriented nationalism and the Fjölnismenn's more romantically tinted version was maintained throughout the battle for independence to its final point in 1944. All this time the Icelandic language played a central and unquestioned role in the argumentation. This is shown by e.g. a petition made by the Icelandic delegation which met Danish representatives in Reykjavík in July 1918, shortly before Iceland was granted sovereignty (quoted in Hálfðanarson, 1999, p. 311):

Íslenska þjóðin hefir ein allra germanskra þjóða varðveitt hina fornu tungu, er um öll Norðurlönd gekk fyrir 900-1000 árum, svo lítið breytta, að hver íslenskur maður skilur enn í dag og getur hagnýtt sjer til hlítar bókmenntafjárþjóði hinnar fornu menningar vorrar og annara Norðurlandþjóða. Með tungunni hefir sjerstakt þjóðerni, sjerstakir siðir og sjerstök menning varðveitst. Og með tungunni hefir einnig meðvitundin um sjerstöðu landsins gagnvart frændþjóðum vorum ávalt lifað með þjóðinni. Þessi atriði, sjerstök tunga og sjerstök menning, teljum vjer skapa oss sögulegan og eðlilegan rjett til fullkomins sjálfstæðis.¹⁰

Furthermore, this perception of the Icelandic nation and its language being, as it were, two sides of the same coin survived more or less unchanged at least well towards the end of the 20th century even though its political importance may have waned once the independent status of Iceland could no longer be questioned.

¹⁰ "The Icelandic nation has, as the only Germanic nation, preserved the ancient language which was used throughout the Nordic countries 900-1000 years ago. The language has changed so little that every Icelander can, even today, understand and make full use of the literary treasures of our ancient culture and that of the other Nordic countries. With the language a distinctive nationality, distinctive customs and a distinctive culture have been preserved. And in the language there has always lived with the nation an awareness of the country's distinctiveness with regard to our neighbouring nations. We believe that these factors, a distinctive language and a distinctive culture, provide us with a historic and natural right to full sovereignty." (My translation)

To now turn more directly to the linguistic consequences of this materialization of nationalism in Iceland, we have already seen how they mainly manifested themselves in a language policy leaning heavily towards purism. We will come to this in more detail shortly, and let it suffice for the time being to point out that this purism, at least in its initial stages, primarily affected the official spheres of Icelandic society as it was aimed at wiping out the Danish influences which were predominantly found in the domains of administration and commerce. In this regard nationalism can, therefore, be said to have caused a linguistic turn which was crucial in establishing Icelandic as a language usable for official as well as more private purposes. As for the linguistic effects of nationalism on the Icelandic vernacular they seem, for some reason, not to have been studied to any extent. I therefore have very little to base my suggestions on here, but it is nonetheless tempting to propose that, during the fight for independence, nationalism may have been a key element in maintaining the stability of everyday Icelandic, albeit in a somewhat indirect way. As we have seen, both Ólafsson and Rask maintained that the language spoken in the Icelandic countryside was “purer” than that spoken in Reykjavík and the coastal trading places (Ferðabók, 1978; Hannesdóttir, 2004; Ottósson, 1990). As mentioned earlier (see section 2.4), Iceland was an almost exclusively agrarian society until the latter half of the 19th century, so the language Ólafsson and Rask regard as pure is likely to have been spoken by a vast majority of the population and had been held highly stable not the least due to the stable social networks (see section 2.4). When nationalism started to make itself felt shortly before 1850, this majority of the population, i.e. the common public, became, to a large extent due to the Fjölismenn (Ottósson, 1990), the linguistic model for the more official spheres rather than vice versa and is thus not likely to have had to make any dramatic linguistic changes, apart from slowly incorporating some new or regained Icelandic vocabulary. This development – or perhaps one should rather say the lack of it – is then likely to have continued in the latter half of the 19th century, when Iceland started changing from a rural, agrarian society to an urban one and the linguistically stabilizing effects of the tight networks are likely to have dissolved with the networks themselves. Still at this point, the population that moved from the countryside to the emerging fishing villages is unlikely to have made any considerable linguistic alterations; these people had little reason to feel ashamed of the language they used as they already spoke a form of Icelandic which the official standard, established largely through nationalistic sentiments, was to a considerable extent based on. Also, there were few if any dialectal differences which could have had an unsettling effect when people from various rural regions congregated in the villages. To this it can be added that during this process the nationalistic arguments emanating from the political debate seem to have reached most levels of society and thereby further strengthened the role of language in the construction of the nation. This should have given further weight to the vernacular language as an integral element in

being Icelandic. Thus nationalism seems on the whole to have in many ways overtaken the stabilizing role of the formerly tight and stable social networks and guided the Icelandic language through times of considerable social and political unrest. Its effect is then likely to have been further consolidated by an expanding centralized educational system in Iceland. Primary school education was made compulsory in 1907 for children aged 10-14 and in the first curricula the national sentiments are as evident as could be expected, given the political climate of the time (Hauksdóttir, 2001).

3.1.5 Nationalism and language in Iceland: The present situation

As can be seen from the above, Iceland mostly followed some of the examples discussed earlier (section 3.1.3) of how nationalism and language were forged together to form the foundations for an independent nation. I have also hinted that this link between the Icelandic nation and the Icelandic language remained intact and unquestioned from its final establishment around 1850 towards the end of the 20th century. It can even be said to have become normalized in a “Bourdiesquean” way through being constantly restated and reproduced in institutional as well as everyday practices by e.g. administrative, educational and mass medial means (cf. Blommaert, 1999). However, as we are now a few years into the 21st century, questions remain about the present situation. Is the Icelandic language still the main defining characteristic of the Icelandic nation and, to the extent that nationalism still exists in Iceland, how does it affect the linguistic situation? The answers to these questions appear to be much less clear-cut now than they would have been a few decades ago.

In the past 10-15 years or so, the Icelandic national identity, which was formerly quite uniform and firmly rooted in “purely” Icelandic language and cultural history, seems have become more diversified. This seems primarily to be the result of increased globalism, or at least increased contacts between Iceland and the outer world, especially the Anglo-American part of it, and the ensuing pressures on Icelandic of the English language, which thus seems to have overtaken the role played by Danish in the 19th century. Árnadóttir (2000) depicts this development by dividing the present Icelandic population into four groups. The first consists of the “purists” in nationalistic terms. They refer to Icelandic language, history and nature when defining the nation, attend all sorts of nationalistically inspired events, are regular readers of the sagas, buy luxury editions of Jónas Hallgrímsson’s¹¹ poetry and believe that Iceland is more or less doomed should the Icelandic language be lost. Most people in this group are middle aged or older, many of them were raised in rural areas, they were spoon-fed with the traditional nationalistic ideals at school and they would be strongly opposed to joining the EU.

¹¹ One of the “Fjölnismenn”; see section 3.1.4.

The second group is less fundamental in its stance and embraces the traditional Icelandic version of nationalism more for practical reasons, as this has hitherto been both fashionable and politically correct. The people here are generally middle aged or slightly younger, well-educated and prosperous. They follow the cultural trends, read the latest Icelandic novels, buy the collected works of Jónas Hallgrímsson and while they generally live in urban centres, they have trekked across most of Iceland and at least make symbolical protests against projects which might damage the unspoilt image of Icelandic nature. Finally, this group is somewhat divided as regards the EU, as joining it would probably have beneficial effects for some of the group's members.

The third group consists predominantly of relatively young people who live in urban centres and are generally less educated than the members of the previous two groups. This group takes no interest in Jónas Hallgrímsson and could not care less whether Icelandic nature is left unspoilt or is utilized through large dams and similar constructions. Nonetheless, this group probably considers itself no less Icelandic than the previous groups; it is just that its national pride rests not on language, culture or nature but rather on e.g. how well the Icelandic national handball team does in this or that tournament or the international success of Björk, an Icelandic pop icon.

The fourth and final group also mainly contains young people, born after ca 1970. They were born and raised in an urban environment, are well-educated, especially in the fields of business/economics and information technology, and aim at making the world their place of work since they are generally not tied down by family or domestic life. They support the utilization of Icelandic nature and virtually anything else which will bring economic profits and connect Iceland to the outer world. They would like Iceland to join the EU as soon as possible and read Anglo-American literature on economics and politics rather than Jónas Hallgrímsson. This is, in other words, the global generation among which internationally successful Icelandic companies evoke the same feelings as the sagas do in the first group.

This is of course a very rough division and Árnadóttir presents it in the same light-hearted fashion as it is reproduced above. Nonetheless, this grouping, which thus seems to be symptomatic of the current situation, is quite clearly mirrored in the lively public debates on the status of Icelandic which have arisen at regular intervals during the last 10-15 years within the more general discussion of Iceland's position in the world in this modern day and age. To give an example, one of the most recent of these debates, which are mainly carried out by academics and prominent cultural personalities, arose in the beginning of 2006 when a seminar on the status of Icelandic was arranged. The same weekend this topic was also the main subject of *Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, a weekly cultural magazine which accompanies *Morgunblaðið*, one of Iceland's leading newspapers. The source of the discussion, both at the seminar and in the *Lesbók*, appears primarily to have been doubts about the future prospects of Icelandic as it

becomes increasingly exposed to English influences. The reactions to these doubts, as they emerged, both at the seminar and in the *Lesbók*, on the one hand and in the ensuing debate on the other, show how the links between language and nation are now not taken as much and as unanimously for granted as they were before. Rather, they show signs of a more diversified national identity, much along the lines of Árnadóttir's group division above.

As can probably be expected, given the strength of the traditional nationalistic view over the last century and a half, it had its representatives in this debate. Thus Páll Valsson, head of publishing at an Icelandic publishing company, caught most of the headlines by echoing the 200-year-old prophecy of Rask that Icelandic will be an extinct language within the next 100 years (Huldudóttir, 2006).¹² That this is detrimental, Valsson supports by means which the Fjölismenn would probably have been proud of, as he claims that there are two factors that set Icelanders apart from the rest of the world and justify that they can be called a nation. These are Icelandic nature and the Icelandic language. While he sees a rise in Iceland in the general awareness of nature, Valsson argues that the opposite is true as regards language and if the tide is not turned, Rask's prediction will finally become reality.¹³

Valsson can thus be seen as a representative of the first of Árnadóttir's (2000) groups, and the same can be said about Matthías Johannessen, a well-known poet in Iceland and former editor of *Morgunblaðið*, who also spoke at the seminar. He posed the question why the language of as small a population as the Icelandic one should be maintained. The answer was as follows (quoted in Huldudóttir, 2006, p. 20):

Ástæðurnar eru margar. Þær eru allar mikilvægar. Þær snerta kvikuna í Íslendingseðli okkar, þær eru vitnisburður um það hvaðan við erum komin og hvernig þessari löngu leið í kaupstaðinn hefur verið háttað. Minna á svaðilfarir myrkra aldra og hvernig okkur tókst að sækja í kaupstaðinn þrátt fyrir allt. Minna á sigrana sem unnir hafa verið á vegleysum þessarar miklu heiðar sem við köllum sögu Íslendinga. Minna á hvað tókst í nafni þessarar tungu, þessarar arfleifðar sem hún hefur varðveitt og það er í þessari arfleifð sem þjóðin eignaðist sitt ræktaða og nærandi stolt.¹⁴

¹² On the evening of the seminar this claim was presented as one of the main headlines in the news of both RÚV and Stöð 2, the leading television channels in Iceland. It was treated in the same way in the main news broadcasts on the state-run radio channels which have national coverage. This in itself of course indicates that while the stand taken towards Icelandic may not be as unified as before the language is still regarded very much as a matter of public interest and relevance.

¹³ Similar claims regarding the increasing importance of nature as a national symbol for Iceland – at the expense of language – can be found in e.g. Hálfðanarson (1999).

¹⁴ “The reasons are many. They are all important. They touch the core of our Icelandic nature, they are a testimony of where we come from and of our long journey into town. They remind us of the perilous adventures of dark ages and how we were able to reach town despite the

Despite being spoken in the 21st century, these words sound more like something said in the midst of the fight for independence in the 19th century. It may be more debatable whether or not Johannessen's arguments can really be seen as an answer to his own question.

An article in the *Lesbók* gives examples of views which can be said to represent the other end of the nationalistic scale and are at least close to falling into the fourth of Árnadóttir's (2000) groups. In the article, representatives of the three largest banks in Iceland are interviewed about the standing of Icelandic vs. English as a working language, but all three banks have in recent years become increasingly international in their outlook and invest heavily abroad (Geirsdóttir, 2006). The representative of one of the banks simply claims that English has become the working language. All board meetings are said to be conducted in English, as some board members are not Icelandic, and annual reports are only published in English. E-mails which are sent to all employees are generally in both English and Icelandic, but, according to the representative, it happens that only the former language is used for these purposes. Using only Icelandic does, however, not seem to be an option. This bank's spokesperson justifies this prominence of English by referring to the international environment in which the bank works where English seems to be a *lingua franca*.

This prominence of English does not seem to have reached quite the same level in the other two banks and, according to their representatives, Icelandic remains the core language for business even though English is used for international operations. It may of course also be the case that the spokesperson of the first bank overestimates or overstates the importance of English. Thus, even though it may well be the case that English is widely used at managerial level and in international operations, it seems likely that most "everyday" operations within the Icelandic community are run in Icelandic. Thus I can add, on a personal note, that I have been a customer of the bank in question since I opened my first bank account as a teenager and I have yet to receive any services in any other language than Icelandic. Nonetheless, the comments recounted above indicate a clear English-oriented global ambition.

In between these extremes more intermediate views were presented, especially in the debate which followed the seminar and the discussion in the *Lesbók*. What these views share with the more nationalistic ones is an explicit desire to preserve the Icelandic language. The differences, however, lie in the motivation behind this desire, and the arguments presented by this intermediate group show few signs of the traditional nationalism. Rather, this group points to the impossibility of trying to keep Icelandic in a linguistic straight-jacket where an almost absolute stability is the ultimate goal in order to preserve the continuity

circumstances. They remind us of the victories which have been won in the wilderness of this great heath which we call the history of Icelanders. They remind us of what was achieved in the name of this language, this legacy which it has preserved and it is through this legacy that the nation achieved its nourished and nourishing pride." (My translation)

and historical roots of the language of the “golden age”. Furthermore, these strongly nationalistic sentiments are seen as undesirable as they are only a short step away from nationalism’s less friendly cousin, racism, and other similar élitist ideologies. Icelandic should certainly be maintained, but the reasons for this can be said to be democratic and practical rather than nationalistic. Thus, while representatives of this group point out that Icelandic is first and foremost a tool to transmit thoughts and feelings, just like any other language, it is the language still used by the overwhelming majority of the Icelandic population in most domains and is thus the most suitable to ensure equal opportunities for everyone to take part of and participate in a democratic society. Other arguments for the maintenance of Icelandic include e.g. the claim that Icelandic, in the same way as other languages, has an intrinsic value and the world would be all the poorer if this contribution to its cultural diversity were to be lost. Finally, in this group the fear of English does not seem to be as strong as in the nationalistic camp. The view taken here is rather that knowledge of English is necessary in the modern world, but as long as the Icelanders’ knowledge and usage of Icelandic is maintained, English does not necessarily pose a threat; it becomes more of a complement (Ágústsson, 2006; Einarsson, 2006; Hálfðanarson, 2006; Jónsson, 2006; Magnússon, 2006). At the same time, however, questions have been raised about the general perception of most Icelanders that they speak quite good English (Jakobsson, 2006).

As a final point in this discussion, it should be mentioned that all the main political parties in Iceland were asked to present their language policies as a part of the debate in the previously mentioned *Lesbók*. In terms of the relationship between Icelandic language and the Icelandic nation the parties generally seem to line up with the intermediate group just discussed. While there are some comments which can be seen as nationalistic, such as references to Icelandic as the national language, the importance of the language, which is certainly stressed, is done so more through arguments of the democratic and practical kind mentioned above (*Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 2006). There are also no clear differences between the parties in this respect, which in itself can be seen as an indicator of the common agreement there seems to exist on the role played by Icelandic in the society. The more directly language policy-oriented views of the parties will be discussed later (section 3.3.2).

As valuable as the debate described above may be as an indicator of the now more diversified view of the connection between language and nation in Iceland its limits should be clearly marked. As mentioned above, debates of this kind tend to be carried out by academics and prominent cultural personalities and this last example is no exception. The participation of the general public is marginal and as no research seems to have been carried out on the public view on these matters very little information exists. To this it should be added that research on everyday, spontaneous language is also very limited in an Icelandic context and thus little is known about the present linguistic impact that

nationalism may have there. Still, some indirect indication can perhaps be obtained from two recent studies. In an examination of the language use and linguistic attitudes of Icelanders who lived in the Uppsala region in Sweden, Gísladóttir (2002) found that this group had a clear Icelandic identity. The majority of its members were determined in maintaining their Icelandic and wanted their children to learn the language. In many cases, the motivation behind this was of a clear nationalistic nature which might indicate that nationalism still plays a considerable part in the maintenance and thereby possibly the stability of the language. However, care should be taken not to read too much into these results as it is doubtful how applicable they are to the current situation in Iceland. From Gísladóttir's study it can be deduced that being a foreigner abroad can sharpen one's original national identity which can lead to a special emphasis being placed on various national symbols such as language. This seems particularly applicable to a large part of Gísladóttir's informants who were in Uppsala for educational purposes and intended to return to Iceland upon the completion of their studies. A desire to maintain one's native language in this intermediate period is probably quite understandable as it ensures an easy return to home soil. We can thus not be certain that Gísladóttir's subjects are representative of Icelanders in Iceland, or even those Icelanders living in Sweden who have no intention of returning to Iceland.

The other study which may provide some indirect information on the present link between language and nationalism amongst the general Icelandic public is the Icelandic part of a larger Nordic research project on the attitudes towards and the influence of English in the Nordic countries (Árnason, 2005). In the results of this Icelandic part, it emerged e.g. that roughly half of the 801 subjects had used English most days or several times a day during the week prior to their participation in the study. Another 33% of the group had used English once or not at all in the same period.¹⁵ Interestingly, English was used more by those who had the highest education and income, which might be indicative of the first stages of a development similar to that in e.g. Ireland. There Irish came to be seen as a symbol of backwardness, whereas English was seen as a key to progress and prosperity (Barbour, 2000b). However, the Icelandic informants also oppose themselves strongly to the use of English as both a work-place language and a global language and generally agree with the originally nationalistically inspired Icelandic policy of coining Icelandic equivalents of English terminology (Árnason, 2005). This would indicate that the average Icelandic falls somewhere between the two extremes of nationalism and *laissez-faire* discussed above. However, just as is the case with Gísladóttir's (2002) study above, it is doubtful how much this study tells us about how nationalism affects the current linguistic climate in Iceland. In this case, the main reason for these

¹⁵ Note that "using English" here refers not to code-switching but to using English as the medium of communication.

doubts is that here the focus is on English and the attitudes towards and usage of it and therefore this study, although it is certainly valuable in its own right, can at best provide information on the effects of nationalism on Icelandic in a very indirect way.

As can be seen from the discussion above, there still exists very little information on how nationalism and language are currently intertwined amongst the general Icelandic public, and we know equally little about if, and then how, nationalism may contribute to the stability of the Icelandic language. The results presented later in this thesis (Chapter 6) will hopefully shed some light on these matters. For the time being, however, we set our sights on further broadening the approach for examining language stability by taking a closer look at another factor which may play an important part in this respect. Here I am referring to attitudes. Their potential effect has been hinted at indirectly on a few occasions in the discussion above, but now we turn our attention to a more direct examination of the possible relationship between attitudes and language stability.

3.2 Attitudes and language

In this section, the possible effect of attitudinal factors on language stability will be examined. The discussion starts with a brief general survey of how attitudinal research has been applied to linguistic contexts. This is then followed by an examination of the possible effect of language attitudes on the stability of the Icelandic language.

3.2.1 Language attitudes

Language attitude study is of course a branch of the more general study of attitudes, which has primarily been carried out within the field of social psychology. Therefore, the concept of attitude is probably a natural starting point. Here two main trends can be discerned. On the one hand, there is the so-called mentalist view where, to give one example of how the concept is defined in this camp, an attitude is seen as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution or event” (Ajzen, 1988: 4). In this mentalist definition, attitude is generally seen to incorporate three sub-components. These are affect or emotion, cognition, and behaviour. Affect refers to people’s feelings about a given object, cognition to people’s thoughts or beliefs about the object, and behaviour to people’s predisposition to behave in a certain way towards the object (Fasold, 1987; Ladegaard, 2000; Oakes, 2001). As can be seen from this, the mentalist view regards attitude as primarily an internal state which means that any research on the subject calls for self-reports from the subjects in question or indirect inference from behaviour (Fasold, 1987).

On the other hand, there is the behaviourist view of attitudes. Here attitudes are seen as observable behavioural responses to stimuli and social

situations (Fasold, 1987; Wingstedt, 1998). Members of this camp also view attitudes as single units rather than consisting of sub-parts as is the belief among mentalists. Another difference from the mentalist camp is that within the behaviourist framework, research on attitudes relies primarily simply on observing overt behaviour.

To then turn more directly to language attitudes, this is now a thriving field where most of the work rests on the mentalist view (Fasold, 1987). Following the mentalist definition of attitudes in general above, this means that most frequently language attitudes are seen as a disposition to respond in some way favourably or unfavourably to language. This means that the study of language attitudes is quite a broad field and, as can probably be expected, it has been approached in a number of ways. However, the main emphasis appears to have been placed on people's attitudes towards specific languages or language varieties in order to further establish the social significance of language e.g. in terms of the group membership of speakers and listeners' evaluations of the groups in question (Preston, 2002; Wingstedt, 1998). More often than not, this has been placed in the context of minority vs. majority groups and the attitudes they display towards the dominated and/or the dominant language (Oakes, 2001).

Research carried out within this framework suggests that, much as attitudes in general, language attitudes can be divided into sub-components. One such distinction assumes that language attitudes are two-dimensional, where one dimension is instrumental, whereas the other is integrative. Instrumental attitudes are primarily self-oriented and "reflect pragmatic, utilitarian motives, such as improving or maintaining socio-economic status through knowledge of a certain language" (Oakes, 2001, p. 31). Integrative attitudes, on the other hand, can be said to be interpersonal and reflect a speaker's wish to identify with a certain language group (Oakes, 2001).

Another distinction has been suggested where language attitudes are seen as three-dimensional. The three dimensions in question are superiority, social attractiveness and dynamism. The first of these dimensions reflects attitudinal judgments made about aspects such as speakers' intelligence and prestige. The second dimension refers to e.g. the likeability and honesty of the speaker in question, and the third to e.g. his or her enthusiasm and confidence (Garrett, 2001). In research carried out on language attitudes, one of these dimensions appears to evoke the strongest response amongst subjects. The dimension in question is superiority, as people seem to be especially prone to make comments about the level of correctness in the speech of the person they listen to. In other words, this suggests that people tend generally to have clear and strong views on the rights and wrongs in language, and the other two basic dimensions and their various aspects are much less likely to be commented upon (Garrett, 2001; Preston, 2002). Preston (2002) has used these results to form a folk theory of language which in his view is an essential element of all language attitude study. According to this theory, the folk view, which is largely based on ideas about

correctness, is that language is external to human cognitive embedding. This is the place of “real”, rule-governed language, such as English, which is presumably correct, but by deviating from this extra-cognitive reality speakers move, as it were, downwards from good language to more concrete dialectal features or simply errors and bad language. By comparison, the linguistic theory generally assumes, according to Preston (p. 63), “one moves up (and away from) the concrete reality of language as a cognitively embedded fact in the capacities of individual speakers to the social constructions of language similarity.” These higher level constructs Preston sees as socially real but considerably more abstract than the “real” language of individual speakers. Preston’s ideas about the folk view are echoed by Milroy and Milroy (1999) who claim that, at least as far as English is concerned, people tend to assume that there is one, and only one, way of speaking and/or writing and that this standard is what ought to be used, whereas deviations away from it are regarded as illiteracies or barbarisms.

Work along these lines can be seen as a partial answer to the call made earlier for a broader approach in the study of language change and stability. By taking attitudinal factors into consideration, alongside the traditional social categories of e.g. age and gender, as well as both social networks and more recent frameworks, such as communities of practice and geographical and language contact aspects, a fuller view of the social background of change or stability can be achieved. Thankfully, there appears to be some agreement on the need to do this, as it now seems clear that language attitudes are one of the factors which can predict patterns of sociolinguistic behaviour (Ladegaard, 2000), including tendencies for change and stability. Garrett (2001, p. 630) even goes so far as to say that “[t]he systematic patterns that appear in social evaluations provide us with data that is perhaps of even more importance than descriptive distributional data in the explanation of language maintenance and change, language shift, language death and language revival” and that “since explanations of sociolinguistic phenomena are most likely to be found in social psychological processes, language attitudes are a key component of sociolinguistic theory-building”.

Having said this, the problems and limitations of language attitude studies should not be forgotten. First of all, regardless of whether a mentalist or behaviourist standpoint is taken, attitudes are not concrete entities which can simply be collected and counted. Thus, in the mentalist approach, the unreliability of self-reports poses a severe problem as there is no guarantee that the reported attitudes are the subjects’ real attitudes rather than the attitudes they believe to be appropriate in the given context. This problem has partly been side-stepped by using e.g. matched-guise techniques where language attitudes are inferred on the basis of the subjects’ behaviour or evaluation of languages or language varieties (Fasold, 1987; Oakes, 2001), but these techniques have their own shortcomings. For example, studies using these techniques are in a sense artificial as they are generally carried out in an experimental rather than a real-

life context, where subjects only get to listen to recordings of speakers and their judgments are extracted on the basis of their reactions to these recordings and voices alone. Another problem relates to validity, as even though the inferential attitude data collected in matched-guise studies may be more reliable than simple self-reports, it is still uncertain that the former actually provide information about people's real attitudes, and reaching a stage where there is no uncertainty in this respect is well-nigh impossible. As for the behaviourist approach the main problem there is that the information on attitudes obtained through direct observation cannot be applied to predict other behaviour (Fasold, 1987).

Ladegaard (2000) points out some further limitations of language attitude studies. Thus he claims that even though language attitudes may be used to predict sociolinguistic behaviour and that there may be a correlation between the two, this correlation should not be equalled with causation. In a study carried out on Danish adolescents, he found no significant relationship between his subjects' attitudes towards a given variety of speech and their linguistic performance in a school context. On this basis he concludes that attitudes do not necessarily cause behavioural patterns. He then puts this in a wider context and says that it would be difficult to claim that language attitudes determine linguistic change. This can, in turn, be said to be a reflection of Labov's (1972) claim that attitudes come into play only after the change in question begins.

Despite these problems and limitations, it seems clear that, as long as there is an awareness of attitudes, adding such a component to the social categories mentioned above in the study of language stability and change should be quite valuable, as it further broadens the approach in the quest to obtain a clearer picture of the social background of the speakers studied. Indeed, attitudes are frequently taken into consideration in the study of language change, an example being Labov's well-known work on a number of sound changes in Philadelphia speech which included a set of interview questions aimed specifically at the subjects' evaluations of their own speech (Labov, 2001). It has also already been mentioned that attitudes have often been studied in the context of majority vs. minority languages, and work along these lines has established that attitudinal factors and the processes of language maintenance and shift can go hand in hand, often in direct combination with the nationalistically inspired sentiments discussed in the previous section (Barbour and Carmichael, 2000; Oakes, 2001).

Despite all this, one aspect is yet again missing, just as it was missing with respect to the interplay between nationalism and language discussed in the previous section and to the theoretical frameworks regarding language change and variation discussed in chapter 2. The aspect in question is stability, as it is hardly touched upon at all in any direct way when the effects of attitudes on language are examined. Rather, there are some indirect hints, such as claims that "[t]he course of sound change is apparently influenced by whether the change is favored or disfavored by the speech community" (Fasold, 1987: 148). Here one

would assume that stability is maintained when an emerging change is disfavoured but this other side of the coin seems rarely to be studied to any extent. Conversely, on the few occasions that stability is addressed directly, it tends to be linked only indirectly to attitudes. Thus e.g. Milroy and Milroy (1999) mention two kinds of mechanisms that tend to encourage stability; one is covert and informal pressure exerted by peer-groups or social groups, whereas the other is overt and institutional enforcement of norms carried out by means of educational and broadcasting systems. Here attitudes seem likely to play a part in shaping both the covert and the overt pressures.

It should be mentioned that it is not perfectly clear whether Milroy and Milroy are referring in the above to stability as such, or more to language maintenance, but even if they are referring to maintenance it seems likely that many attitudinal factors that are at work in such a context can be applied also to a context of stability, even though the issue in the latter is the preservation of a certain form of a given language rather than the maintenance or survival of the language which, in the given linguistic community, is under threat from another language. Nonetheless this transfer from the maintenance context to the stability context appears not to have been made to any extent.

As before one can only speculate about the causes of the neglect of this subfield within language attitude studies. Nonetheless, it seems likely that we here yet again arrive at the same answer as before, namely that even though change and stability are two sides of the same coin, one side, i.e. change, is seen as the more worthy of study, both simply because examining change and motion is more interesting than observing something that is by and large static, and because of the basic sociolinguistic assumption that all languages change. I would like to reiterate, however, that the other side of the coin is not only interesting in itself but should also be examined if a full understanding of its opposite side is to be acquired. A step in this direction is to briefly examine the possible connection between language attitudes and the stability of the Icelandic language.

3.2.2 Attitudes and language in an Icelandic context

In sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 above we saw that there is a well-established link between language and nationalism in Iceland and that this link has been studied to some extent, even though it has not been put in any direct connection with the stability of the Icelandic language. Unfortunately, the same can not be said about the possible links between attitudes and language in Iceland, as this is a field that has hitherto been largely neglected in an Icelandic context. With this knowledge in hand it probably comes as little surprise that the possible effects of language attitudes on Icelandic have hardly been examined at all and are only mentioned in the literature in an indirect way.

Let us nonetheless take a brief look at the few available traces of information on how attitudes may have affected the Icelandic language, not the least in terms of stability. To start with the historical background, Böðvarsson (1964) claims that very little can be discerned about language attitudes in Iceland prior to the early 17th century when, as we saw in section 3.1.4 above, Arngrímur Jónsson “the learned” spells out his pride in the continuity of the Icelandic language. These first direct signs of language attitudes in Iceland thus go hand in hand with the initial emergence of nationalistic sentiments in the country and, as will become clear in this discussion, this connection seems to have been quite strong ever since. The reason for the lack of any clear attitudes towards Icelandic prior to ca. 1600 may, on the other hand, perhaps be explained by the fact mentioned in section 3.1.4 that it is not until 1558 that the term Icelandic is used for the first time in writing for the language spoken in Iceland (Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). It seems reasonable to assume that clear attitudes towards Icelandic *per se* were formed only after it became viewed as a separate language.

Once Icelandic had gained this status of a separate language in the minds of Icelanders themselves, occasional attitudinal comments were made by people writing in one way or another about the language. Interestingly, many of these comments reveal that the stability of Icelandic is seen as valuable in itself. Thus Þórður Þorláksson, who was a bishop in Skálholt in the south of Iceland wrote in 1688 (quoted in Böðvarsson, 1964, p. 191) that

“[o]skandi væri þess, að vær heldom við vort gamla Mopurmaal, sem Forfeþr Vorir brukat hafa, og briaaluþum því ekki, því skealdann fer betur þegar breytt er, seiger gamall Maalshattur. Mætti það oss heldur til hropurs horfa, at vær heldom oumbreittu því gamla oc vidfræga Norræno maali, sem brukat hefur verit at fornu i miklum parti Norþurhalfunnar, einkum Danmørk, Noregi, Sviariki etc.¹⁶

On a similar note, Jón Ólafsson, a prolific 18th century writer, delivered a speech to Icelandic students in Copenhagen shortly after 1730, in which he spoke in admiring words about the stability of Icelandic which he compares to the distortion other languages have suffered due to immigration from other countries (Böðvarsson, 1964). Stability is, in other words, seen as a key characteristic of Icelandic. At the same time, a nationalistic undertone is evident in the words of both Þórður Þorláksson and Jón Ólafsson, even though nationalism in the modern sense had not emerged when they presented their views. This connection between nationalism and the value of stability was to become all the clearer during the fight for independence, as witnessed e.g. by the Icelandic petition from 1918

¹⁶ “It is desirable that we preserve our old mother tongue which our forefathers used and not distort it as change rarely leads to improvement as the old saying goes. We should rather take pride in keeping unchanged the old and famous Nordic language which was formerly used in large parts of the North, especially in Denmark, Norway and Sweden etc.” (My translation)

where the stability of the Icelandic language is presented as an argument for the nationhood of Iceland (see section 3.1.4).

Although attitudes have been directly addressed no more frequently in recent years than in previous centuries, it seems that the views mentioned above have remained largely intact, at least in academic and official circles. Thus, as Böðvarsson rounds off his article on the development of attitudes towards Icelandic, he echoes the earlier attitudes of Þórður Þorláksson and Jón Ólafsson. Thus he says that (1964, p. 200)

[s]kólamenn hafa löngum fylgt hreitungustefnunni dyggilega og staðið trúan vörð um móðurmálið að því leyti, enda sæmir ekki annað uppalendum nýrrar kynslóðar, sem á að taka við móðurmálinu og skila því sem fullkornustu til framtíðarinnar.¹⁷

A later example from academic circles can be found in Gíslason, Jónsson, Kristmundsson and Þráinsson (1988) who, in an overview of the Icelandic language community, write that one of the main benefits of Icelandic is how stable it has remained throughout the centuries. They support this claim by saying in a factual way that Icelanders can, without any serious difficulty, read texts in Old Icelandic and then they pose the question how Icelanders would feel if *Njáls saga*, one of the best known Icelandic sagas, would have to be translated into modern Icelandic. No answer is given to this question which is probably due to the authors believing it to be all too obvious.

As for the note struck in various official documents, the national curriculum for Icelandic in elementary schools serves as a good example. In the curriculum from 1989 the importance of stability is spelled out, as it is seen as imperative that a strong link is maintained between modern Icelandic and the earliest Icelandic literature. Interestingly, stability features less clearly in the newest curriculum, which is from 1999. There more emphasis is placed on the role of Icelandic in strengthening the Icelandic national identity. This might in turn be an official response to the seeming loosening, discussed in section 3.1.5 above, of traditional values regarding the connection between the Icelandic language and the Icelandic nation.

Although the possible connection has never been examined, it seems likely that the abovementioned positive official and academic attitudes towards the stability of Icelandic have played their part in maintaining this stability over the last decades. Care should be taken, however, not to over-emphasize this role. The main reason for this is that even though these attitudes are likely to be known to the general public in Iceland, via e.g. the educational system, this does not automatically mean that a majority of the Icelandic population holds these same

¹⁷ “In schools the policy of purism has been strictly adhered to and thereby the mother tongue has been defended, as befits those who raise a new generation which is supposed to inherit the mother tongue to then pass it on to the future in as perfect a state as possible.” (My translation)

views. On this we have very little information as hardly any research exists on Icelanders' attitudes towards their own language in general, and none of the little research of this kind that exists deals specifically with the connection between attitudes and the stability of the language. Therefore we have to rely more or less on indirect ways to obtain information about the attitudes of the general Icelandic public towards the Icelandic language. Here we can again turn to the two studies discussed in section 3.1.5 above regarding the connection between nationalism and the stability of Icelandic. Thus, many of Gísladóttir's (2002) informants, who were Icelanders living in Sweden, claimed not only that they wanted to maintain the Icelandic language and hoped that their children did so too; they also wanted to maintain the "proper" or "correct" form of Icelandic. Of course, much the same warnings against generalizations to Icelanders elsewhere apply here as in section 3.1.5. First, being a foreigner abroad often awakens a need to strengthen one's original national identity of which language is more often than not an integral part. Second, many of Gísladóttir's informants intended to return to Iceland and in such circumstances it is probably only natural that people want to maintain their native language as the return to the home country could otherwise become unnecessarily problematic, particularly for children. We have no guarantee that sentiments of this kind are reflected by Icelanders living in Iceland. To this it should be added that when using terms such as "proper" or "correct", the informants in Gísladóttir's study seem to be referring more to Icelandic that is free from foreign influences picked up in Sweden than to Icelandic that adheres strictly to norms regarding e.g. inflections and pronunciation. The former issue, i.e. not picking up influences from the foreign language in question, is likely to be more relevant for Icelanders living abroad than for those who live in Iceland.

The other study discussed in this context in section 3.1.5 was the Nordic study on attitudes towards and the influence of English in the Nordic countries (Árnason, 2005). As seen above, it seems that the majority of Icelanders use English as a medium of communication on a regular basis. This may of course mean that English is overtaking some of the domains which have hitherto belonged entirely to Icelandic, but at the same time the informants are in general adamant that Icelandic be used in contexts other than those requiring English, and that this Icelandic should be as free as possible of English influence as regards vocabulary. For my purposes, the problem with this study is of course that it focuses on attitudes towards English rather than Icelandic, and even though the informants seem to have a positive attitude towards the stability of Icelandic vocabulary, there is little information to be discerned regarding attitudes to other aspects of the language. The results here are, in other words, mainly applicable to a context where Icelandic can be said to be in competition with English rather than in a context where Icelandic is regarded on its own from a stability perspective.

Apart from using the two studies mentioned above, information on language attitudes in Iceland can mainly be obtained by studying the “letters-to-the-editor” that regularly appear in Icelandic newspapers. In general these letters fall firmly within the frame of correctness mentioned in the last section, in that the authors point to one or more specific features which they believe to be changing and this is generally regarded as a dangerous development. The desirability of stability is thus further ascertained. At the same time, however, it should be kept in mind that the authors in question are only a small fraction of the general Icelandic public and how representative their views are is at best uncertain.¹⁸

There is no self-evident reason for the lack of research on language attitudes towards Icelandic. One possible explanation can be found in the fact that it may be only recently that any need to address the issue arose. Thus Árnason (2005) points out that Icelandic has always been the only language in Iceland; there have never been any language minority groups, even though there was a strong Danish influence for centuries. There has, in other words, and to use the terminology of Oakes (2001), never been any strong Other against which the Icelandic linguistic Self has had to compete or be compared against. Interestingly, this lack of a specific external Other in linguistic terms may of course have paved the way for an internal one, namely change, thereby finding a channel for the opposition to the Other. In any case, the status of Icelandic has been more or less unquestioned and this, possibly together with the homogeneity of the population, may have led to the conclusion that Icelanders also share their attitudes regarding their language and that this requires no further examination. At present, however, a need to study Icelanders’ language attitudes may be arising due to increasing pressure from English which thus emerges as an Other (with the potential to replace the more “internal” Other of change). This need may already have been felt and expressed in some way by the general Icelandic public, as is indirectly pointed out by Whelpton (2000) in an interesting paper on his perspective as a foreigner on the Icelandic linguistic identity. Here he mentions the strong Icelandic tendency to view both the country and the language as something extraordinary in comparison to other countries and languages. At the same time, Icelanders seem to have a strong need to have this uniqueness confirmed which results in the first question most foreigners get from Icelanders when they visit the country: “How do you like Iceland?”¹⁹ Whelpton sees this as

¹⁸ Note that “letters-to-the-editor” and similar expressions of concern for language from the general public are by no means a specifically Icelandic phenomenon. See e.g. Andersson and Ringarp’s (2007) book *Språket* which discusses and answers a selection of questions on e.g. language change and correctness sent in, by members of the public, to the radio programme *Språket* (= “The language”).

¹⁹ Again this is not a specifically Icelandic phenomenon. At least I was frequently asked similar questions during the two four year periods (one as a child, the other as an adult) I lived as a foreigner in Sweden.

a sign of insecurity amongst Icelanders about the value of Icelandic in the modern and increasingly globalized world, despite its importance in establishing the nation's identity.

As a final note in this section, it should be mentioned that even though it seems to be largely taken for granted that the stability of Icelandic is seen in a positive light, the emphasis placed on this stability has not gone entirely unquestioned. Thus both Hannesson (1973) and Pálsson (1981) argue that the strictness with which the stability policy has been applied in Iceland is a major causal factor behind language change in the country as it has more or less forced those who, due to their social background and/or circumstances, do not fully command the standard language to find new ways of expression. Pálsson also develops his arguments further and claims that, through their emphasis on language in isolation and its possible rights and wrongs, Icelandic linguists have dissolved the connection between the Icelandic language and the social background it stems from. Language in Iceland is thus seen as an entity that obeys its own laws outside and above human cognition. This comment is interesting in light of Preston's (2002) folk theory of language, according to which language is also seen as external to human cognition. The difference, however, is that Pálsson (1981) argues that, at least as far as Icelandic is concerned, this folk view can be traced to academic linguistic circles. Both Pálsson's and Hannesson's arguments suffer, however, from the fact that they are not backed by any empirical research and seem to be based exclusively on these authors' analysis and interpretation of the Icelandic language community. We are, therefore, in a sense back at the starting point as we seem not to have any direct evidence, one way or the other, regarding the attitudes of Icelanders towards Icelandic and the effect these attitudes may have had on the stability of the language. Admittedly, it seems likely that the previously mentioned positive official and academic attitudes towards stability have to some extent been echoed by the general public – as is testified e.g. by the almost complete lack of contradictory opinions voiced there or elsewhere – with maintained stability as a result, but further research is needed to confirm whether this is the case. Hopefully, the results from this study (see chapter 6) can be used as a first step towards determining the effect of language attitudes on the Icelandic language, not the least when they are put in the context of language planning and policies of linguistic purism which are the focus of the next section.

3.3 Language planning and policies

This third and last section within this chapter, which aims at broadening the perspective regarding the study of language stability, consists of a brief examination of the possible links between stability and language planning. As before, the discussion is in essence divided into two main parts. In the former, the issue will be addressed from a general perspective through a look at some of the

key concepts of language planning and its possible effects on language stability. In the latter, the features will be examined within an Icelandic context.

3.3.1 Language planning and language stability

The term ‘language planning’ is relatively new to the scientific literature as it was only introduced in 1959 by Einar Haugen, who in turn borrowed it from Uriel Weinreich, who had used it in a seminar in 1957 (Deumert, 2001). Planning language or intervening in one way or another in its structure and usage is, however, by no means a newly established activity. Indeed, it is probable that language intervention of some kind has been in existence for nearly as long as language itself and organized language planning can be traced at least as far back as to the foundation of the *Accademia della Crusca* in Florence, Italy, in 1582. The aim of this academy was to purify and invigorate the Italian language, an aim which was by and large echoed by its more famous counterpart, *L’Académie Française*, which was founded in 1635 by Cardinal de Richelieu, and did, in turn, become the model on which several similar academies in various parts of Europe were based as they were subsequently founded (Cooper, 1989; Vikør, 1994).

Despite this well-established trend of language planning as a practice, it was not until after World War II that it became a separate field of sociolinguistics or the sociology of language and, as was pointed out above, the term itself only came into use in 1959. Since then, language planning research has been quite a thriving field which has taken into consideration a wide variety of issues, the most prominent of which are probably language standardization, national language selection and the relationship between majority and minority languages (Deumert, 2001).

Given the broad spectrum of language planning research, it should come as little surprise that a wide range of definitions of the concept ‘language planning’ and its subject matter has been proposed. To start at the beginning; Haugen himself originally defined language planning as (quoted in Cooper, 1989, p. 29): “the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community”. As can probably be expected, this relatively narrow definition has been refined somewhat in later years and now language planning generally appears to be viewed along lines similar to those presented by Deumert (2001, p. 644) who says that “[l]anguage planning refers to deliberate, conscious, and future-oriented activities aimed at influencing the linguistic repertoire and behavior of speech communities, typically at state level.” Having said that this is the general present understanding of what language planning consists of, it is interesting for our purposes to note that it seems to vary somewhat just what “activities aimed at influencing the linguistic repertoire and behavior of speech communities” is taken to entail. With this, I mean to say that while some definitions include stability as at least a potential aim of language planning, others appear almost to

exclude it, focusing only on planning as a process in relation to linguistic change. Naturally, I side with definitions which take stability into consideration. However, as I will come to in more detail later in this section, even those authors who in this way acknowledge stability on a theoretical level in their approach, tend to leave it at that and stability is by and large kept aside in applications of the various theoretical approaches to concrete examples of instances of language planning. This is a general shortcoming of the currently available literature in this field.

Let us nonetheless quickly examine a few examples of both types of definitions of language planning mentioned above. To start with an example of a definition which accounts for stability, Cooper (1989, p. 45) regards language planning as: “*deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes*”. In an explanation of this definition, Cooper writes that he uses the term ‘influence’ rather than ‘change’ (p. 45) “inasmuch as the former includes the maintenance or preservation of current behavior, a plausible goal of language planning, as well as the change of current behavior.” As can be seen, Deumert’s definition above also uses the term ‘influence’ rather than ‘change’ which should probably be seen as a sign of her siding with Cooper on this matter. As for the other side, Thorburn’s (quoted in Cooper, 1989, p. 30) approach serves as a good example as he sees language planning as occurring “when one tries to apply the amalgamated knowledge of language to change the language behavior of a group of people”. Another example of this kind is Rubin’s and Jernudd’s definition (quoted in Cooper, 1989, p. 30) according to which “[l]anguage planning is *deliberate* language change; that is, changes in the systems of language code or speaking or both that are planned by organizations that are established for such purposes or given a mandate to fulfill such purposes”. I find it hard to accept definitions of this kind as they imply that language planning can only be aimed at change. The next section, which discusses language planning in an Icelandic context, should make it abundantly clear that stability is just as likely a goal of language planning as change is.

The different approaches emerging from the proposed definitions above show that there is no full agreement on whether or not language planning includes activities aiming to increase stability. However, the simple fact that this aspect is mentioned by some researchers, indicates that there is at least some awareness of it and its possible role as a goal of language planning, even though, as I lamented above, this has yet to lead to a closer examination of how this goal is reached. This awareness is heartening in itself, given the neglect stability has met in the issues discussed previously in this chapter, i.e. the possible interplay between stability, on the one hand, and research on linguistic nationalism and language attitudes, on the other.

To the discussion above it should be added that just as the definitions of language planning tend to differ as regards their outlook on stability vs. Change,

they show variation regarding a number of other issues. Thus Cooper (1989, p. 45) makes special mention of the fact that his definition, which is given above, “neither restricts the planners to authoritative agencies, nor restricts the type of the target group, nor specifies an ideal form of planning. Further, it is couched in behavioral rather than problem-solving terms.” With this Cooper appears to be responding to a number of other definitions, such as that of Rubin and Jernudd above, which not only see language planning as “planned by organizations that are established for such purposes” but also as (quoted in Cooper, 1989, p. 30) “focused on problem-solving and ... characterized by the formulation and evaluation of alternatives for solving language problems to find the best (or optimal, most efficient) decision.” I agree with Cooper here, mainly as it seems unnecessarily restrictive to assume, as Rubin and Jernudd seem to do, that planning can only be carried out at an organizational level. To me, it seems wiser to widen the concept of language planning to incorporate various unofficial groups and even the general public, and assume an interplay, at least potentially, between all these levels. In this I also agree with e.g. Ager (2001) and Vikør (1994), both of whom include individuals and various unofficial groups as potential sources of language planning. Furthermore, Ager (2001) is mainly concerned with the behavioural aspect of language planning and the various motives behind it. When all this is considered, it is probably only natural that the term ‘language planning’ is by no means the only one which has been used for the field under discussion. Other suggestions include terms such as ‘language engineering’, ‘glottopolitics’, ‘language development’, ‘language treatment’ and ‘language regulation’ (Cooper, 1989; Vikør, 1994). However, ‘language planning’ has clearly become the most widely accepted term.

When discussing language planning, the closely related concept of language policy should be mentioned. At times these two concepts have been treated as one but at present a distinction between the two appears to have become generally accepted. This distinction can be found in e.g. Schiffman’s (1996) examination of language policy where he quotes Bugarski’s definition from 1992 (p. 3) and says that language policy refers “to the policy of a society in the area of linguistic communication – that is, the set of positions, principles and decisions reflecting that community’s relationships to its verbal repertoire and communicative potential”. Cooper (1989, p. 29) puts this somewhat more concisely by saying that language policy mostly “refers to the goals of language planning”. Language planning, however, consists, according to Schiffman (1996, p. 3), of the “concrete measures taken within language policy to act on linguistic communication in a community, typically by directing the development of its languages”. Schiffman then embarks on a study of language policy in which he e.g. makes a distinction between overt and covert policy, where the former is formalized and official, while the latter is informal, unstated and primarily found at grass-roots level. This latter policy also tends to be ignored, according to Schiffman as the overt policy is generally taken at face value without paying

attention to what really happens at grass-roots level, even though there is no guarantee that the overt policy trickles down to all levels of society. Another noteworthy point made by Schiffman is that language policy is grounded in linguistic culture which includes e.g. the set of behaviours, attitudes, prejudices, folk belief systems and ways of thinking associated with a particular language. This seems to me to be a reasonable assumption, given my comment above about the necessity of including both unofficial groups and the general public in a definition of language planning and both Schiffman's and Cooper's views of language policy as referring to the goals of language planning. If language policy deals with the goals of language planning and planning is viewed as carried out cooperatively by official and unofficial groups, as well as by the general public, it follows naturally that the set of behaviours, attitudes, etc. Schiffman mentions cannot be excluded from language policy, even though they may to a large extent be found at the grass-roots level of covert policy.

Note that Schiffman's view of language policy in many ways reflects Ager's (2001) and Vikør's (1994) outlook on language planning mentioned above. Interestingly, however, Ager, presents a distinction between language planning and language policy that is somewhat different from Schiffman's. Thus, Ager (2001, p. 175) claims that "[p]olicy, as opposed to planning, is a term which ... represents the actions of those who hold power in society" and thereby places in policy an instance which is by most researchers seen as belonging to planning. Ager then identifies three types of policy-makers, i.e. of those who hold power in society. The first consists of powerful individuals, such as politicians, rulers and opinion-formers, the second of ruling groups or communities, e.g. of a religious, ethnic or economic nature, and the third of the state itself. Here I miss something resembling Schiffman's (1996) cultural grounding as, even though policy may represent the actions of those in power, it seems reasonable to assume that these actions can at least be taken on the basis of the language community as a whole. To his credit though, Ager adds to his discussion that the ultimate goal or ideal of language policy is stability in linguistic as well as other terms. This of course adds further weight to the potential connection, mentioned above, between stability and language planning in general.

In sum, it should have become clear that the view taken here of language planning and policy is that we need to include stability as a potential goal and assume that all levels of society can be involved. The discussion in the next section, as well as the results of this study, indicate that this broad approach is necessary.

Having now looked at how the concepts of language planning and language policy have been defined, let us take a closer look at the former to examine some of its inner workings. Here again Haugen (1966) is the main pioneer. He proposed a fourfold model aimed at explaining the typical workings of language planning. The first stage consists of selecting a norm. With this, Haugen means that in language planning it is necessary for the planners to choose

a certain language variety, normally social or regional, as a model on which a common norm for the linguistic community in question can be based. It has also been noted that two main types of selection can be discerned; monocentric selection and polycentric selection. The former refers to the selection of a single social or regional dialect as the norm, whereas the latter occurs when the selected norm is essentially a composite of features from various dialects (Deumert, 2003; Deumert and Vandebusch, 2003; Vikør, 1994).

This stage of selection is usually followed by what Haugen (1966) refers to as ‘codification of form’, involving the selection of a writing system and the development of form, i.e. the structure in terms of phonology, grammar, and lexicon, for the language in question. Haugen originally called the third stage ‘acceptance’ but now the term ‘implementation’ appears to be more commonly used (see e.g. Deumert, 2003; Deumert and Vandebusch, 2003). At this stage, the established norm is gradually diffused and – if the planning is successful – accepted by a language community. Finally, planning reaches a stage of elaboration, which means that the functions of the selected norm are extended as much as possible to widen its functional reach at the same time as it is adapted to new functions and challenges posed by e.g. innovations and new technologies. This stage is, in other words, an ongoing process (Deumert, 2001; Deumert and Vandebusch, 2003; Haugen, 1966).

In his presentation of these four stages of planning, Haugen (1966) divided them into two categories. He placed selection and codification in the former as they both deal with the form of language, by which he meant the establishment of a new norm or standard language which was then formalised by means of e.g. grammars and dictionaries. Acceptance, or implementation, and elaboration were placed in the latter category which Haugen regarded as referring to the function of language, i.e. how it diffused throughout the speech community and took on new functions. However – and perhaps somewhat confusingly – Haugen also claimed that selection and acceptance were primarily concerned with society, whereas codification and elaboration were mainly applicable to language. All in all, this categorization created a matrix which Haugen presented as a basis on which all language planning issues could be addressed.

To some extent, Haugen can be said to have been quite right in suggesting that his model provided researchers with the only tool needed for discussing and analysing language planning. At least, most subsequent research, and the generalisations it has resulted in, rests to a large extent on Haugen’s foundations, although of course some major amendments or further developments have been suggested. Thus, in 1969 Heinz Kloss presented an alternative to Haugen’s model which is based on a similar view of language planning as divided into linguistic concerns, on the one hand, and social concerns, on the other. According to Kloss, planners are engaged in ‘corpus planning’ when they deal with concerns aimed at the linguistic structure of the language or variety in question, but in ‘status planning’ when they deal with concerns aimed at changing its social function.

More recent developments of Haugen's (1966) and Kloss' (1969) original models include e.g. Cooper's (1989) approach which adds 'acquisition planning' to the two previously suggested levels. This type of planning refers, as Cooper (p. 157) puts it, "to organized efforts to promote the learning of a language". Another suggested addition to the different types of planning comes from Haarmann (1990) who introduced 'prestige planning' by which he refers to activities aimed at affecting a society's attitudes towards a language or variety. Other, more ideologically based approaches, have also been suggested, such as those of Ager (2001) and Schiffman (1996), mentioned above, who emphasise the cultural and motivational grounding of language planning. This can be said to be a response to a flaw in Haugen's original model which is that it does not take sufficiently into account motivations and non-linguistic aims of planners (Deumert and Vandebussche, 2003). Finally, Vikør (1994) uses his detailed account of language planning as a basis for his presentation of four groups of principles which underlie the various types of linguistic ideologies represented in language planning. The first group consists of internal linguistic principles, some of which are to a large extent opposed to each other. Thus, variation can in some cases of planning be encouraged while in other cases stability or a uniform standard is the main goal. The second group includes principles regarding the relationship with other languages and varieties and here Vikør recognises two main trends; approaching other languages or adapting the chosen standard to them, on the one hand, and purism, on the other. The third group of principles concerns the relationship between a language and its users. Just as in the first group of principles, some of the principles found here are to some extent contrastive. Thus a principle of prestige, i.e. basing the standard on the variety or varieties which have the highest prestige in the society in question, is evident in some cases, whereas an anti-prestige principle, i.e. promoting low-prestige varieties and forms to diminish social discrimination, is put to the fore in other cases. The fourth and final group of principles deals with the relationship to general ideologies which include e.g. nationalism, democracy or social equality, and liberalism. By means of this grouping, which points out that contrasting principles may be involved in various types of language planning, Vikør, in my view, also manages – intentionally or not – to add a valuable element to the original models. Models tend to be neat, tidy and even somewhat simplistic by nature, and this does in many ways apply to e.g. Haugen's (1966) and Kloss' (1969) proposals, while Vikør's approach comes closer to acknowledging the fact that language planning is often, as Cooper (1989, p. 41) puts it, "a messy affair – ad hoc, haphazard, and emotionally driven".

It was mentioned above that language standardisation is one of the more prominent fields of inquiry within language planning research. This is not the least evident in most of the models of language planning just discussed, as they have mainly been used in this context, and Vikør (1994) e.g. identifies a uniform standard as one of the principles potentially involved in language planning. Since

standardisation, as a feature of language planning, is also relevant for the approach presented in this thesis, it should probably be briefly examined in its own right.

James Milroy (2001, p. 531) defines standardisation as consisting “of the imposition of uniformity upon a class of objects”. In linguistic terms this would mean imposing uniformity on a language or variety, which thus establishes standardisation as a certain instance of language planning, as the latter in general does not necessarily have uniformity as its goal. At the same time, this in itself establishes a potential link between standardisation and language stability. Note also the similarity of Milroy’s approach to Vikør’s (1994) discussion of internal linguistic principles involved in language planning. As seen above, standardisation can, according to Vikør, be one of these principles, but does not have to be, as language planning can just as well be geared towards variation.

Milroy (2001) addresses the relationship between standardisation and language stability at some length and points out that through the imposition of uniformity, invariance becomes a defining characteristic of a standardised language. He also notes, however, that even though uniformity may be the goal of standardisation, it can never be fully reached as (p. 534) “total uniformity of usage is never achieved in practice”. Therefore, Milroy adds to his original definition of standardisation that it should be seen as a continuous process with uniformity or invariance as its goal. Thus, even though a certain standard may have been established, the work does not end there; rather this standard constantly undergoes a maintenance process. This maintenance is, in turn, carried out with the aid of e.g. what Milroy refers to as the ‘complaint tradition’. This in essence consists of the expression of support for the standard language, which is frequently seen as a valuable inheritance, and all deviations from it are believed to lead to its decay. Other aspects involved in the maintenance process include those concerned with the legitimacy and historicization of the standard language. What is meant by the former is that at the same time as a given standard is established and diffused through e.g. grammar books, dictionaries and school curricula, it becomes associated with a sense of legitimacy, while other forms or varieties come to be seen as illegitimate. This legitimacy of the standard can in turn be further strengthened by a historicization which is typically obtained by promoting the history of the standard as both unbroken and unmixed, on the one hand, and, on the other, as some kind of official history of the language in question while other variants of it are by and large neglected.

Milroy is not the only one to have noted this relationship between language standardisation and language stability. Thus Deumert (2003, p. 21) points out that the structural properties and social prestige of standard languages are legitimised by a language ideology “which centrally reflects on the invariance or “fixity” condition of standard languages.” She also mentions that what has been termed ‘flexible stability’ can be seen as a structural property of standard languages. This term refers to (p. 20) “the capacity of a language to be used in new

functions, genres and styles while maintaining its linguistic identity and fundamental structural properties.” Here we essentially come back to Milroy’s (2001) vision of standardisation and the maintenance of a standard as a process. Finally in this context, it should be noted that there seems to have been an awareness of the interplay between stability and standardisation since the first stages of language planning as a field of research. Thus, as was mentioned in the discussion of nationalism above (see section 3.1.3), Haugen (1966) identifies stability as an aim of standardisation. At the same time, however, he precedes Milroy (2001) in pointing out the impossibility of reaching this target.

Apart from the clearly stated goal of stability, standardisation shares most of the features of language planning mentioned earlier and can by and large be placed in that more general context, although a few more points relating more specifically to standardisation should be raised. First it should be mentioned that while Haugen’s model described above has been extensively used as a framework for standardisation studies, it has been pointed out that it does include a process which has become increasingly noticeable in various language communities in the last few decades. This process is that of destandardisation, by which is meant that even after a relatively uniform standard has been established on a number of dialects this development can take a u-turn such that the standard starts to split into divergent varieties again (Deumert, 2003; Deumert and Vandebussche, 2003). An example of this would be the 19th century emergence of two standard forms of spoken Danish, a High and a Low variety (Kristiansen, 2003). Another point that should be made, and one which has frequently been made (Cooper, 1989; Deumert and Vandebussche, 2003; Haugen, 1966) is that standardisation is essentially within the realm of written language rather than spoken, as is it primarily through writing which the standard, or the model on which it is built, can be established. This does not exclude, however, the formation of a spoken standard on the basis of the written one.

Above we can see that in the same way as he identifies a uniform standard as a possible principle of language planning, Vikør (1994) specifies purism as a potential language planning goal, albeit within a set of principles different from that of standardisation. As this potential goal or principle, i.e. purism, is highly relevant within the context of this thesis, a short examination of it seems to be called for.

Much like standardisation, purism can be seen as a specific instance of the general field of language planning and thus Thomas (1991, p. 12), who has extensively studied purism and its various facets, uses the following working definition which, he says is in turn an amalgamation of previous ones:

Purism is the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community (or some section of it) to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable (including those originating in dialects, sociolects and styles of the same language). It may be directed at all linguistic levels

but primarily the lexicon. Above all, purism is an aspect of the codification, cultivation and planning of standard languages.

The link between standardisation and purism should be quite clear in this definition which appears to view purism as one aspect of standardisation. Thomas elaborates further on this connection and points out that standardisation is evident in purism as a desire to conserve those parts of earlier stages of a language that are regarded as the best ones. At the same time, purism can be seen as a criterion of standardness, not the least as it provides a basis on which the corpus to be standardised can be selected. Purism and standardisation also share a number of characteristics and thus the possible motivations behind both – just as behind language planning in general – are largely of the same nature. Furthermore, as we have just seen, Vikør (1994) even includes purism as a possible principle of planning, and Ager (2001) expresses similar views by claiming that purism can be seen as a set of attitudes that can be a motivating factor in language planning. For our purposes, however, it may be more noteworthy that, just as standardisation, purism includes a strong element of stability in that once a language reaches what is seen as an acceptable level of purity, attempts are generally made to maintain this level. It should also not be forgotten that this level of purity is typically based on some earlier stage of the language in question which creates at least an image of stability over a long period of time. However, it should be kept in mind that in the same way as a standard can never become perfectly stable, purity is highly unlikely to become absolute and its maintenance is probably just as processual as that of the standard (Thomas, 1991).

In the discussion above, we have on occasion mentioned the attitudes and motivations involved in language planning, standardisation and purism, and it should be clear by now that there is an interplay between the factors of attitudes and planning which can in certain circumstances be beneficial to language stability. However, language planning has, not least when concerned with standardisation and purism, no weaker links to the factor discussed in the first section of this chapter, i.e. nationalism, although this has hitherto only been hinted at by referring to Vikør's (1994) inclusion of nationalism in the list of possible principles in language planning. This link has nonetheless been clearly stated by several other researchers in the field. Thus, Haugen (1966) points to the example of France where nationalism and standardisation went hand in hand, as, at the same time as a sense of cohesion developed around a common government, the French language, which at the time was undergoing a standardisation process, became a symbol and vehicle of the emerging French unity. Similarly, albeit on a more abstract level, Deumert (2003, p. 19) points out that “[s]tandard languages ... serve as symbols of national solidarity as well as national distinctiveness” while dialectal diversity accentuates regional and social differences within the state or nation. Sapir (2003) strikes the same note in discussing the standardisation of Finnish, Hebrew and Icelandic, which he in all three cases sees

as instrumental in forming the national identity of the respective nations. As for purism, the nationalistic element is particularly strong when language planning involves goals of a puristic nature. As was seen in Thomas' (1991) definition above, purism tends to evolve around preserving a language from, or ridding it of, foreign elements and this in itself could be interpreted as an expression of nationalism. Hence Thomas' (p. 43) claim that "it is hard to think of an instance of purism which is not motivated by some form of cultural or political nationalism" is not surprising. Thomas then elaborates further on this point and claims that purism can be motivated by a search for a national identity and that the target of puristic activity is often a culture which is regarded as threatening to the national culture in question. This is then linked to national pride which is a possible result of successful purification of a language which, according to Thomas, can in turn have as its source a sense of shame and inferiority regarding the inadequacies of the national language. Of course this interplay between standardisation and purism on the one hand and nationalism on the other can be seen as a support for Vikør's (1994) matrix of language planning principles discussed above. Standardisation, purism and nationalism are included in Vikør's list of possible principles and, as he points out himself, these principles can overlap and interact with each other, or even be in opposition to each other, within the same language ideology.

Given the discussion in the last paragraph, it seems clear that we can return to the section above (3.1.3) dealing with the relationship between language and nationalism to find concrete examples of the effect of language planning on language. Thus, the 17th century linguistic "Swedification" of the formerly Danish districts of Blekinge, Halland and Scania in what is now southern Sweden, is a direct result of language planning which is based on nationalistic sentiments (Vikør, 2000). The recently mentioned interplay between the standardisation of the French language and the emergence of a French nationalism is another example that is treated in more detail in section 3.1.3. It is important to note, however, that nationalism is not by definition a part of language planning and thus, as Vikør (1994) points out, liberalism has, through its emphasis on private rather than official language planning, played a greater role than nationalism in language planning in most parts of the English-speaking world.

In the previous pages we have seen that on a theoretical level stability is a potential goal in language planning in general and tends to be regarded as a central goal in standardisation and purism. This, however, brings us back to the critical comment made in the initial stages of this section, as it is intriguing to note that in applying the theoretical level to studies of concrete examples researchers appear not to have shown stability as such any interest. Rather the focus is on the processual aspects of planning, i.e. how a language goes from one structural and social stage to another through e.g. the dialectal or variational convergence of standardisation or puristically motivated intervention in,

typically, the lexicon. It seems, therefore that we are once again faced with the apparent fact that change is more interesting than stability – i.e. observing things in motion is simply a more rewarding activity than observing unmoving objects. This might explain why, as we have seen, one of the recent additions to Haugen’s (1966) model is that of the aspect or level of destandardisation (Deumert, 2003; Deumert and Vandebussche, 2003), while the social and linguistic contexts which at least potentially lead to the maintained stability of an established standard are generally neglected. In other words, once standardisation has been carried out, it appears to become uninteresting until it starts “moving” again, albeit in the opposite direction to its original course. This lack of interest in stability within the context of language planning is somewhat surprising e.g. in light of the abovementioned point made by Milroy (2001) that standardisation is never fully accomplished and that even after a standard has been established it undergoes continuous maintenance. As I have previously pointed out, stability in linguistic terms is unlikely ever to become absolute, and if we accept Milroy’s view that even here a process is involved, a closer examination of this process should add a valuable dimension to the general discussion of language change vs. language stability. As before in this chapter, an attempt will now be made to provide this addition by turning to the example of Icelandic; this time by looking at how language planning in Iceland may have contributed to the relative stability of the language.

3.3.2 Language planning in Iceland

Given the picture that has emerged of the Icelandic language community in the sections above on nationalism and attitudes, it follows quite naturally that language policy and language planning are in many ways central to the general linguistic debate in Iceland. As we now take a brief look at how language policy and language planning have been approached in Iceland, it will emerge that language planning there often contains a strong nationalistic element at the same time as the issue of stability tends to be more directly addressed in the context of planning than in either that of nationalism or attitudes.

To understand the present situation of policy and planning in Iceland, a quick historical overview is probably necessary. As was mentioned in the last paragraph, language planning and nationalistic sentiments often go hand in hand in the history of Icelandic. Thus, much of what was said in section 3.1.4 above on the development of the relationship between language and nationalism in Iceland is either the result or the cause of instances of direct or indirect instances of language planning. However, a few more points pertaining specifically to language planning or policy should be made.

How far back the history of language planning in Iceland can be traced depends to some extent upon which definition of the concept is used. If a wide definition with a relatively weak element of deliberate action or planning is

accepted, the first clearly recorded signs of normative tendencies can be dated back to the 12th century and the so called First Grammatical Treatise in which an unknown author, usually referred to as the First Grammarian, presented a spelling norm for the writing of Icelandic based on the Latin alphabet. The argument behind this was that a norm of this kind would facilitate writing and reading in Icelandic (Árnason, 2003a, 2003b; Jónsson, 1989, 2002).

It seems that this attempt by the First Grammarian only had a limited impact as many of his spelling conventions were not accepted, neither by contemporary nor later scribes (Árnason, 2003a). What may, however, make his contribution more interesting for our purposes is that he appears to assume that a norm for Icelandic already exists and that his task is only to provide a spelling standard. Thus, he makes no mention of variant forms of Icelandic which could have formed an alternative to the norm he uses. This is particularly interesting in light of the highly detailed phonological analysis which lies behind the orthographical proposals. Árnason (2003a, 2003b) argues that this suggests that already at this time a standard form of Icelandic had been formed which was based on the runic tradition, the poetic tradition and the legal tradition. The position of this standard was then further consolidated through its acceptance by the church in the centuries following the advent of Christianity in Iceland in the year 1000. That oral tradition and Latin writing were merged in this way in the religious discourse, is seen by Árnason as instrumental in preventing the development of a diglossic situation which arose in several other countries where Latin was the primary language of religion. Latin was certainly used in religious contexts in Iceland but never managed to fully replace Icelandic in religious or learned discourse. In this context it should also not be forgotten that this standard for Icelandic was adapted to the Icelandic Sagas as well, the writing of which began not long after the consolidation of the standard in religious texts. As we will shortly see, the standard thus formed in the first centuries of settlement in Iceland was to become the model on which later more direct instances of language planning in Iceland were based.

Although Christianity thus played an important part in the development of the Icelandic standard, it was not until a reformatory movement emerged in Iceland in the middle of the 16th century that the first attempts were made to translate the Bible. The first step in this direction was the publication of Oddur Gottskálksson's translation of the New Testament in 1540. However, the quality of this translation has been questioned, as in it Gottskálksson primarily followed Luther's earlier translation into German and both his syntax and vocabulary show clear signs of this. (Ottósson, 1990). At the same time, Gottskálksson is usually given much credit for his pioneering contribution, especially when it is considered that his aim seems to have been to produce a translation that was usable in Icelandic circumstances rather than to present the New Testament in as "pure" Icelandic as possible.

However, this idea of “pure” Icelandic emerged not long after the publication of Gottskálksson’s translation of the New Testament. Thus, a full Icelandic translation of the Bible was published in 1584. The man responsible for this translation was Guðbrandur Þorláksson who was at the time bishop in Hólar in the north of Iceland. He also translated a number of other religious texts and psalms into Icelandic and in the introduction to a psalm-book he published in 1589 he claims that part of the motivation for his translations is his desire to honour his mother tongue which is, in his view, in itself beautiful enough not to be reliant on borrowings from other languages. As seen in sections 3.1.4 and 3.2.2 above, these views are reflected in the writings of Arngrímur Jónsson “the learned” who in his publication from 1609, *Crymogæa*, not only points to the continuity of the Icelandic language, but also claims that this continuity is valuable in itself and that Icelanders should rely on the wealth and brilliance of their mother tongue to keep it intact, rather than imitating Danes or Germans. To reach this target, Icelanders should avoid excessive contact with foreigners and use the pure language of the sagas and other medieval literature as a model for their present language (Árnason, 2003a, 2003b; Ottósson, 1990; Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). Unsurprisingly, the reformation and its immediate aftermath is seen by many as the period in which Icelandic purism was born (see e.g. Halldórsson, 1979; Kristjánsson, 1986; Ottósson, 1990). Previously (section 3.1.4) we have seen that this is also the period in which nationalistic sentiments, albeit not in the modern sense, first emerge in the context of the Icelandic language. To this it should be added that we may here have the first Icelandic language policy statement which specifically identifies the stability of the language as one of its aims.

The puristic view described above, which was primarily established by Jónsson and contained a strong element of stability, appears only to have had limited effects for the next century and a half. Thus, while certain authorities, such as the religious 17th century poet Hallgrímur Pétursson and the 17th century bishop Brynjólfur Pétursson, commented on the need to keep Icelandic pure and unchanged (Árnason, 2003b), the influence of Danish was felt to an increasing degree, especially in written official and commercial language (see section 3.1.4). The spoken vernacular seems to have been more stable, probably not the least due to the close-knit and stable social networks, as is discussed in section 2.4 above. Around the middle of the 18th century, however, the tide started to turn as at that point a number of Icelanders studying in Copenhagen became increasingly aware of the problems that the Icelandic language was facing. Not only had Danish overtaken the official and commercial domains to a great extent; Icelandic was also not renewing itself in order to incorporate the terminology of various technological and ideological advancements (Halldórsson, 1979). Ironically enough, this realization of the weakening status of Icelandic was largely inspired by the emergence of puristic sentiments in Denmark, following

translations from German of books written in the spirit of the Enlightenment (Ottósson, 1990).

Initially, these sentiments did not appear in any organized way as regards Icelandic (Halldórsson, 1979), but 1779 saw what is frequently regarded as either a turning point in the history of language planning in Iceland or its first clear instantiation. In that year a few Icelanders in Copenhagen, led by Jón Eiríksson founded ‘Hið íslenska lærdómslistafélag’ (‘The Icelandic Society for Learned Arts’) and in its manifesto, published in 1780, the language policy which had been developing informally in Iceland for at least the previous two centuries was stated for the first time. This is done in three often quoted paragraphs in the manifesto (see e.g. Jónsson, 1987, p. 21; Ottósson, 1990, p. 42) :

5. Einnenn skal Felagit geyma ok vardveita norræna Tungu sem eitt fagurt Adalmaal, er laanga Æfi hefir talat vered aa Nordrlandum, og vidleitaz at hreinsa ena saumu fra utlendum Ordum og Talshaattum, er nu taka henni at spilla. Skal því ei i Felagsritum bruka utlend Ord um Iþrootter Verkfæri og annat, sva fremi menn finni önnur gaumul edr midaldra norræn Heiti.
6. Því maa og i Stad slikra utlendra Orda smiida ny Ord, samansett af audrum norrænum, er vel utskiri Naaturu Lutar þess, er þau þyda eigu; Skulu þarvid vel athugaz Reglur þær, er Tungu þessi fylgia, og brukadar eru i Smiþe goodra gamallra Orda; Skal og gefaz lios Utskiiring oc Þyding slikra Orda, sva at þau verdi Almenningi audskilinn.
7. Þoo megu vel haldaz slik Ord, sem brukut hafa verit i Ritum aa þrettandu edr fioortaandu Ølld, þoo ei hafi uppruna af norrænni Tungu, helldr seu i fyrstu fraa utlendum Þioodum, nær ei eru til annur meir tidkanlig, edr betri og fegri at audrum hætti.²⁰

In essence, this policy of preservation on the one hand and reinforcement on the other has been followed in Iceland until the present day, with the clearly stated

²⁰ “5. In the same way the Society is to protect and preserve the Nordic language as a beautiful principal language which for a long time has been spoken in the Nordic countries, and to try to purify it from foreign words and idioms, which now have begun to corrupt it. Hence one ought not, in the publications of the Society, to use foreign words pertaining to sport, tools, and other things for which one can find old or medieval Nordic names.

6. Hence one is allowed, instead of such foreign words, to form new words, compounded from Nordic stems. These new words should explain the nature of the things the names of which are to be translated; in this connection one should pay attention to the principles of this language which have been used with regard to the formation of good old words; a clear explanation and translation of such words should be given in order to make them easily understandable for ordinary people.

7. Nevertheless one is allowed to continue to use such words as have been used in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, even if they are not Nordic by origin, but borrowed from foreign nations; this exception, however, only applies in the event that no other common or better and more beautiful words in other respects are found.” (Translation from Halldórsson, 1979, p. 78-79)

purism as a core element. It should be noted, however, that, as hinted at in the manifesto, purism is there advocated only partially for its own sake and the value of preserving the language. What is also evident is the emphasis placed, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, on the language being understandable to the common public and this was believed to be best achieved by using as “pure” a form of Icelandic as possible. As we will see later, this argument has also prevailed into modern times.

What was probably equally important to stating a language policy was the implementation of it by the Lærdómslistafélag. The society published yearbooks in Copenhagen in 1781-1798 in which the coinage of new Icelandic words, according to the principles stated in the manifesto, was emphasised, especially in relation to various branches of science which had until this time not been dealt with in an Icelandic context (Halldórsson, 1979; Ottósson, 1990). Even though many of the words coined by the writers writing in the yearbook never became fully established in the vocabulary of Icelandic, the society can be said to have paved the way for what has been described as the golden age of Icelandic purism, i.e. the beginning of the struggle for independence in which language was a central element alongside an emerging nationalism, as is discussed in section 3.1.4. (Ottósson, 1990). The example set by Lærdómslistafélagið has been claimed to be second only to the Icelandic sagas in terms of importance in the argument for the separate status of Icelandic and the value of maintaining this status (Kristjánsson, 1986).

In discussing the language planning aspects of the rising nationalism and calls for independence in the 19th century in Iceland, we can mainly refer back to section 3.1.4. There it can be seen how both Rasmus Rask and the Fjölnismenn deliberately used medieval language and literature as the model on which they built their revival of Icelandic. Furthermore, Fjölnismenn can be said to have tried to elaborate the standard they proposed by introducing a number of neologisms in order to make Icelandic usable for all domains. It should be pointed out however, that this revival was mainly aimed at the more official domains of Icelandic language and society as it was primarily in the fields of e.g. administration and commerce that the effects of Danish were felt. The Icelandic spoken by the common public was, on the other hand, believed to have preserved most of its Old Norse characteristics and this vernacular language was even used alongside medieval literature in establishing the above mentioned model for revival (Ottósson, 1990). It has also been pointed out that the success that the Fjölnismenn enjoyed in establishing their language policy rested to a large extent on this strategy of including vernacular language in the standard. Their approach was received with suspicion amongst many officials and inhabitants in the trading centres that were scattered around the coastline. Here the view was that the Fjölnismenn were pretentious (Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). However, even though Danish was widely used in various official and commercial circles and had clearly affected the Icelandic used in such contexts, it must be remembered

that these circles were quite small and primarily found in Reykjavík and the trading centres. In 1800 Reykjavík had only about 300 inhabitants and the inhabitants in the trading centres will have been counted in tens rather than hundreds. The remainder of the Icelandic society was agrarian and both spoke Icelandic that was quite close to the standard that was in the process of being reinstated and made up a vast majority of the population. The Old Norse-based standard rested, in other words, on much firmer ground than the Danicized *officialesse*, not the least when the rising spirit of nationalism is taken into consideration (Jónsson, 1987; Kristmannsson, 2004; Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). In essence, what the majority of Icelanders did was accepting their own linguistic standard.

As was seen in section 3.1.4 the nationalistically inspired policy advocated by Rask and, especially, the *Fjölnismenn* gained further weight when it was politicized through being accepted by Jón Sigurðsson and other leaders of the independence movement in Iceland. The consequences this had regarding the general acceptance of nationalism in Iceland and the role the Icelandic language played in this process have already been traced. However, some of the more directly linguistic consequences should also be mentioned. As can be expected, the main emphasis in these political circles was placed on implementing and even legally prescribing the use of Icelandic for various administrative and legal purposes. This goal can be said to have been reached step by step in the latter half of the 19th century.

An important stage was reached in 1844 when the Danish king, Christian IX, decreed that understanding and speaking Icelandic was a requirement for obtaining official posts in Iceland. It was, however, not until 1874 that this was fully observed (Jónsson, 1985). Another crucial step was taken – as is surprisingly often the case in this period – at the initiative of a Dane, i.e. the diocesan governor Jørgen Ditlev Trampe, who, when he came to office in 1850, started writing letters to Icelandic officials in Icelandic rather than Danish. Initially, this almost shocked the Icelandic officials but in the longer term it seems to have had the effect that Icelandic replaced Danish in official correspondence (Jónsson, 1985; Ottósson, 1990). A third point which can be made consists of a debate between the leaders of the Icelandic independence movement and the Danish authorities which lasted throughout the latter half of the 19th century. The Icelandic parliament, the *Alþingi*, was re-established in 1845. Its petitions to the Danish crown were originally written in Icelandic, but if they were accepted and confirmed by the Danish king, only a Danish translation was signed by the king which meant that this was the only version with any legal standing. Jón Sigurðsson first contested this in 1847 and was joined by the *Alþingi* in requesting that the original Icelandic version of petitions accepted as part of the Icelandic law was given the same status as the Danish version. In 1849 and 1853 this request was taken a step further as then the demand was that only the Icelandic text be signed by the king. Initially, all these requests were rejected,

but in 1859 the king agreed to sign both the Icelandic and the Danish version. This situation remained unchanged for three decades. Within that period, in 1874, to be more precise, the Alþingi was granted legislative rights but the Danish king still had to confirm its bills. Then, in 1891 Jón Sigurðsson's successors can be said to have completed his mission in terms of language policy as then the Danish king agreed that only the Icelandic version of legal documents had any official standing, even though they were accompanied by a Danish translation (Ottósson, 1990).

At the same time as Icelandic replaced Danish as the political and official language in Iceland, further ground was gained in other spheres. Thus puristic efforts were made in e.g. the fields of commerce and religion. In the former case, this consisted primarily of replacing Danish with Icelandic, but in the latter of wiping out the Danish influence on the Icelandic language used in sermons and religious texts. Icelandic also found a number of new domains, as care was taken to adapt the language to scientific and ideological novelties, mainly through the use of neologisms. An important aspect in this respect was the increase in the latter half of the 19th century of Icelandic publications, both as regards magazines and periodicals, on the one hand, and books, on the other. (Ottósson, 1990) With this, both the political and the linguistic agenda of the time will have become more accessible to the general public, thereby further consolidating the status of the emerging written standard, which, as previously mentioned, was to a great extent inspired by the vernacular language.

All in all, therefore, the 19th century can be regarded as a prosperous period for Icelandic. In this period, an Icelandic standard based on medieval written language and the contemporary spoken vernacular of the general public replaced Danish as a language in certain spheres, diminished or eliminated Danish linguistic influences in others – i.e. the Icelandic used in these fields was purified–, and broke new ground in various domains. It also seems safe to say that this is the foundation on which language planning in Iceland has rested, at least until the past few years, as the main theme throughout the 20th century was essentially the same as that stated in the manifesto of the Lærdómslistafélag, i.e. preservation and reinforcement, with clear touches of purism and nationalistic sentiments attached to it. This is evident in nearly all instances of language planning the last 100 years or so. Even the focus on the coinage of new Icelandic words, rather than directly borrowing foreign ones, has been maintained as this has been the main concern of 20th century language planners in Iceland. It is also noteworthy that language planning and even its underlying policy can by no means be said to belong solely to the official sphere of Icelandic society; rather, a side-effect of basing the standard largely on the spoken vernacular appears to be a general interest in linguistic matters. Icelandic appears, in other words, to have been viewed as common property.

Clear examples of the intervention of private parties into language planning matters can be found in the numerous so called “orðanefndir”, i.e. ‘word

committees' formed by various associations or institutions active in a specialized field of some sort. The first of these was formed in 1919 by the Association of Chartered Engineers and is responsible for coining a number of new words of a technological nature (Halldórsson, 1979). This example set by engineers was later followed in several other fields which require specialized terminology, e.g. medicine, mathematics and physics. The media has also played an integral part in sustaining the generally accepted language policy. Thus, some of the leading newspapers have published regular columns on Icelandic language and similar material has regularly been broadcast on national radio since its foundation in 1930 (Ottósson, 1990).

By mentioning national radio, the part played by official parties in language planning in Iceland has been introduced. An important, albeit indirect, example is the introduction of compulsory primary school education in 1907 which ensured that the language policy reached all Icelandic children at a relatively early age (Ottósson, 1990). Other examples include various regulations which deal with language in one way or another. Thus, the use of personal names has been the subject matter in this respect on more than one occasion and standards of spelling and punctuation have been issued (Jónsson, 1989). What is, however, probably the biggest official step was initially taken in 1964 when the Icelandic Language Committee was formed on the foundation of a general word committee, which had in turn been unofficially formed on the basis of governmental financial support of word coinage and collection which started in 1952. This new committee was to collect, coin and publish neologisms, co-operate with word committees, reply to linguistic inquiries and co-operate with parties, such as the media and schools, likely to influence the language use of the general public. However, the committee was not directly expected to form a language policy (Halldórsson, 1979; Jónsson, 2002; Ottósson, 1990).

Lack of funding meant that the Language Committee was largely ineffectual until 1980 when its financial means were greatly increased. Then, in 1984, its role was confirmed with legislation which took effect on January 1st 1985 and a special institution, The Icelandic Language Institute, was formed as a channel for this role (Jónsson, 2002; Ottósson, 1990). With legislation from 1990 the Language Institute was given a formal language policy forming role and it has maintained this role until the present day, despite some organisational changes, such as the most recent one, in September 2006, when the Language Institute was included in a new institute for Icelandic studies, the Árni Magnússon Institute. It is interesting to note that in outlining this policy, the Language Committee places the long-established themes of preservation and reinforcement as central concerns. As for the Language Committee, it presently consists of 15 members, including representatives from e.g. Icelandic universities, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service and the Icelandic Writers' Association (Kristinsson, 2006).

Having now briefly discussed some instances of official language planning in Iceland, it is noteworthy that even though the underlying policy can probably be said to be semi-official through e.g. various documents from the Language Committee and/or the Language Institute, the formal or official status of this policy has never been confirmed at a constitutional level. The closest approximation of this can probably be found in a report published in 1986 by a committee formed to make suggestions on language cultivation and the teaching of pronunciation in elementary schools. This was the first time that an officially appointed committee discussed the foundations of the Icelandic language policy in a scientific manner (Ottósson, 1990). In the report, which has been taken to have a much wider frame of reference than only elementary schools, the committee comes, unsurprisingly, to the conclusion that the Icelandic language policy consists primarily of preserving and reinforcing the Icelandic language. Preservation here refers to maintaining the linguistic continuity from one generation to another with the aim of preserving the link between modern language and the earliest Icelandic literature. Reinforcement, on the other hand, primarily refers to increasing the vocabulary to ensure that Icelandic can be used for any given subject matter in written as well as spoken language. This main theme is then elaborated upon to discuss e.g. the issue of right vs. wrong and proper vs. improper in terms of language use. Other levels than the vocabulary are also addressed and thus the committee recommends that changes which might pose a threat to the morphological structure of Icelandic should be resisted while modern pronunciation should be preserved so that future generations can enjoy recordings made in the 20th century. Furthermore, loanwords which contain phonological elements foreign to Icelandic should be avoided (Kristmundsson, Jónsson, Þráinsson & Gíslason, 1986). This report was well-received and appears to have been regarded by many as an official confirmation of the previously undeclared but nonetheless generally accepted language policy (Jónsson, 2002).²¹

While it is debatable whether or not the Icelandic language policy is official²², there still appears to be a strong general consensus on its main contents. Thus, most recent writers agree on the importance of preserving the link with the medieval literature and thereby the continuity of the language and its structure (see e.g. Árnason, 2001; Jónsson, 2002). At the same time, it has been pointed out that language policy, not the least its puristic element, has become, as it were, a national concern in Iceland, which can in turn be largely traced to the relative homogeneity of the Icelandic language community where the general public does

²¹ In this context it should probably be noted that at the time of writing, the Icelandic Language Committee is, together with a number of sub-committees (in one of which I have participated briefly), working towards establishing an official language policy for Iceland. As the end result of this work is yet to be presented, it can not be treated here.

²² See e.g. Kristinsson (2001b) who prefers the term *málrækt*, i.e. ‘language cultivation’, to language planning in an Icelandic context as in his view the latter implies that there is an official strategy or policy behind it. This policy he feels to be lacking in Iceland.

not feel that there is any clear linguistic gap between itself and the official spheres. There is, thus, one common linguistic foundation which is seen as valuable in itself (Kristinsson, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2001a, 2001b; Ottósson, 1997). It should be noted, however, that the views of the general public that these last comments are based on are yet to be scientifically confirmed.

As we have seen above the continuity and invariability of Icelandic also count as traditional arguments for the language policy and this circularity has probably made the policy self-perpetuating to a large degree, particularly when it is, even today, further supported by nationalistically tinted language political claims about the need for an independent nation to have an official linguistic standard (Árnason, 1999). In recent years, however, other arguments for maintaining a language policy of preservation and reinforcement have been added. These include the democratic arguments mentioned in section 3.1.5 above, i.e. that as Icelandic in its present form – which is regarded as a direct continuation of its previous forms – is the language used by the majority of the population, it is also the language which ensures equal opportunities for everyone to participate in a democratic society. Within this socio-political context it has also been pointed out that keeping Icelandic pure and unchanged in all levels of society prevents the emergence of linguistically based class differences (Ottósson, 1997). On a more practical note, recent arguments state that often it is quite simply easier and more convenient to form neologisms from Icelandic material than to adapt loanwords to Icelandic morphology, phonology and spelling conventions (Árnason, 1999). Finally, seemingly aesthetically based arguments pertaining to the beauty and intrinsic value of Icelandic as a stable and homogenous language have been made, on e.g. the grounds that purism of the kind advocated in Iceland enriches the global cultural community through preserving the cultural heritage and experience that is bound in the language (Ottósson, 1990). In this light it is interesting to note that several Icelandic companies appear to have realized that, given the linguistic atmosphere in Iceland, it is a profitable marketing strategy to visibly support the Icelandic language policy (Kristinsson, 1997).

At the same time as the arguments for persevering with the Icelandic policy have been broadened somewhat in recent years, the need for also broadening its field of application has been pointed out. This has been done in order for the policy to become capable of facing the challenges of an ever-changing modern society. The first thing to point out here is probably that English has in the last few decades almost completely replaced Danish as the main perceived external threat. Many now see Anglo-American influence as the biggest threat faced by Icelandic language planning, both as regards the corpus and status of the language, as the pressure of English has become increasingly felt in several domains, such as commerce, science and technology and large parts of the popular culture (Árnason, 1999, 2003a; Kristinsson, 1991, 2001). In this context, the problems posed by information technology have specifically

been mentioned, not the least as the small size of the Icelandic market raises serious questions about the possibility – and profitability – of publishing Icelandic material and translating foreign material in this field (Rögnvaldsson, 1998). Another noteworthy aspect can be found in a critical account by Gísli Sigurðsson (2006), a research professor at the above mentioned Árni Magnússon Institute. He argues that Icelandic language policy needs to shift its focus from the nationalistic and romantic inheritance of the fight for independence. Instead, it should set its sights on modern technology as well as on the no less modern issue of an emerging multi-culturalism in Iceland which is the result of increasing immigration in the last few years.

This change of focus appears to be reflected to some extent in political circles in Iceland. Here I would like to refer back to the debate in the beginning of 2006 on the status of the Icelandic language which was discussed in section 3.1.5. As we saw there, the newspaper *Morgunblaðið*, which was one of the main arenas for this debate, asked the main political parties to present their language policy. We have already seen that while all parties stress the importance of the Icelandic language, they do so mainly along the democratic and practical lines mentioned above while nationalistic arguments are more or less left out. To this it can be added that, at the same time as all parties declare themselves as supportive of the traditional themes of the Icelandic language policy, four out of five also mention some of the more recent issues just discussed. Thus three parties expressly mention the importance of incorporating immigrants and multiculturalism in the language policy and one party directly addresses the challenges posed by information technology. Interestingly, however, none of the parties includes both these issues in the policy presented. This might possibly be a result of the fact that none of the parties appears to have had any official policy when they were asked to present it; what is published as their policy in *Morgunblaðið* is more a collection of points set up to reply to the newspaper's request. This is of course interesting in itself, although it does not come as a surprise since, as has been previously mentioned, there is no single official or constitutional language policy in Iceland. This is, in turn, regarded as problematic by at least three of the parties as they state that an official policy should be formulated (*Lesbók Morgunblaðsins*, 2006).

These new challenges have not gone unnoticed by the Icelandic Language Committee either. Thus in the Committee's strategic plan for 2002-2005 (*Stefnuskrá Íslenskrar málnefndar 2002-2005*), three fields were identified for special attention. These fields were children and teenagers, companies and the service sector, and immigrants. In identifying these fields the Committee pointed out that it took a major turn from its traditional primary concern with the form of Icelandic to now pay closer attention to the status of the language. In the further argumentation for this choice of fields it is clear that the first two can be traced to the same source, i.e. the fear that Icelandic might be replaced by English as the primary language in certain domains. As regards children and teenagers, they are

claimed to be frequent users of information technology in various forms and consumers of popular culture. In many cases the language used in these domains is English. Similarly, Icelandic companies are said to operate on an increasingly globalized market where English is frequently used as a lingua franca. This is seen as a threat to the status of Icelandic, even within Iceland. To respond to this, action should be taken to e.g. increase the use of Icelandic in information technology, increase the production of Icelandic television programs; especially programs aimed at children and teenagers, and heighten the level of awareness amongst leaders of Icelandic companies of the importance of using Icelandic on the domestic market and of the rights of Icelanders to use their mother tongue at work. As for the last field, i.e. immigrants, the Language Committee here acknowledges the increasing immigration which has meant that Iceland has by many come to be seen as a multicultural community rather than the homogeneous community it used to be. This increases the likelihood of English, or other foreign languages, becoming the standard means of communication when various groups of immigrants interact with one another or with Icelanders. If Icelandic is to play this role, the teaching of Icelandic for foreigners needs to be increased considerably.

Apart from suggestions about new challenges and broadening the focus of Icelandic language policy and planning, the policy has also been the target of some direct criticism, especially in the past two to three decades. Here various aspects have been identified as problematic. Thus Kristmannsson (2004) claims that the language policy has cornered the Icelandic language through its insistence on keeping the vocabulary as purely Icelandic as possible. This means that whenever the vocabulary is to be kept up to date with the advances of the modern world, word coiners have to rely solely on the limited basic Icelandic vocabulary for elements to use in constructing new words. This has in turn led to another problem. Even though an Icelandic neologism may be accepted in written language, the foreign original it is translated from is more often than not used in spoken language with the result, according to Kristmannsson, that a clear gap is emerging between written and spoken language, at least in certain fields. In this last comment he echoes Benediktsson (1987) who earlier mentioned this discrepancy. Similarly, Óskarsson (1999) shares Kristmannsson's view that the rigid purism of Icelandic language policy may cause more problems than it solves.

One relatively common complaint is that while the policy itself may be quite clear its execution tends to be somewhat unfocused and haphazard. Arguments of this kind are found e.g. in Rögnvaldsson (1985, 1988) who, roughly 20 years ago, claimed that the official sphere in Iceland had failed the Icelandic language in educational and financial terms, despite frequent promises of support. Rögnvaldsson also notes that the language policy can in many ways be characterized as an unorganized conservatism, as there is little consistency in just which linguistic features are addressed by public as well as private language

planners. This, Rögnvaldsson believes, is to a large extent traceable to the lack of a clear official language policy which, however, he claims should be based on research into modern language and be unprejudiced and tolerant. Finally, he precedes Sigurðsson's (2006) comments above, about the language policy itself being somewhat outdated due to societal changes in Iceland. The difference between Rögnvaldsson's (1985, 1988) and Sigurðsson's (2006) views is that in the 1980s multi-culturalism had not yet become an issue which needed to be addressed in Iceland. Thus, in Rögnvaldsson's view the language policy is at this point outdated as it does not take into account that children get much of their linguistic upbringing in kindergartens and schools rather than at home, that visual means of communication, such as television and computer games, have to some extent diminished the importance of language in some aspects of daily life, and that the policy does not deal with foreign influences in a realistic fashion. Comments of a similar nature can be found in e.g. Gíslason (1985), who mentions that no specific policy has been followed in terms of pronunciation, and Kristinsson (1994) and Benediktsson (1987) who join Rögnvaldsson in claiming that Icelandic language policy has not always been consistent in its conservatism.

Other notes of complaint include e.g. that an element of snobbery has been built into the language policy. This is to say that in certain linguistic domains, traditionally associated with the higher echelons of society, foreign words are accepted without comment while the puristic policy is applied with much greater rigidity in other domains (Pálsson, 1996). Thus "Icelandic" terms such as "doktor", "lektor" and "prófessor" probably do not call for any translation into English, but these terms have become generally accepted in Icelandic academic circles, some members of which have at the same time been in the forefront of the battle against foreign influences on the Icelandic language. This might in turn mean that the language policy directly counteracts one of its main aims, i.e. to maintain the linguistic homogeneity in Iceland, since rejecting certain foreign elements, which are used amongst the general public, while accepting others, which are seen as being of a fine pedigree, might lead to linguistically based class differences (Sigmundsson, 1990-1991). Having said all this, it should be noted that while critics have identified certain aspects of the language policy as problematic, they nonetheless generally join in the general consensus on the main themes of the policy, i.e. preservation and reinforcement, where the continuity and stability of Icelandic are key elements. Thus, even Sigurðsson (2006) who, as we saw above, calls for a shift of focus in the language policy, clearly states that this does not mean that the traditional values just mentioned should be abandoned. The present criticism is thus much weaker than that which occasionally emerged in the formative stages of the Icelandic language policy in the latter half of the 18th century, when serious suggestions were made that Icelandic be abandoned altogether to make room for Danish (Ottósson, 1990).

As may be gathered from the above, the Icelandic language policy has, in practical terms, mainly been applied to the vocabulary. There are, however, some

examples of direct planning actions taken in other levels of language. A well-known morphological example concerns the paradigm of so-called *ia*-stem nouns. In Old Icelandic it had the following form, with the word *læknir* (= ‘doctor’) serving as an example (Árnason, 2003b, p. 273):

- (3.1) *Sg.* læknir (NOM) lækni (ACC) lækni (DAT) læknis (GEN)
Pl. læknar (NOM) lækna (ACC) læknum (DAT) lækna (GEN)

Around 1800 a change had occurred and the paradigm had taken the following form:

- (3.2) *Sg.* læknir (NOM) læknir (ACC) læknir (DAT) læknirs (GEN)
Pl. læknirar (NOM) læknira (ACC) læknirum (DAT) læknira (GEN)

In the latter half of the 19th century efforts began to reinstate the Old Icelandic paradigm, at the initiative of Konráð Gíslason, one of the leaders of *Fjölismenn*. The reasoning behind this was clear; the older paradigm was the original one and hence also the correct one. These efforts proved successful and currently the original paradigm is the standard and clearly dominating one, even though the use of the latter one is occasionally heard (Árnason, 2003b; Kristinsson, 1994). Corresponding examples of successful corpus planning in relation to syntax and phonology can be found as well. It should also be mentioned that the puristic stance in terms of vocabulary is taken with an eye on features pertaining to maintaining the structure of other levels of Icelandic. A key argument for rejecting foreign words in Icelandic unless they are assimilated to Icelandic phonology and morphology is that otherwise they might disrupt the structure of Icelandic at these levels which have hitherto remained highly stable.

All in all, it seems clear that the Icelandic language policy, with its clearly stated aim of preservation, has, despite never having become official in a strict sense, played a large part in maintaining the relative stability of Icelandic. Thus we have seen how the rise of nationalism in Iceland brought with it a clear agenda of language planning and this is likely to have been a crucial element in the process described in section 3.1.4 above, where it is argued that nationalism in the latter part of the 19th century overtook the role previously played by social networks in maintaining linguistic stability in Iceland. It also seems that language planning has preserved its role e.g. through being incorporated into the educational system and being quite visible at most levels of society, including both the media and the political scene. In this way, planning and its underlying policy have seemingly become a national concern where there is a general consensus on the main themes even though certain aspects have been adapted to societal changes with e.g. the result that the strictly nationalistic element in the policy appears to be on the wane. Therefore, while one can agree with Sigmundsson in saying that it is difficult to measure the effects of language

policy and planning, as it is e.g. impossible to tell which loanwords would have been accepted and which rejected in Icelandic had the policy not existed, it seems safe to say that without the planning agenda of purism and stability the Icelandic language would have undergone more extensive change than is the case, not the least when the considerable changes of most other levels of Icelandic society are taken into consideration. Hopefully, the results from this study give some indication of whether this role of language policy and planning is still as important.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter the possible links between language stability, on the one hand, and nationalism, attitudes and language planning, on the other, have been examined. Throughout, the discussion has been twofold. In each of the three sections on nationalism, attitudes and language planning the discussion was first on a general level where definitions of central concepts were examined as was the potential general interplay between these fields and stability. Each section then contained a second main part in which the above mentioned interplay was exemplified by taking a closer look at how it has materialized in Iceland.

The general conclusion of this chapter is that nationalism, attitudes and language planning are all potential contributing factors in language stability. This is shown e.g. by the implicit element of stability often found in the attempts to create national language communities in which the continuity of the language in question is emphasized. Also, it can be argued that for stability to be maintained, the attitudes towards it need to be positive, i.e. that preserving a language in as unchanged a state as possible is regarded as valuable by the language community in question. The strongest, or most direct, potential connection, however, is that between stability and language planning as the former can indeed be an explicit aim of the latter. In light of this, a second main conclusion of this chapter is quite intriguing. Here I am referring to the fact that the potential links mentioned above appear not to have been examined to any extent. Rather, nationalism, attitudes and language planning have been studied from the standpoint of language change. Thus, even the clear possible relationship between stability and language planning has been by and large neglected; more emphasis has been placed on the process by which stability is achieved than on how stability is maintained. A possible reason for this seems to be the simple fact that change is seen as a more rewarding field of study than stability.

With the aim of rectifying this picture somewhat, the conservative Icelandic community has here been taken as a case study of sorts. What emerges is that all of the three factors discussed, i.e. nationalism, attitudes and language planning, seem likely to have played a direct part in maintaining the relative stability of Icelandic in the last two centuries or so. There are signs that they have done so both separately and in combination with each other, and characterizing

the state of Icelandic in recent times as the result of language planning based on puristic and nationalistic attitudes is not wide off the mark. Whether or not this still holds is a central concern of this thesis, but for the time being it seems safe to say that factors such as nationalism, attitudes and language planning are a valuable complement to categories such as age, gender and social networks, when the functions of language stability vs. language change are studied. This is exactly what is aimed at now by taking a closer look at the present situation in Iceland. For that purpose, a number of linguistic variables which have come under scrutiny, not the least in terms of attitudes, nationalism and language planning, will now be identified and examined.

4. Linguistic variables: definitions and earlier work

The aim of this chapter is to identify and define the linguistic variables treated in this dissertation as indicators of the level of linguistic stability vs. change in modern Icelandic and to give an account of the earlier work that exists on each of them. This particular group of variables was chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, as can be seen below, the variables are of a morphological or syntactical nature and are thus a part of the central structure of Icelandic in various ways, e.g. its case inflectional system and certain verb constructions, and could in turn be seen to lead to a destabilization of the language as a whole. While Icelandic has undergone numerous phonological changes and expanded its vocabulary extensively, this does not seem to have had any marked structural effect on the language as e.g. loan-words have a long tradition of being fully incorporated into Icelandic only after they have been adapted to the appropriate phonological and grammatical rules (Óskarsson, 2001). Secondly, of the morphological and syntactical changes Icelandic may currently be going through, those presented here are probably the ones which have been paid most attention in academic as well as public circles, as witnessed by e.g. the level of stigmatization attached to some of them, and are thus most likely to shed some light on how factors such as nationalism and linguistic attitudes speed up or slow down linguistic change. Finally, while the first examples of some of the variables are several centuries old, others seem only to have emerged in the last few years. This should allow for an investigation of how the factors just mentioned function at various times and stages in possible change processes of the variable in question.

Naturally, the main emphasis will be placed on discussing sociolinguistic approaches to the features below but, where applicable, work carried out in other theoretical frameworks will also be mentioned. Having said this, the following quote from a recent book (Hovdhaugen, Karlsson, Henriksen & Sigurd, 2000:531-532) on the history of Scandinavian linguistics should probably be presented as a word of warning regarding the general state of Icelandic sociolinguistics:

Sociolinguistics never became popular or influential in Iceland. The two most obvious explanations for this are the smallness and egalitarian character of Icelandic society coupled with the successful and intense concentration by young Icelandic linguists on theoretical phonology, morphology, and syntax.

This is not to say that sociolinguistics has not been touched upon at all in Iceland and the last few years have seen an increased interest in work of this nature as witnessed e.g. by the fact that recent issues of *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, the main linguistic journal in Iceland, contain a few articles on subjects which are, if not directly sociolinguistic, at least strongly linked to the field (Blöndal, 2004; Hjartardóttir, 2004, 2006; Þórðardóttir, 2006). Until that

point, the journal had been dominated by the more traditional topics mentioned in the quote above and even though some of the exceptions to that rule will be discussed below as dealing with sociolinguistics, we shall see that the methodology and general outlook of the work in question does not always conform too well to that of sociolinguistics. All in all, therefore, sociolinguistics is a relatively unexplored field in Iceland, and, apart from a handful of studies on dialects (Árnason & Þráinsson, 1983; Guðfinnsson, 1946, 1964; Þráinsson & Árnason 1984, 1986, 1992) work based on standard sociolinguistic fieldwork and methodology is practically non-existent.

The organization of the chapter is as follows: Section 4.1. deals with ‘dative sickness’ and other ‘sicknesses’ connected with impersonal verbs, section 4.2 with ‘genitive avoidance’, section 4.3 with other case inflectional changes, section 4.4 with ‘new passive’ and section 4.5 with the ‘am-to-frenzy’. Each of these sections is accompanied by a brief sub-section where the aims of this thesis in relation to the feature in question are presented, along with an operationalization of the relevant feature. Finally, 4.6 is a summary of the chapter.

4.1 ‘Dative Sickness’ and other ‘verb sicknesses’

Of the five basic types of changes dealt with in this thesis, *þágufallssýki*, or ‘dative sickness’²³, is by far the best documented one. As was hinted at in the introduction to this chapter, the term refers to a change in the case taken by the subject of impersonal verbs, but verbs of that type, a number of which can be found in Icelandic, allow their subjects to stand in oblique case rather than nominative as the more common personal verbs do.²⁴ For most of these verbs

²³ A special mention should probably be made of the use of the term ‘sickness’ in this section and throughout the thesis. This is not to indicate that I regard the usage of a non-standard subject case for the verbs in question as pathological or inappropriate in any way. Indeed, it has been pointed out that this terminology, which has primarily been used in debates – scientific as well as public – on ‘dative sickness’, calls for unwarranted and unnecessarily negative connotations, both as regards the linguistic features in question and the speakers who use them. Thus, the suggestion has been made to use the term *þágufallshneigð* (= ‘dative tendency’ or ‘dative substitution’) instead as this is much more neutral (Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that if this phenomenon is to be called a ‘sickness’ at all it would be more appropriate to use the term ‘accusative sickness’ for it as it involves a weakening of accusative case subjects rather than their dative counterparts. (Jacobsen, 1980). The ‘X sickness’ term is nonetheless used here, both because it is the term under which at least ‘dative sickness’ has become generally known in Iceland and because it serves as a good reminder of the general attitude towards these features, which will be discussed in section 6.4.2.

²⁴ The existence of this phenomenon in Icelandic – and Faroese – was first established by Andrews (1976) and his original analysis has since been supported by an extensive body of work, see e.g. Þráinsson (1979), Zaenen, Maling and Þráinsson (1985), Barnes (1986) (for Faroese), Sigurðsson (1989, 1992, 1996), Jónsson (1996) and Barðdal (2001a).

the case in question is dative as in (4.1)a., but there is also a smaller number of verbs that in standard language take accusative, as in (4.1)b., and a handful of verbs that take genitive, as in (4.1)c.:

(4.1)a. mér finnst þetta gott
me(DAT) think this good
I think this is good

(4.1)b. mig vantar penna
me(ACC) lack pen
I lack a pen

(4.1)c. mín nýtur ekki við
Me (GEN) present not
I am not present

‘Dative sickness’ emerges in a tendency for the accusative subjects (as in (4.1)b.) to become dative and thus appear as in (4.2):

(4.2) mér vantar penna
me(DAT) lack pen
I lack a pen

Interestingly, two personal verbs show an instability in the case marking for their subjects similar to the one shown by the impersonal verbs just described. The verbs in question are *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kviða* (= ‘be anxious’), which can thus, rather than appearing with a nominative subject, as in (4.3)a., turn up with either an accusative ((4.3)b.) or a dative one ((4.3)c.) and thereby become, as it were, impersonal:

(4.3)a. ég hlakka til jólanna
I(NOM) look forward to Christmas
I look forward to Christmas

(4.3)b. mig hlakkar til jólanna
me(ACC) look forward to Christmas
I look forward to Christmas

(4.3)c. mér hlakkar til jólanna
Me(DAT) look forward to Christmas
I look forward to Christmas

In the public debate in Iceland, these two verbs have traditionally been placed alongside the impersonal ones under the heading ‘dative sickness’. However, as *hlakka* and *kviða* are personal in the standard language and seem to be capable of assigning either accusative or dative case to their subjects in non-standard usage, Eyþórsson’s (2000b) suggested term, *aukafallssýki*, or ‘oblique case sickness’ is probably more accurate. In this thesis, this distinction will be maintained even though ‘oblique case sickness’ will, in the data further described in chapter 5, be treated in conjunction with more standard ‘dative sickness’.

A third type of ‘sickness’ related to the case system should be mentioned here. This one has been labelled *nefnifallssýki*, or ‘nominative sickness’ (Eyþórsson, 2000b), or *nefnifallshneigð*, or ‘nominative tendency’ (Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003), and can in a sense be said to be the reverse of ‘oblique case sickness’, as in this case a handful of impersonal verbs, that in standard language take accusative or dative subjects, as in (4.4)a. and (4.4)b., appear in a personal form with a nominative subject, as in (4.5)a. and (4.5)b.:

- (4.4)a. bátinn rak á haf út
boat-the(ACC) drifted to sea out
 the boat drifted out to sea
- (4.4)b. bátnum hvolfdi
boat-the(DAT) capsized
 the boat capsized
- (4.5)a. báturinn rak á haf út
boat-the(NOM) drifted to sea out
 The boat drifted out to sea
- (4.5)b. báturinn hvolfdi
Boat-the(NOM) capsized
 The boat capsized

It should be noted that, apart from causing oblique subjects to become nominative rather than turning one oblique case into another, ‘nominative sickness’ also differs from ‘dative sickness’ in that the former primarily affects verbs that assign the thematic roles of theme or patient to their subjects, while the latter seems to be restricted to verbs that assign the role of experiencer to their subjects. However, claims have been made that verbs in this latter group are not completely immune to ‘nominative sickness’ either (Eyþórsson, 2000b; Smith, 1994, 1996), which means that constructions like (4.6) (as compared to (4.1)b. and (4.2)) are also possible:

- (4.6) ég vanta penna
 I(NOM) lack pen
 I lack a pen

As can be expected, ‘nominative sickness’ is generally not regarded as an instance of ‘dative sickness’ and accordingly it will be regarded here as a separate entity even though it will be discussed in relation to ‘dative sickness’ and ‘oblique case sickness’. It should also be added that ‘nominative sickness’ has, in the Icelandic context, received relatively scant attention in scientific circles, at least when compared to ‘dative sickness’, and appears hardly to have been noticed by the general public at all.

Some signs have been found of the existence of a fourth, and last, type of ‘sickness’ which is in one way or another linked to impersonal verbs in Icelandic (Jónsson & Eyþórsson 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982). This can be labelled ‘reverse dative sickness’ or ‘accusative sickness’ as it emerges when verbs that in the standard language take dative subjects take accusative ones instead, as exemplified in (4.7)a. and (4.7)b. below:

- (4.7)a. mér dettur eitthvað í hug
 I (DAT) fall something in mind
 I will think of something
- (4.7)b. mig dettur eitthvað í hug
 I(ACC) fall something in mind
 I will think of something

As before, this ‘sickness’ will be treated separately from, but nonetheless in connection with, the other ‘sicknesses’ mentioned above. Finally, a note should be made of the fact that this ‘sickness’ has received even less attention than ‘nominative sickness’, apparently mainly for reasons which we will come to shortly.

To then turn to the possible reasons behind this instability in case-marking for subjects of impersonal verbs (and the two personal verbs *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kvíða* (= ‘be anxious’)), it follows naturally from what was said above that “the original”, i.e. ‘dative sickness’, has been most extensively discussed of the four types and numerous suggestions, based on various theoretical frameworks, have been put forth. Thus, to give a few examples, Rögnvaldsson (1983) suggests that ‘dative sickness’ can be seen as part of a process of stabilization – and thereby preservation – of the Icelandic case system, where nominative case is primarily used for subjects and predicates and dative for experiencer subjects, whereas accusative is reserved for objects of verbs and prepositions. Barðdal (2001b), however, objects to this hypothesis and claims, on the basis of a Construction Grammar analysis, that ‘dative sickness’

is to be expected since the accusative subject construction is lower in type frequency than the dative subject construction. She notes that the accusative subject construction can be divided into two subconstructions; one for experiencer verbs ('Mig dreymdi ömmu' = 'I(ACC) dreamt about grandma(ACC)') and one instantiated by predicates denoting changes in nature ('Ána lagði' = 'river-the(ACC) froze') and claims that the experiencer verbs are attracted by the dative subject construction because these two constructions share the same semantics. This she further supports by the fact that the nature verbs appear to be attracted by the nominative subject construction rather than by the dative subject construction. A similar analysis is presented by Jónsson (1998) and Jónsson and Eyþórsson (2003) who point out that accusative subjects can be seen as instances of so-called quirky case which is a sub-type of lexical case that is irregular and not predictable on the basis of the subject's thematic role. Dative subjects, however, are, according to this analysis, examples of regular lexical case if the subjects have the thematic role of experiencer and are thus predictable from their thematic roles. Then, as many of the irregular (and accusative) quirky case constructions are acquired later than more regular constructions, the dative experiencer verbs manage to intervene in the acquisition of accusative experiencer verbs, so that they become dative on the basis of the shared semantics of both groups of verbs.

Barðdal's and Jónsson and Eyþórsson's suggestions go hand in hand with some of the points made by Svavarsdóttir (1982) in her discussion of possible reasons for the emergence of 'dative sickness'. Thus, she claims that impersonal verbs that take dative subjects are probably more commonly used in everyday language than are impersonal verbs that take accusative subjects. Many verbs from the latter group are rare, even in written language, and this results in an increased use of dative case for subjects of impersonal verbs in general. To this, however, Svavarsdóttir adds a few other possibilities and says (and thereby seems to be of the same opinion as Rögnvaldsson (1983)) that 'dative sickness' could be some sort of simplification of the grammatical structure of Icelandic, where those who show a tendency for the 'sickness' only distinguish between personal and impersonal verbs and the latter, in turn, only appear with dative subjects. Furthermore, Svavarsdóttir (1982) points to the fact that the impersonal verbs that take accusative subjects are semantically similar to the ones which take dative subjects. The verbs in question refer to some mental or physical state and might thus be perceived of as a single semantic category, which may, in turn, result in a tendency for the same case being used for all subjects.

Other suggestions go along lines similar to the ones presented thus far. Thus, they include the proposal that 'dative sickness' can be traced to an analogy based on experiencer dative as the only accusative subjects that are affected by the 'sickness' are the ones that can be categorized as experiencers (Barnes, 1986; Smith, 1994, 1996). Similarly, Eyþórsson (2000a, 2000b) can be said to have combined this view with those of Rögnvaldsson (1983), Jónsson

(1998) and Barðdal (2001b) when he suggests that ‘dative sickness’ stems from pressure from semantic roles.

As for the other ‘sicknesses’ much less attention has been paid to explaining them than is the case for ‘dative sickness’. A few suggestions have been made, nonetheless, and thus Eyþórsson (2000b) suggests that ‘oblique case sickness’ is essentially a semantic phenomenon. By this he means that as *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kvíða* (= ‘be anxious’) are semantically closely related to the impersonal verbs that assign the role of experiencer (e.g. *langa* = ‘long’/‘want’ and *vanta* = ‘lack’) the former are drawn to the latter in such a way that the nominative subject case becomes either accusative (which can subsequently become dative via traditional ‘dative sickness’) or dative. Eyþórsson also indicates that ‘nominative sickness’ is motivated by pressure from the general and most common rule that subjects take the nominative case. This is then developed further by Jónsson and Eyþórsson (2003) when they follow up on their explanation of ‘dative sickness’ discussed above. Here they point out that dative case is quirky for subjects that have the thematic role of theme and that these verbs, along with the accusative verbs which assign the role of theme to their subjects, are attracted by the more common and regular nominative subject construction for verbs with these semantic characteristics. Finally, Svavarsdóttir (1982) views the few examples there are of ‘reverse dative sickness’ in her data not as any real signs of instability that call for a thorough analysis, but rather as a result of hypercorrection. Jónsson & Eyþórsson (2003) accept this, but add that in their data accusative case was consistently used more often than nominative when there was any deviation from the standard dative and suggest that this might be due to similar reasons as above, i.e. that experiencer verbs that take oblique subjects form a unified semantic category. Thus it would be normal to use accusative case rather than nominative for their subjects, if the meaning of the verb in question is known, but an uncertainty exists about which case to use for the subject.

Obviously, these attempts at explaining ‘dative sickness’ and the other relevant ‘verb sicknesses’ provide valuable insights into the language internal factors which enable these phenomena to take place. However, they bring us no closer to answering the basic sociolinguistic question posed by Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) about why these changes started when they did and not at some other point in time. Furthermore, and more importantly for my purposes, these suggestions give few clues as to how these changes have spread and may still be spreading amongst speakers of Icelandic, despite at least ‘dative sickness’ being highly stigmatized and actively fought against in the educational system. However, some answers to questions of this kind can be found in what little work exists on these features that is of any direct sociolinguistic relevance.

The most significant work of the kind just mentioned has already been referred to above; on the one hand, there is Svavarsdóttir’s research which was carried out in 1980-1981 and presented in 1982 to then be further developed,

along with Pálsson and Þórlindsson, in 1984. On the other hand, 20 years after Svavarsdóttir's research, Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) carried out some research which was to a large extent based on that of Svavarsdóttir and partly aimed at tracking the development of 'dative sickness' and other related features during this intervening period.

Svavarsdóttir's research is the natural starting point here. She carried out a study where the aim was to look into the frequency and spread of 'dative sickness' and answer questions such as whether or not this feature was restricted to certain (geographical) areas and whether it was in any way linked to social class and the respondents' performance in school. As can be seen from this description, the respondents were school-children, eleven years of age, to be more precise, from various parts of the country. Apart from these strictly sociolinguistic aspects Svavarsdóttir investigated whether 'dative sickness' was limited to certain verbs and whether it showed up differently depending on whether the subject was in the 1st or 3rd person.

To collect data a special test was constructed. It was in two parts and consisted of a text with blanks for the subjects of 31 different verbs, 20 of which are personal and thus take nominative subjects. Out of the 11 remaining impersonal verbs, 6 take accusative subjects in the standard language, and the remaining 5 take dative subjects. In the first part, the children were supposed to fill the blanks with a 3rd person singular feminine pronoun, whereas they were supposed to use 1st person singular in the latter part. Except for the missing subjects the same text was used in both parts. Apart from this, information was gathered about the children's age and background, their parents' background, employment and education, housing, and how well the children did at school. All in all, 202 children participated.

The results of the study show that the majority of the children use the standard, or "correct", case with all verbs, with the exception of *hlakka* (= 'look forward to'), which, especially in the first part of the test tended to show up in an impersonal form with an accusative or dative subject. Here only 19.3% of the children used the standard nominative subject, whereas 45.6% did so in the second part of the test. *Kvíða* shows a similar tendency, even though it is not quite as strong in this case; 36.1% used the nominative case in the first part of the test while 59.4% did so in the second part. The children showed hardly any tendency at all to use the other personal verbs in an impersonal way. Thus, there seems to be some confirmation here of the existence of 'oblique case sickness' in relation to the two verbs in question.

Let us then move on to the main subject of the study, i.e. 'dative sickness', which, as we have seen, emerges when impersonal verbs normally taking accusative subjects take dative ones instead. Here the results clearly indicate that even though the majority of the children do not display this usage, a considerable part of them show signs of this tendency, albeit – and interestingly – to a varying degree depending on the verb in question. This is especially

evident in the first part of the test, i.e. with 3rd person singular feminine pronouns as subjects. The findings from this part of the study are summarized in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Impersonal verbs that in standard language take subjects in accusative case. Use of standard vs. non-standard case (%) in Svavarsdóttir (1982).

	3 rd person singular			1 st person singular		
	<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Dat.</i>	<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Dat.</i>
Langa (= ‘want’/ ‘long’)	1.0	66.8	31.7	1.5	85.2	11.4
Dreyma (= ‘dream’)	6.4	71.3	21.3	7.9	86.1	4.0
Vanta (= ‘need’/ ‘lack’)	1.5	63.4	34.7	1.5	80.2	15.4
Minna (= ‘recall’)	19.8	57.9	21.8	5.0	79.2	12.4
Svíða (= ‘hurt’)	1.5	50.5	47.5	5.0	50.0	39.6
Gruna (= ‘suspect’)	10.9	65.4	22.8	6.9	85.2	3.5

As can be seen here, with the exception of *svíða* (= ‘hurt’), between 21.3% and 34.7% of the children used the dative case for the subject when it was the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun, whereas between 3.5% and 15.4% did so when the subject was the 1st singular pronoun. Svavarsdóttir sees this as a confirmation of the existence of ‘dative sickness’, and claims that the fight carried out against this phenomenon in Icelandic schools has had little success. According to her this claim is especially supported by the fact that the verbs *langa* (= ‘want’) and *vanta* (= ‘need’), which are probably the two most commonly used impersonal verbs of this kind, and certainly the ones most often used when warning against ‘dative sickness’ in teaching materials, both appear with dative subjects amongst more than 30% of the children. As for *svíða* the high figures for dative subjects there can probably be explained by the fact that the verb can be used with either an accusative or a dative subject, depending on its meaning. An accusative subject is used when the verb expresses physical pain (*‘mig sveið í sárið’* = ‘the wound hurt’ (i.e. = ‘I felt physical pain in the wound’)), but when the pain is of a mental kind (*‘mér sveið að hún skyldi fara’* = ‘it hurt me that she left’ (i.e. = ‘it caused me grief that she left’)) a dative subject is used.

It was mentioned above that five impersonal verbs that in the standard language take dative subjects were included in the study, and it was here that Svavarsdóttir found some signs of a ‘reverse dative sickness’, as quite a large proportion of the children used accusative subjects instead of the standard dative ones. This, however, mainly occurred in the second part of the test, i.e. with 1st person singular subjects, whereas ‘dative sickness’ showed up to a greater extent with the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun as a subject, as was mentioned

earlier. As Svavarsdóttir points out, this means that the use of accusative increases when the subject is 1st person singular. The results from this part of the study are summed up in table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Impersonal verbs that in standard language take dative case. Use of standard vs. non-standard case (%) in Svavarsdóttir (1982).

	3 rd person singular			1 st person singular		
	<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Dat.</i>	<i>Nom.</i>	<i>Acc.</i>	<i>Dat.</i>
Þykja (= ‘think’)	1.5	7.4	91.1	0.5	20.3	77.2
Leiðast (= ‘be bored’)	1.5	12.9	85.2	1.5	18.3	78.2
Létta (= ‘relieve’)	7.4	16.8	75.3	2.5	41.6	50.5
Liggja (á) (= ‘be in a hurry’)	5.9	5.5	88.6	3.0	25.7	67.3
Detta (í hug) (= ‘get an idea’)	5.0	11.4	83.2	2.0	23.8	69.3

Here it can be seen that with 1st person singular subjects accusative case is used instead of dative case to much the same degree as dative case is used instead of accusative case with the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun as a subject. The higher figures for *létta* (= ‘relieve’) Svavarsdóttir explains by the fact that it is rather uncommon and could thus not be too well known to the children.

As has been mentioned above, Svavarsdóttir sees this ‘accusative sickness’ as a possible result of hypercorrection, especially as the “correct” usage of accusative subjects was also more common with the 1st person singular pronoun. Nonetheless, she regards this hypercorrection, just as she does ‘dative sickness’, as an indication of some confusion amongst the children about the use of cases with impersonal verbs. She admits, however, that this confusion might only be temporary, as the children tested are fairly young and might simply not have mastered the features in question. It should be added that while Svavarsdóttir does not specifically examine the possible relationship between hypercorrection and ‘dative sickness’, she mentions that amongst children who had few “errors” in general in the test there appeared a relatively small tendency for hypercorrection.

Interestingly, a few signs of ‘nominative sickness’ can be found in the results just presented, even though Svavarsdóttir herself does not comment upon this. Thus 19.8% of the children used nominative case rather than the standard accusative for the verb *minna* (= ‘remember (vaguely)’) when the subject was the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun and the corresponding figures for *gruna* (= ‘suspect’) are 10.9%. In the second part of the test, i.e. where the subject is the 1st person singular pronoun, these figures decrease somewhat, to

5% and 6.9% respectively, while another verb, i.e. *dreyma* (= ‘dream’) shows a slight increase from the first part of the test to the second and goes from 6.4% to 7.9%. The verbs that in the standard language take dative case subjects appear to be less prone to ‘nominative sickness’ as only *léttu* (= ‘be relieved’) and *liggja (á)* (= ‘be in a hurry’) show figures that rise above 5% (in the first part of the test only). This was probably not to be expected as the impersonal verbs used in the test are experiencer verbs, which above were said to be less prone to ‘nominative sickness’ than theme or patient verbs.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, the most interesting results are probably the ones concerning how ‘dative sickness’ is connected to different geographical areas of Iceland and the children’s social standing in terms of their social background and how well they did at school.

To start with the comparison between different parts of the country, no clear pattern emerged; ‘dative sickness’ occurred to a similar extent in all towns and communities where the test was carried out. Here it should be said, though, as Svavarsdóttir points out, that in some locations too few children participated to make this comparison really reliable.

As for the relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and success at school and social background, the results indicate that children who do well at school and have their roots in the higher social classes tend to be less prone to showing signs of ‘dative sickness’. Svavarsdóttir says that this lends support to claims made by Jacobsen (1980) and Pálsson (1979). Jacobsen believes that the use of the “correct” case with impersonal verbs simply needs to be learned and is not supported by the linguistic structure of Icelandic. Should that be the case, it is probably only natural that those who are successful in their studies in general should find it easier than others to learn the “correct” use of cases. Pálsson, on the other hand, sees ‘dative sickness’ as part of dialectal differences between social classes that he believes can be found in Icelandic.

In 1984 Svavarsdóttir, along with Pálsson and Þórlindsson, used the material from the study just discussed to delve deeper into the connection between ‘dative sickness’ and some social factors, in order to establish whether or not this connection existed at all. The following four null-hypotheses were tested (1984, p. 36): a) There is no relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and social class; b) There is no relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and place of residence; c) There is no relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and gender; d) There is no relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and performance at school.

The results for the first hypothesis more or less confirm Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) earlier findings; there was a significant relationship between social class and ‘dative sickness’ where children from the lower classes tended to deviate more often from the norm than children from higher classes.

As for the second hypothesis, the results here make an interesting contrast to Svavarsdóttir’s conclusion. This time, children from Reykjavík, the capital, were compared to children from the rest of the country, rather than looking

separately at each town and community as Svavarsdóttir originally did. This showed that the children in Reykjavík deviated significantly less from the norm than children elsewhere in Iceland did. Here, however, the authors point out, just as Svavarsdóttir did, that the sample chosen may not have been ideal to make this kind of comparison.

The children's gender does not on the whole seem to be a relevant factor for the occurrence of 'dative sickness', although the boys showed a slightly stronger tendency for it than the girls. Nonetheless, the authors state that outside Reykjavík there was a significant difference between the genders. They do not indicate, however, what the difference consisted of.

Finally, there appeared to be quite a strong connection between performance at school and 'dative sickness' with the children who did best at school making the fewest "errors". This also goes hand in hand with Svavarsdóttir's earlier research, indicating at the same time that we are here dealing with a typical case of change from above.

As was mentioned above, Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) partially duplicated Svavarsdóttir's (1982) work 20 years after she presented her results. Thus, Jónsson and Eypórsson used a text with blanks for the subjects of a number of verbs which the respondents, who again were eleven-year-old school children, were asked to fill in.²⁵ The main differences between the studies were that Jónsson and Eypórsson's sample was considerably larger than Svavarsdóttir's since they analysed questionnaires from 845 children, as compared to 202 in Svavarsdóttir's study. However, the respondents in Jónsson and Eypórsson's study were not as widely scattered across Iceland as were the respondents in Svavarsdóttir's work, and in the former study a considerably larger proportion of the respondents came from the greater Reykjavík area than was the case in the latter. With this, Jónsson and Eypórsson wanted to achieve a better reflection of the division of inhabitants between Reykjavík and the rest of the country. Other differences between the two studies include the fact that Jónsson and Eypórsson only looked at the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun and also included some changes in the number and types of verbs. Thus, Jónsson and Eypórsson had a total of 26 verbs in their study, which were divided into four groups. The first consisted of 6 personal verbs, including *hlakka* (= 'look forward to') and *kvíða* (= 'be anxious') which are known to be prone to 'oblique case sickness'; the second contained eight experiencer verbs which in the standard language take accusative subjects and could thus be expected to show signs of 'dative sickness'; the third had nine experiencer verbs which take dative subjects and might thus reveal some traces of a 'reverse dative sickness'; and the fourth was made up of three theme verbs which in the standard language take an

²⁵ A small group of adults was also asked to fill in the blanks in the text used. According to Jónsson and Eypórsson, these adults used a non-standard subject on far fewer occasions than the teenagers did. However, no further analysis of the adult results is presented.

oblique subject, but have been known to appear with a nominative subject instead.

Jónsson and Eypórsson discuss their results according to the groups of verbs they studied. Thus, they first mention that while 49.9% of the informants use the standard nominative for *kviða* only 14.9% do so for *hlakka*. The remaining four personal verbs, however, all nearly reach 100% for use of nominative. Jónsson and Eypórsson claim that these results for *kviða* and *hlakka* should mainly be seen as an indicator of the semantics of *kviða* being in greater accordance with typical nominative subjects than is the case with *hlakka*. As for the deviations away from nominative, it is interesting to note that for both verbs the subjects given are quite evenly divided between accusative and dative. When Jónsson and Eypórsson's figures are compared to those in Svavarsdóttir's study, it emerges that the use of nominative with *kviða* appears to have increased, while the use of dative appears to have decreased significantly. For *hlakka*, however, the use of nominative seems to have decreased somewhat, while the use of accusative has apparently decreased considerably, seemingly to the benefit of dative, the use of which appears to have increased significantly.

The results for the second group of verbs, i.e. regarding 'dative sickness' in the strictest sense, show much the same pattern as did the corresponding results in Svavarsdóttir's study. This is to say that all the verbs do show signs of 'dative sickness' but to a highly varying degree (24.9-60.4%). This variation Jónsson and Eypórsson primarily explain by pointing to a certain correlation between the frequency of the verbs and the level of 'dative sickness'; the more frequent the verbs are the less likely they are to be used with dative rather than accusative subjects. Here Jónsson and Eypórsson make a special mention of the fact that a significant majority of the respondents (90.8%) showed some signs of 'dative sickness'. At the same time, however, only 2.7% of the respondents used dative rather than accusative subjects for all the verbs in this group. It should also be noted that six of the verbs included in this group were also used in Svavarsdóttir's study, and when the two sets of figures are compared it emerges that the level of 'dative sickness' appears to have risen somewhat for all the verbs; most for *vanta* (= 'need'/'lack') (from 34.7% to 45.4%) but least for *minna* (= 'recall') (from 21.8% to 24.9%) and the average level has risen from 30% in Svavarsdóttir's study to 35.9% in that of Jónsson and Eypórsson.

The third group of verbs can be treated rather quickly, as here, just as in Svavarsdóttir's study, only traces of 'reverse dative sickness' or other signs of instability were found. The explanations of these signs provided by Jónsson and Eypórsson were discussed above, but to them it should be added that a relationship similar to the one mentioned above in connection with 'dative sickness' also emerges here; the more frequent the verb, the more likely it is to be used with the standard subject case.

Finally, the results from the fourth group, i.e. theme verbs with oblique subjects which have been reported to take nominative instead (see examples

(4.4)a. – (4.5)b. above), are somewhat mixed. Thus *ljúka* (= ‘finish’), which in the standard language takes dative subjects, is used in such a way by 80.5% of the respondents while 17% use nominative. *Hvolfa* (= ‘capsize’), on the other hand, which also takes dative subjects in the standard language, is used with subjects in this case by only 47.6% of the respondents while 42.8% of them use nominative. The third verb in this group, *reka* (= ‘drift’), which in standard language takes accusative subjects, shows an even higher degree of ‘nominative sickness’ than *hvolfa* does, as here 57.2% of the respondents use nominative and only 33.4% of them use the “correct” form. Jónsson and Eypórsson point out that it is difficult to use the frequency of the verbs in a similar way to what was mentioned above, as all the three verbs in this group can also be used with a nominative subject in a slightly different meaning,²⁶ but no distinction is made between the types in the studies made on word frequencies in Iceland. They nonetheless suggest that the respondents are probably least familiar with the accusative subject version of *reka* which would explain why nominative is more commonly used for this verb than the other two.

Turning then to the connection between these figures and the social factors taken into consideration by Jónsson and Eypórsson, they only discuss this in relation to *hlakka* and *kviða*, on the one hand, and experiencer verbs with accusative subjects, i.e. ‘dative sickness’, on the other, as they say that the social factors appeared not to have any significant effect on the use of verbs belonging to the other two groups. Certain patterns can be detected, however, as regards the two types of verbs that are discussed. Thus the level of both ‘oblique case sickness’ (with *hlakka* and *kviða*) and ‘dative sickness’ was in inverse proportion to the educational level of the respondents’ mothers, i.e. the less educated the mothers were the more likely the children were to use non-standard case for subjects. In a similar fashion, boys are more prone to ‘dative sickness’ than girls, while, interestingly, the difference is not as marked as regards *hlakka* and *kviða*. Thus boys use the standard nominative slightly more than girls for *kviða* while the opposite is true for *hlakka* and the boys use dative significantly more than girls for *hlakka* while this is turned around for the use of accusative. Finally, the results for the geographical aspect are also somewhat mixed. Thus *kviða* is significantly more often used with its standard nominative subject case

²⁶ This is to say that *ljúka*, *hvolfa* and *reka* can be used as personal agentive verbs with nominative subjects. The difference between the personal and impersonal form of is exemplified below:

Personal:	ég hvolfdi bátnum <i>I(NOM) capsized boat-the(DAT)</i> I capsized the boat
Impersonal:	Bátnum hvolfdi <i>Boat-the(DAT) capsized</i> The boat capsized

in the greater Reykjavík area than elsewhere, while the levels of standard nominative usage with *hlakka* are similar across the sample. For both these verbs, however, the tendency to use dative is stronger outside the greater Reykjavík area, while the children in Reykjavík are more likely to use accusative if they use a non-standard case in the first place. As for ‘dative sickness’, the differences are very small and the children in the greater Reykjavík area are only marginally less likely than the children elsewhere to replace accusative subjects with dative ones. Interestingly, however, if the greater Reykjavík area is divided into smaller parts, it emerges that children in its eastern suburbs are likelier than children elsewhere in the area to show signs of ‘dative sickness’ and not to use the standard nominative subject case for both *hlakka* and *kvíða*. This, as well as the differences between Reykjavík on the whole and the rest of country, Jónsson and Eypórsson relate to the fact that the general level of education in Iceland is at its highest in inner Reykjavík and some of its neighbouring municipalities, while it is lower in Reykjavík’s eastern suburbs and elsewhere in the country.

All in all, I believe that the main asset of Svavarsdóttir’s and Jónsson and Eypórsson’s studies is that they confirm the existence of ‘dative sickness’ and ‘oblique case sickness’ with *hlakka* and *kvíða*, as well as the existence of what appears to be wide-spread variation in terms of the case used for subjects of impersonal verbs. Nonetheless, I find it questionable just how much their results tell us about the real spread and frequency of the features in question. First of all, as Svavarsdóttir (1982) herself indicates, it is doubtful whether children that are only eleven years of age have mastered this grammatical difficulty, especially if Jacobsen (1980) is right about it having to be learned rather than acquired. Also, even though Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) claim that the verbs they chose for their study are common and should thus be familiar to the children, this can not be guaranteed and there may well have been a few verbs that were indeed unfamiliar to a number of children, which, in turn, might have resulted in their using pure guesswork, possibly encouraged by the design of the tests where it shouldn’t be too hard, even for eleven-year-olds, to realize what is really being asked for. Consequently, I believe some questions can be raised about the reliability of the results. Thirdly, I am unsure about just how much a “prescribed” test of the kind used by Svavarsdóttir and Jónsson and Eypórsson really tells us about the frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in spontaneous speech and writing. At least I do not believe that it gives any valuable insights into the frequency of this phenomenon in the children’s everyday language, both written and – especially – spoken, which is not taken into consideration at all in these studies.

Apart from Svavarsdóttir’s and Jónsson and Eypórsson’s work a third study of a similar kind exists, even though its scope is much more limited than that of the work just discussed. Like Jónsson and Eypórsson, Gíslason (2003) set out to examine how ‘dative sickness’ had developed in the 20 years that had

passed since Svavarsdóttir's original study. His results, which are based on data from 232 eleven-year-old school-children from the greater Reykjavík area who were asked to fill in blanks in a given text with the correct form of a 3rd person singular feminine pronoun subject, largely mirror those of Jónsson and Eyþórsson, showing a general increase of 'dative sickness' from Svavarsdóttir's study as well as an increased use of oblique case for *hlakka*, whereas non-standard usage of case for *kviða* appears to be stable. Naturally, I have the same reservations regarding this work as about that of Svavarsdóttir and Jónsson and Eyþórsson.

One final piece of research, which touches upon the sociolinguistic aspects of 'dative sickness' and its related features, should be mentioned. This was carried out by Halldórsson (1982) at nearly the same time as Svavarsdóttir carried out her research. In Halldórsson's study, 18-19-year-old students in a high school in Reykjavík were asked to indicate how frequently 'dative sickness' occurred in their surroundings. This was done by presenting paired sample sentences to the students where one contained an accusative subject for the impersonal verb, whereas the other contained a dative subject. The students were then supposed to mark one of three columns (labelled "often", "rarely", and "never") to show how frequently they heard each form. A total of 25 verbs were tested, 22 of which in the standard language take accusative subjects; the remaining three take dative subjects. 151 students took part in the study.

The results from this study are in many ways similar to those in Svavarsdóttir's (1982) first study. Thus the "correct" form was the most commonly heard for all 22 verbs normally taking accusative subjects, but at the same time there was a clear tendency for the respondents to report hearing many of them used with dative subjects. Two verbs stood out in this respect, namely *langa* (= 'want') and *vanta* (= 'need'). 61.6% of the students reported to have often heard these verbs used with a dative subject. Interestingly, however, these verbs were also amongst those which obtained the highest percentage of "often"-marks for accusative case (95.4% for *langa*; 92.1% for *vanta*). This indicates that the high score for dative subjects can at least partly be explained by the already mentioned fact that these two verbs are amongst the most commonly used impersonal verbs and are thereby most often heard in both "correct" and "incorrect" forms. This explanation gains further support from the fact that six out of eight of the other verbs which obtained fairly high "often"-marks for dative subjects (25.8-39.7%) get a score of 80% or higher in terms of "often"-marks for the "correct" accusative subject. Nonetheless, of course, the sheer number of verbs gaining relatively high "often"-marks for dative subjects indicates a clear tendency for 'dative sickness'.

As was mentioned above, Halldórsson included three verbs normally taking dative subjects in his study. This he did mainly to catch those who, in his words (1982, p. 165), were trying to "gera sprell", i.e. play tricks, as he did not believe that anyone had heard them used with anything else than dative subjects.

To his surprise, however, two of the verbs showed some tendency for ‘reverse dative sickness’. Thus, 24.5% claimed often to have heard *sárna* (= ‘be hurt/insulted’) used with an accusative subject, and the corresponding figure for *þykja* (= ‘feel/think’ (when expressing an opinion)) was 17.2%. Halldórsson also comes to much the same conclusion as Svavarsdóttir and Jónsson and Eyþórsson as he believes that this might be the result of hypercorrection. He does not, however, make any attempt to explain the reasons for ‘dative sickness’ and makes no special mention of either ‘oblique case sickness’ or ‘nominative sickness’.

Finally, it can be added that Halldórsson also includes a historical study of ‘dative sickness’ in his research. Here he searched Icelandic literature from the sagas onwards for occurrences of this phenomenon and the main conclusion is that ‘dative sickness’ first emerges in written language around 1850, apart from isolated examples as far back as the 12th century. This, of course, suggests that it may have existed in spoken language for quite a while before this point. It is also somewhat surprising that, despite this knowledge, both Halldórsson and virtually everyone else who has had anything to say about this in the scientific as well as the public debate seem to take for granted that ‘dative sickness’ only affects young people.

I believe that Halldórsson’s study has very much the same effect as the others discussed above; it confirms the existence of ‘dative sickness’ in Icelandic. Otherwise the study leaves the reader with about as many questions as it answers, which is mainly due to quite a few methodological problems. First of all, the categories “often” and “rarely” are vague at best. What does it really mean when a student claims often to have heard a dative subject used instead of an accusative one? How did the students understand the categories? Does “often” to them mean that the sheer frequency of the form in question was high or that the occurrence of a dative subject was proportionately high when compared to a corresponding accusative subject? Admittedly, the many instances of high “often”-marks for both the standard and the non-standard form indicates that the former understanding was the most common one, but nonetheless what one student regards as “often” can be regarded as “seldom” by another student. All in all, this leaves us with a set of results which we cannot be sure how to interpret.

Another objection is that in the test all the subjects were in 1st person singular which of course limits the applicability of the results to that category, especially in the light of Svavarsdóttir’s results which show some differences between 1st and 3rd person subjects. To Halldórsson’s credit he is aware of both these limitations and briefly discusses them, but then the question arises as to how to interpret the results in the light of these difficulties.

A final problem is the sample. It is doubtful how much can be said about the general spread of ‘dative sickness’ on the foundation of material from a single high school in Reykjavík. Halldórsson is, again, aware of the possible

criticism but rejects it this time as the students in question come from various backgrounds and are likely to have spoken to all kinds of people. This I believe is true only to a certain extent. Admittedly the school was at the time of the study attended by students from many parts of the country, but it is also one of the oldest and most renowned high schools in Iceland and has a long tradition of primarily being attended by students with a middle/upper middle class background. The entrance requirements are also fairly strict, with the result that only students with quite good marks from elementary school are accepted. Also, even though the students' background may be varied and they may have spoken to all kinds of people, it would have been better to have included some measure on this background and people in order to make the results clearer and more nuanced.

4.1.1 Aim and operationalization

The main goals of this thesis in relation to 'dative sickness' and other 'verb sicknesses' can probably be deduced from the criticism aimed at the previous studies discussed above. As will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, I aim to broaden the approach somewhat by using data obtained from various age groups, in spontaneous speech and writing, in an attempt to establish the frequency 'dative sickness' and the other 'verb sicknesses' described above have reached in everyday Icelandic. At the same time, I hope to obtain a picture of the sociolinguistic patterning these 'linguistic diseases' may display. By extension, the results on 'dative sickness' and the other linguistic features examined in this thesis will then form the foundation for a discussion of whether or not Icelandic should be viewed as a stable language.

The above discussion and examples also give strong indications about the view taken here of what constitutes examples of 'dative sickness', 'oblique case sickness', 'nominative sickness', and 'accusative sickness'. Thus, for the purpose of establishing the level of 'dative sickness', all impersonal verbs that in standard language take accusative case subjects are excerpted from the data and examined. Each instance of a dative case subject in this context is then regarded as an example of 'dative sickness'. Thus, constructions such as '*mig* vantar bók' (= '*I(ACC)* lack/need a book') and '*hana* langar í ís' (= '*she(ACC)* wants ice cream') would be counted as examples of standard usage, while '*mér* vantar bók' (= '*I(DAT)* lack/need a book') and '*henni* langar í ís' (= '*she(DAT)* wants ice cream') are counted as examples of 'dative sickness'. One exception should be noted here. The verb *vanta* (= 'lack/need') is frequently used in the construction '*það* vantar mjólk/brauð/smjör...' (= 'it/there needs milk/bread/butter...' in the meaning 'we're out of milk/bread/butter...'). In this context, where *það* (= 'it') should be regarded as a dummy subject, the construction '*það* vantar X' is here viewed as a set phrase as I think the entire Icelandic-speaking population will agree with me that it is simply inconceivable that the dative form

of *það*, i.e. *því*, could be used. This can be compared to contexts where *það* is used as a 3rd person singular neuter pronoun to refer to e.g. *barn* (= ‘child’). In such cases some variation between the standard ‘Barnið grætur. *Það* vantar snuð’ (= ‘The child is crying. *It(ACC)* needs a pacifier’) and the ‘dative sickness’ form ‘Barnið grætur. *Því* vantar snuð’ (= ‘The child is crying. *It(DAT)* needs a pacifier’) is perfectly conceivable. For this reason constructions of this latter kind will, if found, be included in the analysis in this thesis while instances of ‘*það* vantar X’ are excluded.

As can be seen in the discussion of earlier work above, two verbs, i.e. *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kvíða* (= ‘be anxious’) have been identified as showing a tendency for ‘oblique case sickness’. For this reason, all instances of these verbs in the data have been examined along with the subject in question at each time. If the subject appears in an oblique case, i.e. accusative, dative or genitive, rather than the standard nominative format, this will be regarded as an example of ‘oblique case sickness’, whereas a nominative subject will be regarded as an example of standard usage. Note that the possibility of the subject appearing in genitive case is not excluded here *a priori* even though this scenario seems extremely unlikely given the total lack of such examples in previous work. It should also be noted that even though *hlakka* and *kvíða* are the only verbs that have yet been established as involved in ‘oblique case sickness’ the possibility of other verbs showing the same tendency will be kept in mind when the data is examined. This is to say that if a personal verb (other than *hlakka* and *kvíða*), which in standard language takes a nominative subject, appears with an oblique subject, it will be recorded as an instance of ‘oblique case sickness’ while examples of standard usage of the verb in question will be recorded as such.

‘Nominative sickness’ can be operationalized in a rather straightforward manner. All instances found in the data of impersonal verbs appearing with a nominative subject rather than their standard accusative, dative or genitive one will be recorded as an example of this feature. When, however, the relevant verbs appear with their standard oblique case subject this is recorded as an example of standard usage. This is to say that a construction such as ‘*báturinn* hvolfdi’ (= ‘*boat-the(NOM)* capsized’) will be recorded as an example of ‘nominative sickness’ whereas ‘*bátnum* hvolfdi’ (= ‘*boat-the(DAT)* capsized’) will be recorded as standard usage. Note that this operationalization does not *a priori* exclude the possibility of an impersonal verb, which in standard language takes a genitive case subject, appearing with a nominative subject instead. Again, this seems highly unlikely and examples of this kind have not been included in the discussion in previous work on ‘nominative sickness’. That, however, does not mean that it is impossible for such examples to emerge, especially as the data used here derives from the informants’ actual usage rather than their responses to a set of verbs predetermined by the researcher.

Finally, ‘accusative sickness’ is, as we have seen, the reverse of ‘dative sickness’. This means that in this study impersonal verbs which in standard language take a dative case subject will be examined in search for signs of a tendency for them to take an accusative case subject instead. Examples of this kind will be recorded as instances of ‘accusative sickness’ or ‘reverse dative sickness’, whereas occurrences of these verbs appearing with their standard dative case subject will be recorded as examples of standard usage. This is to say that the construction ‘*mig* dettur ekkert í hug’ (= ‘*I(ACC)* can’t think of anything’) will be taken as an example of ‘accusative sickness’, whereas ‘*mér* dettur ekkert í hug’ (= ‘*I(DAT)* can’t think of anything’) will be regarded as standard usage.

4.2 ‘Genitive avoidance’

When compared to ‘dative sickness’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and the reasons for its (alleged) existence has received little attention, and apart from Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994) no literature exists specifically on this subject, even though there is an abundance of work which deals with the case inflectional system of Icelandic in general. A special point should be made of the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, no research has as yet been carried out on how far this ‘avoidance’ has spread in Icelandic and thus both Kjartansson’s (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir’s (1994) main concern is to describe this feature and provide some possible explanations for its emergence. The reason for this might be that ‘genitive avoidance’ seems to be fairly new and had received no attention until Kjartansson’s first article (1979) on the subject. Also, even though this phenomenon is viewed in much the same way as is ‘dative sickness’, i.e. as a disease against which speakers of Icelandic (especially school-children) need to be, as it were, vaccinated, it has been much less focused upon in the public debate than many other features.

From what has just been said about how little interest ‘genitive avoidance’ has aroused, it is not surprising that this phenomenon has not been fully defined. Nonetheless Kjartansson and Svavarsdóttir can be said to have tried to improve each other’s analysis in order to make the picture clearer. Thus, when identifying this feature in his first article, Kjartansson (1979) poses the question whether ‘genitive avoidance’ should be taken as an instance of “abnormal use of case” (1979, p. 90), i.e. the use of nominative, accusative or dative (which is the most common) case where genitive is required, generally by a preposition or a verb governing for this case, in the standard language; as a change in case endings, i.e. that the speakers in question do not inflect incorrectly for case *per se* but rather use non-standard case endings; or simply as slips of the tongue. Kjartansson does not venture to provide a definite answer, but at least discards the last possibility on the basis of the frequency with which examples of non-standard usage of this kind are encountered in spoken as well as written

language. As for the remaining two options, he leans towards the former possibility, as in the examples on which he bases his identification of the feature, the deviations from the standard seem not to be restricted to certain words or inflectional paradigms, but rather appear to be traceable to their syntactical context. On this foundation Kjartansson then adds some general comments on where ‘genitive avoidance’ is most likely to appear. He claims that it knows few limits in informal spoken language and could probably be regarded as a “slip of the tongue” were it not for its frequency. In more formal spoken language and written language it is, however, less likely to appear and is probably limited to certain speakers and/or writers. Kjartansson also believes that ‘genitive avoidance’ is most frequent in complex sentences that contain many case-inflected words, especially if many of these ought to be in genitive case. Finally, he claims that the risk of ‘genitive avoidance’ increases when the word governing the case stands either well in front of the inflected word or is preceded by it, as well as when words in dative case stand next to the word which should take genitive. This would then explain the ‘genitive avoidance’ evident in his examples, one of which is (4.8) (1979, p. 89):

- (4.8) Hins vegar er dánartíðni vegna(Prep-GEN) krabbameins(GEN) í(Prep-DAT) lungum(DAT), brisi(DAT) og þvagblöðru(DAT), hjarta- og æðasjúkdómum*(DAT) eða hæggengum*(DAT) lungnasjúkdómum*(DAT) ekki verulega aukin.

On the other hand the mortality rate due to(Prep-GEN) cancer (GEN) in(Prep-DAT) lungs(DAT), pancreas(DAT) and urine bladder(DAT), cardiovascular diseases*(DAT) or slowly progressing lung diseases*(DAT) is not markedly increased.

Here the chain of words which should take genitive case from the preposition *vegna* (= ‘due to’) is broken by a shorter string of dative case, initiated by the preposition *í* (= ‘in’). The writer in question observes that *í* requires dative case to be used on the three different types of cancer, but then extends this usage of dative into the terms for the following diseases which the original *vegna* requires to be in genitive case. This is further aided by the fact that the string of datives causes a gap to emerge between *vegna* and the words it should govern which follow the string of datives, leaving only *krabbamein* (= ‘cancer’), which stands right next to the preposition before the dative “interruption”, in the correct genitive case.

15 years after this original identification of ‘genitive avoidance’, Svavarsdóttir (1994) further developed Kjartansson’s ideas. She claims that while Kjartansson is certainly right in his analysis of the examples he presented, ‘genitive avoidance’ cannot always be seen as “abnormal use of case”. She refers here to the fact that non-standard use of genitive appears to be particularly

common with certain feminine nouns which in nominative case end in *-ing* and a group of women's names. Both these types of words take a *-u*-ending in both accusative and dative, a characteristic they share with a number of feminine nouns which are inflected according to a more common inflectional pattern, but while the women's names and *-ing* nouns take an *-ar*-ending for genitive case in standard language, the more common pattern is to retain a *-u*-ending for genitive as well, and this Svavarsdóttir claims affects the *-ar*-ending through analogy. Accordingly, she prefers not to look at this as 'genitive avoidance' in the sense Kjartansson does, i.e. as "abnormal use of case", but rather as a change in the form of the genitive ending. Note, however, that this interpretation is one of the alternatives originally given by Kjartansson (1979).

Following this discussion, Svavarsdóttir picks up a further point made by Kjartansson about the general weakening of the position of genitive case in modern Icelandic being a possible reason behind 'genitive avoidance'. Here they seem to agree, even though they approach the question slightly differently. Thus they both point out that in modern Icelandic few verbs and prepositions govern genitive case and most of these are rare in everyday language. Furthermore, many of the few verbs that do govern genitive case can also be used with a prepositional phrase instead without changing their meaning, as can be seen in (4.9)a. and (4.9)b.:

- (4.9)a. *ég bíð þín*
 I wait you(GEN)
 I wait for you
- (4.9)b. *ég bíð eftir þér*
 I wait after(Prep- DAT) you(DAT)
 I wait for you

Svavarsdóttir also provides some evidence that this latter option is more common, which goes hand in hand with the second point made by both her and Kjartansson. This is that extensive use of genitive is traditionally considered to result in a "heavy" or highly formal style, which is often avoided. Finally, they both point out that genitive forms or inflections of several words are quite different from the other case inflections and may thus tend to be unfamiliar to some speakers.

In his later article, Kjartansson (1999) happily accepts most of Svavarsdóttir's (1994) additions to his original identification of 'genitive avoidance', but then moves on to add a few more points. The most telling of these is that while he sees no problem with making a distinction between non-standard use of case for genitive (on the basis of syntactical context), on the one hand, and use of non-standard genitive case inflections, on the other, these two features can also be combined. By this he means that, even though feminine

nouns which in the standard language take an *-ar*-ending for genitive case may be more prone than other nouns to appear in a non-standard form, whether or not they do so can be influenced to some extent by their syntactical context, such as the distance between the case governing item and the word which should be inflected in genitive case. This suggestion he then supports with a few examples.

As a final point in this discussion, Kjartansson mentions a certain construction where dative case appears to be preferred by speakers on a regular basis even though genitive should, strictly speaking, be used. In this construction, a past participle stands in apposition to a genitive noun and should therefore agree with it in case in standard language, as in (4.10)a. (taken from Kjartansson (1999, p. 157)) :

- (4.10)a. *bók ... í höndum prests ættaðs frá Miklabæ*
 book ... in hands priest's(GEN) descended(GEN) from
 Miklibær
 a book ... in the hands of a priest descended from Miklibær

However, Kjartansson claims that no-one raises an eye-brow when seeing or hearing the version in (4.10)b.:

- (4.10)b. *bók ... í höndum prests ættuðum frá Miklabæ*
 book ... in hands priest's(GEN) descended(DAT) from
 Miklibær
 a book ... in the hands of a priest descended from Miklibær

Kjartansson even suggests that this latter form has become the norm and provides some tentative statistical proof of this. He does not, however, try to explain the development of this feature even though he hints that it might be due to the formal and rigid character of the version where genitive is used for both noun and past participle.

Kjartansson's and Svavarsdóttir's articles are doubtlessly valuable contributions on the nature of 'genitive avoidance'. The only objection I would like to raise is that I believe that they have, in a sense, started at the wrong end. Thus, as we have seen, Kjartansson claims that 'genitive avoidance' is quite frequent in spoken language and his other comments on where this feature tends to emerge are based on a number of written examples. However, neither he nor Svavarsdóttir have investigated how frequent 'genitive avoidance' really is, which is rather unfortunate as it would appear to be the orthodox method to establish how often and regularly it occurs in both spoken and written language before it is treated as an example of linguistic change. As it is, we only have Kjartansson's and Svavarsdóttir's words – which seem to be based to a large extent on their feeling – for this being anything more than just a "slip of the tongue".

4.2.1 Aim and operationalization

From the discussion above, it follows that, as regards ‘genitive avoidance’, the aim of this thesis is, so to speak, to get back to the “right end”, i.e. to establish the frequency and regularity with which this feature appears and examine which sociolinguistic patterns may emerge in this respect. At the same time, the results will hopefully be an aid in finding a clearer definition of ‘genitive avoidance’, but as we have seen above it appears at present to be less than certain just how this feature emerges.

As for the treatment of ‘genitive avoidance’ in this thesis, both major instances discussed here, i.e. “abnormal use of case” and possible change in the form of genitive case endings, will be dealt with. However, given the less than clear previous definitions of ‘genitive avoidance’ it seems wise to broaden the field in order to encompass an examination of the stability of genitive case in general. This means that in this study all contexts which in standard language require genitive case to be used will be excerpted and examined. The relevant token at each time, which can be a noun, a pronoun, an adjective, a determiner, or a numeral, will then be recorded; in the first instance as a non-standard form if it appears either with a deviant genitive case-ending or in any case other than genitive, but as a standard form if genitive case with a standard genitive case ending is used. Following this first identification of non-standard usage where genitive is required, each non-standard example will be measured against Kjartansson’s (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir’s (1994) more specific definitions of ‘genitive avoidance’ to see whether it can be classified as such. To exemplify this, an occurrence of the (accusative or dative case) form *drottningu* (= ‘queen’) in a context requiring the genitive form *drottningar* will, if found, first be recorded as a non-standard genitive form, and subsequently as an example of ‘genitive avoidance’, as it meets Svavarsdóttir’s (1994) definition of this feature through being a feminine noun appearing with a *-u*-ending in a context requiring genitive case and thereby an *-ar*-ending. Similarly, a word which, in a complex sentence containing many case-inflected words, appears in e.g. its accusative form, rather than the required genitive form, is regarded both as an instance of non-standard usage in general and of ‘genitive avoidance’ in particular, following Kjartansson’s (1979) proposed definition. Should, however, the word in question appear in its accusative form, rather than the required genitive one outside contexts such as those identified by Kjartansson above, it will only be recorded as an example of non-standard usage.

The operationalization above assumes that all genitive contexts will be examined. A few exceptions to this should be noted. A number of set phrases and idioms in Icelandic containing genitive items are excluded from any examination as correct usage of them depends on knowledge of the phrase or idiom as a whole rather than on knowledge of case inflection. Thus the phrase ‘vegna þess að’ (= ‘because’), which is used as a conjunction in Icelandic,

strictly speaking contains the genitive form *þess* of the pronoun *það* (= ‘it’). I would argue, however, that speakers of Icelandic regard this phrase essentially as a single entity rather than three separate words and it seems inconceivable that anyone would use e.g. ‘vegna því að’, i.e. with the dative form of the pronoun. It seems equally inconceivable that speakers use idiomatic expressions such as ‘matur er mannsins megin’ (= ‘food is man’s mainstay’) with anything other than the definite genitive form of the noun *maður*, i.e. *mannsins* (= ‘man’s’). Therefore phrases and idioms of this kind are excluded.

Finally, it should be added that no attempt will be made at establishing whether or not genitive case is weakening as regards the possible usage of a prepositional phrase instead with a verb that can also take a genitive object. The reason for this is that it seems impossible to determine whether the speaker or writer in question is – consciously or not – avoiding the use of genitive by using a prepositional phrase.

4.3 Other case inflections

Claims have been made – especially by teachers of Icelandic in elementary schools and high schools – that genitive is not the only oblique case under threat. Rather, it is argued that the case inflectional system in its entirety is currently undergoing some radical changes. According to these teachers, this emerges either in their students’ using an “incorrect” case, e.g. accusative where there should be dative, or in a tendency not to inflect for oblique case at all and thereby to leave nominative as the only surviving case.²⁷ Despite these claims, and occasional “letters to the editor” with complaints about deviant case inflections, no scientific literature has been published specifically on this matter. Therefore it is by no means clear what the extent of these alleged changes is at the present time. Hopefully this thesis will shed some light on the matter.

4.3.1 Aim and operationalization

It follows naturally from the brief discussion above that the aim here will be to try to determine whether or not there is a general instability in the case inflectional system and, if so, what the characteristics of this instability are, both in sociolinguistic and more directly language internal terms. For this reason, the operationalization used here can be said to be an expansion of the operationalization of ‘genitive avoidance’ above (section 4.2.1). This is to say that here all contexts requiring accusative or dative case, regardless of the word-class involved, are recorded and examined with respect to the case or case ending used. All deviations from the standard will be counted as examples of non-standard usage. This includes the usage of accusative case forms where

²⁷ Personal communication with Kristín S. Árnadóttir, a teacher of Icelandic at Verkmenntaskólinn á Akureyri (a high school).

dative case forms are required, or vice versa; the usage of nominative case forms where accusative or dative case forms are required; and non-standard case endings for accusative or dative forms. Furthermore, the possibility of genitive case being used in contexts requiring accusative or dative case is not excluded even though the discussion of ‘genitive avoidance’ above indicates that examples of this kind will be very rare if not completely absent. The non-standard examples will then be further classified in order to establish e.g. whether any particular groups of words show greater signs of instability than others or whether any particular contexts are more likely than others to result in non-standard usage. For an overview of the case inflectional system of Icelandic the interested reader is referred to Svavarsdóttir (1993, 2001) and Bráinsson (1995).

In operationalizing ‘genitive avoidance’ above, a number of set phrases and idioms containing genitive items were excluded. In a similar fashion, set phrases and idioms containing items inflected for accusative or dative case are excluded here. The reasons are the same as regarding the corresponding action taken with respect to ‘genitive avoidance’; these phrases and idioms are regarded as single entities without regard to their separate constituents which are fully set within the frame of the phrase or idiom in question.

4.4 ‘New passive’

As the term ‘new passive’ implies, this refers to a change in how passive sentences are constructed in Icelandic. At least three types of traditional passive constructions have been recognized in the language. These can be seen in (4.11)-(4.13) below (taken from Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir (1997, p. 378) and Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling (2002, p. 5)):

- | | | |
|----------|---|---------------------------|
| (4.11) | Ég var lamin(n) á leikvellingum
<i>I(Nom) was hit on playground-the</i>
I was hit at the playground | Nominative passive |
| (4.12)a. | Honum var hrint í skólanum
<i>He(DAT)was pushed in school-the</i>
He was pushed at school | Oblique passive |
| (4.12).b | Kennarans var saknað
<i>Teacher-the(DAT) was missed</i>
The teacher was missed | Oblique passive |
| (4.13) | Það var sungið hátt
<i>It/There was sung loudly</i>
There was loud singing | Impersonal passive |

As Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir point out, these examples of nominative passive and oblique passive show that a distinction is made between structural and inherent case in the Icelandic passive. Thus, in nominative passive, the structural accusative object from the active sentence becomes nominative as it moves to the subject position in the passive, while, in oblique passive, the inherent object case, which is dative or genitive, is preserved despite the movement to a subject position. Furthermore, while in the nominative passive there is agreement between the subject and the finite verb and the past participle, this is not the case in oblique passive as there the verb is always in 3rd person singular and the participle always appears in the neutral gender, nominative singular form.

To this Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir add that in certain passive constructions the object of an active sentence can remain in its postverbal position if it is indefinite. Thus (4.14) would be an acceptable construction as there the object is indefinite while (4.15) is not acceptable as there the object is definite (Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997, p. 378):

(4.14)a. Það voru seldar margar bækur
It/There were(pl.) sold(pl. fem.) many books(NOM)
 Many books were sold

(4.15) *Það voru seldar margar bækurnar
It/There were sold many books-the(NOM)

This is known as the definite effect. Note also that in (4.14) the postverbal noun phrase stands in nominative and there is agreement of the finite verb and past participle.

Turning then to the ‘new passive’ this appears in forms which correspond to the examples in (4.11) and (4.12) above and thus the nominative passive has its counterpart in (4.16), while the oblique passive corresponds to (4.17):

(4.16)a. Það var lamið mig á leikvöllinum
It/There was hit me(ACC) on playground-the(DAT)
 I was hit at the playground

(4.17)a. Það var hrint honum í skólanum
It/There was pushed him(DAT) in school-the(DAT)
 He was pushed at school

(4.17)b. Það var saknað kennarans
It/There was missed teacher-the(GEN)
 The teacher was missed

Here there is no movement of the object to subject position and the object retains its case regardless of whether it is structural, i.e. accusative, or inherent, i.e. dative or genitive. Furthermore, in constructions of this kind a dummy *það*, i.e. ‘it’ or ‘there’, is inserted in subject position and the finite verb is always in the 3rd person singular form, while the past participle always appears in the neutral gender, nominative singular form, just as is the case in standard oblique and impersonal passive constructions. The object stays in object position even though it is definite, which means that the definite effect does not seem to apply to the ‘new passive’. However, Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir point out that this may need to be modified as even those who accept the structures in (4.16) and (4.17)a. and b. would not accept (4.18):

- (4.18) **Það hafa loksins flutt strákarinnir inn í húsið*
 It/There have finally moved boys-the(NOM) into house-the
 The boys have finally moved into the house

This ‘new passive’ appears to be a relatively new phenomenon; the earliest known examples date from 1959 (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001), and attention was first brought to the feature, at least in academic circles in Iceland, by Bernódusson (1982) and then again by Kjartansson (1991), from whom the label seems to stem. Due to this, it may not be so surprising that the syntactic nature of the ‘new passive’ is under some debate. Thus Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (1997, 2001) argue that the ‘new passive’ is in fact not a passive construction at all but rather a syntactically active construction with a phonologically null impersonal subject. Barðdal and Molnár (2003), however, reject this analysis and argue instead that it should be regarded as a close relative of the impersonal passive and fit it, on the basis of a Construction Grammar analysis, into an expanded system of passive constructions in Icelandic which includes not only the types mentioned so far but also prepositional passive and indefinite passive, the latter of which consists of constructions of the kind presented in (4.14) above.

As for the reasons for the emergence of the ‘new passive’, the picture is no clearer, even though there appears to be some agreement that this is not a contact induced change, as even though e.g. Polish and German have undergone a similar development, the contact between these languages and Icelandic is extremely limited (Kjartansson, 1991; Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001). Kjartansson tentatively suggests that this is a structural simplification aimed at always forming passive in the same way, i.e. with a dummy subject and an impersonal verb as is the case in standard impersonal passive constructions. He also mentions that several standard passive constructions closely resemble the ‘new passive’. Thus, while (4.19) is perfectly grammatical, and falls under what Barðdal and Molnár (2003) call prepositional passives, (4.20) is an example of the ‘new passive’ even though it is synonymous with (4.19):

- (4.19) Það var leikið á mig
It/There was played on me(ACC)
 I was tricked
- (4.20) Það var platað mig
It/There was tricked me(ACC)
 I was tricked

Kjartansson (1991) indicates that the preposition in (4.19) may have been reanalysed as a particle which would make it a natural model for the new passive in (4.20). Barðdal and Molnár agree with this analysis but add two more alternatives (2003, p. 245):

Another possible analysis is that the New passive is an expansion of the Indefinite passive in the sense that the New passive is not restricted to an indefinite noun phrase in the nominative, dative, and genitive but allows definite noun phrases in all four morphological case forms (i.e. even in the accusative). A third alternative is to relate the emergence of the New passive to the Impersonal passive by allowing not only intransitive verbs to occur in this actional domain but even transitive verbs. On such a view, the New passive is only an expansion of the Impersonal passive.

Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001) appear to partly accept Kjartansson's (1991) suggestions above about 'new passive' being a simplification, but add a further dimension. They suggest that when the actor is not expressed in impersonal passives s/he has to be interpreted as human in all Germanic languages. This same condition applies to the other passive types in Icelandic, but not in other Germanic languages, according to Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001). Thus, they claim that while the Icelandic passive in (4.21)a. is ungrammatical, its Swedish and English counterparts in (4.21)b. and (4.21)c. are fine:

- (4.21)a. *Húsið var eyðilagt (af eldinum)
- (4.21)b. Huset blev ödelagt (av elden)
- (4.21)c. The house was destroyed (by the fire)

Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling argue the non-expressed actor in the Icelandic sentence ((4.21)a.) above has to be interpreted as human. If the actor is a force of nature, another construction, shown in (4.22) below, is required. Other Germanic languages, however, do not have to make the same adjustments to accommodate a non-human actor:

- (4.22) Húsið eyðilagðist í eldinum
House-the destroyed in fire-the
The house was destroyed in the fire

On this basis, Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling argue that the general tendency in Icelandic is to interpret a non-expressed actor as human and claim that this might mean that there is a higher probability that this semantic role is reinterpreted as a pronoun in the subject position. This they see as the first step in the development of the ‘new passive’.

The source and syntactic nature of the ‘new passive’ may thus be somewhat unclear, but what is more interesting for my purposes is the question originally posed by Kjartansson (1991) about how widespread this feature has become. Kjartansson himself does not really attempt to answer this question but only mentions that to the best of his knowledge the ‘new passive’ is not restricted to certain parts of Iceland. At the same time he is certain that it is primarily to be found amongst children and teenagers, with the possible exception of very young children who have not yet mastered passive constructions in general. This, however, is not supported by any research but appears to be based solely on Kjartansson’s unsystematic observations. More detailed information regarding the possible spread of the ‘new passive’ can, on the other hand, be obtained from Maling and Sigurjónsdóttir (1997; Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002) who are the only ones who have systematically looked into this aspect of this feature.

On the basis of an earlier pilot study (Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997), Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling carried out a larger study in 1999-2000 (2001, 2002). Here, 1,731 15-16-year-olds in 65 schools scattered across the country were presented with a questionnaire which was also presented to 205 adults in various locations. The questionnaire was designed to test the syntactic properties of the ‘new passive’ and consisted of 68 sentences in random order, 51 of which contained examples of the ‘new passive’ in various syntactic contexts. Sentences which included verbs that govern dative case were included as well as sentences with verbs that govern accusative. Verbs governing genitive case were excluded, however, as they were judged to be too few. The remaining 17 sentences were added for reliability purposes and included grammatically acceptable as well as unacceptable constructions. For all the sentences, the respondents were asked to mark one of two possible columns where one meant “yes, you can speak this way”, and the other “no, you cannot speak this way”. The respondents were also asked to provide information about their gender, year of birth, first language, where they had lived, and their parents’ education. 1,695 teenagers produced usable data, 845 boys and 850 girls.

The main results from Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001) study are summarized in table 4.3:

Table 4.3 Proportion of positive responses to ‘new passive’ in each geographical area. (Figures from Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001)).

<i>Geographical area</i>	Accusative object		Dative object	
	<i>Teenagers</i>	<i>Adults</i>	<i>Teenagers</i>	<i>Adults</i>
West	68%	3%	73%	6%
Western Fjords	62%	3%	68%	7%
North	55%	3%	60%	7%
East	51%	4%	57%	6%
Vestmannaeyjar	64%	5%	71%	4%
South	60%	1%	68%	9%
South-West	68%	7%	75%	3%
Suburban Reykjavík	53%	1%	60%	3%
Inner Reykjavík	28%		35%	

What immediately strikes the eye in this table is the high general acceptancy rate amongst the teenagers, whereas the corresponding figures for the adults reach at most 9%. This, Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling say, indicates that ‘new passive’ is in general use amongst children and teenagers throughout the greater part of the country. A noteworthy exception to this is the inner Reykjavík area where the teenagers show a general acceptancy rate that is significantly lower than that of their peers in other parts of the country, including the suburban parts of Reykjavík (which also include some neighbouring municipalities). Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling also point out that this pattern emerged for all the questionnaire sentences that contained examples of the ‘new passive’, while there was no difference between the areas as regards the control sentences.

Another aspect which table 4.3 shows clearly is that ‘new passive’ constructions containing verbs that govern dative object case are somewhat likelier to be accepted than are constructions containing verbs that govern accusative object case. This difference is statistically significant for both teenagers and adults. Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling suggest that this can be explained by the fact that the only thing that sets the traditional oblique passive apart from the ‘new passive’ is that the latter can contain a definite postverbal noun phrase which the former cannot. However, nominative passives, i.e. constructions containing verbs that govern accusative object case, differ from ‘new passives’, not only on the basis of definiteness, but also in the case of the noun phrase and due to the lack of agreement between the noun phrase and the verbs. This makes the ‘new passive’ form of oblique passive less prominent than its nominative passive counterpart which could make the former more acceptable.

Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling also investigated whether there was any relationship between, on the one hand, gender and acceptance of ‘new passive’, and, on the other acceptance rates and the teenagers’ parents’ level of education.

In the first case, no significant correlation was found, but in the second a strong correlation was evident; the higher the level of the parents' education, the lower the level of acceptance. This Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling link to the figures discussed previously that show that the teenagers in inner Reykjavík are far less likely to accept 'new passive' constructions than are teenagers elsewhere in Iceland. A possible reason might be that, as we saw in the discussion of 'dative sickness' above, the level of education in the inner parts of Reykjavík is higher than elsewhere in the country. Still, this does not fully explain this relationship as the proportion of positive responses in inner Reykjavík is always lower than anywhere else in the country, regardless of the parents' educational level.

Much the same can be said about this study as about the studies dealing with 'dative sickness'. Thus the high acceptance rates amongst teenagers certainly indicate that the 'new passive' has found some footing there, but at the same time it is uncertain just how much these results tell about the level of usage as accepting a certain form as grammatical is clearly not the same as using it. Thus, the usage of 'new passive' may be either more or less frequent than the rate of acceptancy of this feature may at first sight indicate. Therefore, Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's claim that their results show that 'new passive' constructions are commonly used by children and teenagers, is probably unwarranted and we still have no clear data on how these forms appear in everyday language, both spoken and written.

4.4.1 Aim and operationalization

The comment made at the end of the last section about us not having any real indication as to the level of usage of 'new passive' constructions can be said to establish the aim of this thesis with regard to this feature. This is to say that it is hoped that the results here give an indication about the extent to which 'new passive' constructions are used in spontaneous speech and writing and which speakers are responsible for this usage.

As for the operationalization of 'new passive' it follows directly from the definition given in the previous section. This means that all instances of nominative and oblique passive constructions are counted. This count includes 'new passive' constructions which are regarded as non-standard forms of nominative and oblique passive constructions. 'New passive' is seen as occurring when the speaker (or writer) in question does not, in his/her construction of passive, move the object to subject position, retains the object's case, and inserts a dummy *það*. Thus, a construction such as that in example (4.11) in the previous section, i.e. 'Ég var laminn á leikvælinum' (= 'I was hit at the playground'), will here be treated as a standard nominative passive construction, while 'Það var lamið mig á leikvælinum' (= 'It/There was hit me at the playground') (see example (4.16)) will be treated as a 'new passive' construction. Similarly, a construction such as that in example (4.12)a. in the

previous section, i.e. ‘Honum var hrint í skólanum’ (= ‘He was pushed at school’), will be treated as a standard oblique passive construction, while ‘Það var hrint honum í skólanum’ (= ‘It/There was pushed him at school’) (see example (4.17)a.) will be treated as a ‘new passive’ construction.

4.5 ‘Am-to-frenzy’

Of the features discussed here, this last one appears to be the newest and it seems to have emerged only in the past 7-10 years. It even seems to be too new for any one term to have become established for it. Thus, apart from the term *er-að-æðið*, which is used in a translated form in the heading for this section, terms such as *samsett nútíð* (= ‘compound present tense’), *handboltahorf* (= ‘handball aspect’) and *vera að + nafnháttur* (= ‘be to + infinitive’) have all been used in the few attempts there have been made at naming this feature, and there may be more. Due to its recent emergence – and discovery in scientific circles – and the fact that it seems to be expanding its scope within the language, no thorough definition of it exists as yet, even though some current research will hopefully fill this gap.²⁸

Of the terms mentioned above, the last two might be the most telling as regards the nature of this feature which seemingly involves an expansion of the construction *vera að + infinitive* (Copula ‘to’ + infinitive) which is commonly used in Icelandic for continuous aspect.²⁹ Standardly, this construction is used only with verbs that refer to an action that is limited in time, to show that the action is ongoing or continuous. It thus closely resembles *be + ing* in English, as can be seen in (4.23) below:

- (4.23) *ég er að lesa*
 I am to read
 I am reading

Apparently, however, a number of verbs which have hitherto not been used in a continuous sense can now be used in constructions of this kind. The degree of this expansion is still quite unclear and it seems not to have reached its final point yet, but at the moment it involves at least certain perception verbs (4.24), a number of stative verbs (4.25), and some verbs which can be said to be

²⁸ E-mail communication with Höskuldur Þráinsson, professor of modern Icelandic, University of Iceland.

²⁹ It should be noted here that there has been some debate on whether or not aspect can be regarded as a category in Icelandic (see Friðjónsson, 1989; Frímannsdóttir, 2005; Harðarson, 2000; Þráinsson, 1999, 2001). This debate will be left aside here and the discussion of the present feature as an expansion of continuous aspect is mainly thus constructed to follow the terminology used in the scant literature there exists on the subject.

momentive, i.e. refer to an action which it takes only a split second to perform (or be the patient of) (26) (Friðjónsson, 2003):

(4.24) ég er ekki að skilja þetta
 I am not to understand this
 I don't understand this

(4.25) vörnin var að standa sig vel í leiknum
 Defence-the was to perform well in game-the
 The defence performed well/was performing well in the
 game

(4.26) markvörðurinn var að verja vel
 goalkeeper-the was to save well
 the goalkeeper made a nice save/made a number of fine saves

A few more points should be made about these examples. Thus a negation is used in (4.24) but, at the present time at least, perception verbs seem to be restricted to this context. Thus I have not yet heard constructions like (4.27):

(4.27) ég er að skilja þetta
 I am to understand this
 I understand this

However, in standard usage some other adverbials than the negation can be used with this construction to form, as it were, a future tense:

(4.28) ég er alveg að skilja þetta
 I am almost to understand this
 I am on the brink of understanding this

This, of course, also means that the line between standard and non-standard usage is in many cases rather thin.

As for the example in (4.26), that construction seems to be usable to describe both of the English translations given, i.e. a single save as well as how the goalkeeper played in the match as a whole, thereby incorporating a repetitive character of the verb *verja* (= 'save'). Finally, examples (4.25) and (4.26) show that one of the terms mentioned above, i.e. *samsett nútíð* seems somewhat inaccurate as this construction can be used for past tense as well as present.

It should be underlined that the examples just discussed in all likelihood do not give a full picture of how this feature is emerging, and it is equally unclear how widely it has spread amongst the Icelandic population. All that can be said is that informal suggestions have been made that sports commentators on

television and radio are, if not the very source of this novelty, at least leading the way in spreading it (hence the term *handboltahorf* (= ‘handball aspect’)) (Friðjónsson, 2003; Hafstað, 2003). This assumption has led to another one, namely that these constructions are based on the English model of be + ing (Friðjónsson, 2003).

4.5.1 Aim and operationalization

The lack of a definition and a thorough description of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ make it somewhat difficult to deal with. For this reason, the main objective here is to further determine the forms this construction can take, which verbs it can currently be used with, which speakers use it and how the linguistic community in Iceland appears to be reacting to it.

It follows from the above that providing a clear operationalization of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ is probably not possible at the moment. Thus, while any operationalization would have to include constructions such as those given in examples (4.23) – (4.25) in the previous section it needs at the same time to be open to other possible ways in which this feature can emerge. However, as these other possible ways are as yet unspecified all that can be said at the moment is that all clear instances of deviations away from the standard will be treated here, in an attempt to establish a more detailed definition than is available at present.

4.6 Summary

This chapter has been devoted to a presentation and discussion of the linguistic variables examined in this thesis as indicators of the level of linguistic stability in modern Icelandic. In this context, five main types of variables have been treated. The first is the so-called *þágufallssýki* or ‘dative sickness’. A number of Icelandic verbs are impersonal and take a subject in accusative, dative or genitive case rather than nominative as the more common personal verbs do. The term ‘dative sickness’ derives from a tendency for verbs which in the standard language appear with accusative case subjects to appear with dative subjects instead. However, within this system of impersonal verbs, some other developments have been noticed. The first of these has been called *aukafallssýki* or ‘oblique case sickness’ and this refers to a tendency for two personal verbs, which are semantically closely related to some of the most common impersonal ones, to emerge in an impersonal form with an accusative or a dative case subject. The next development has been labelled *nefnifallssýki* or ‘nominative sickness’ as it involves a tendency for a handful of impersonal verbs which in standard usage take accusative or dative case subjects to emerge in an, as it were, personal form with a nominative subject. The third, and final development can be called ‘reverse dative sickness’ or ‘accusative sickness’ as it emerges in verbs, which in their standard form appear with dative case subjects, appearing

with accusative subjects instead. Of course these three latter developments are not examples of ‘dative sickness’ but they are nonetheless treated alongside it, as together these four features should provide a relatively full picture of the variation there may be within the system of impersonal verbs.

The second variable discussed in this chapter is *eignarfallsflótti* or ‘genitive avoidance’. As the term itself indicates, it refers to a seeming weakening of genitive case in Icelandic and this emerges either through the usage of nominative, accusative or dative case where the standard language requires genitive, or through the usage of non-standard genitive case endings. This can in turn be seen as an instance of the more general third type of linguistic variables under study here, as claims have been made that genitive is not the only oblique case which shows signs of instability. This is to say that the entire case inflectional system may be undergoing changes and thus accusative may be used where the standard requires dative or vice versa. It has also been claimed that speakers tend not to inflect for oblique case at all which would leave nominative as the only living case.

The fourth variable is called *ný þolmynd* or ‘new passive’ and as can be seen from the term, it relates to a new way of constructing passive in Icelandic. Traditionally, the language has at least three types of passive, a nominative one, an oblique one and an impersonal one, and the first two of these have been noted to emerge in a new form. In these cases, the object does not move to subject position and the object retains its case marking. As for the subject position, it is filled by a dummy *það* (= ‘it’/‘there’) and there is no agreement of the finite verb and the past participle.

The fifth and last variable seems to have emerged too recently to have received any settled label, but terms such as *er-að-æðið* (= ‘am-to-frenzy’), *samsett nútíð* (= ‘compound present tense’), *handboltahorf* (= ‘handball aspect’), and *vera að + nafnháttur* (= ‘be to + infinitive’) have all been used. Due to this recent emergence, the nature of this feature is also not perfectly clear, but it seems safe to say that it involves an expansion of continuous aspect in Icelandic. Previously, constructions of this kind have been used only with verbs which refer to actions that are limited in time to show that the action in question at each time is ongoing or continuous. Now, however, while it is uncertain how far this has progressed, it appears that at least a number of verbs referring to state and some verbs which are momentive can also appear in these constructions.

Of these five variables ‘dative sickness’ has received most attention. Thus, there exists both some sociolinguistic work on it, which suggests that it has become quite widely spread in Iceland, at least amongst children, and some work which discusses the nature of and possible reasons for this feature. This work is discussed in some detail in the chapter. ‘New passive’ has also been examined to some extent, both from a sociolinguistic and a more formal viewpoint, where it has e.g. emerged that Icelandic teenagers, especially outside

the central Reykjavík area, generally accept forms of this kind. However, less is known about the level of actual usage of ‘new passive’. As for the remaining variables, only ‘genitive avoidance’ has been addressed in any scientific way, but this discussion is limited to the feature’s nature and possible ways of emergence and hardly anything is known about how far this alleged ongoing change has proceeded. The same can be said about the remaining two features, i.e. the case inflectional system in general and the ‘am-to-frenzy’; variation of this kind appears to have emerged too recently for scientific circles to have had time to react as yet, even though remarks pertaining to these features occur with increasing frequency in the more public debate.

All in all, therefore, we are here faced with a relatively broad range of morphological and inflectional features in modern Icelandic which have been scientifically studied to a highly varying degree. Furthermore, there appears to be some difference between the variables as regards the time of their first emergence. Thus, examples of ‘dative sickness’ can be found as far back as the 12th century, while the ‘am-to-frenzy’ appears to have emerged only in the last few years. As was stated in the introductory remarks to this chapter, this should enable us to obtain a relatively broad picture of the potential stability of the structure of Icelandic morphology and syntax at various levels. Finally, it should be noted that, with the possible exception of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ and ‘genitive avoidance’, there appears to exist in the literature on these variables a general assumption that the processes of change that they are currently going through begin amongst children and teenagers. As will be seen in chapter 6, this assumption may be somewhat premature. Before we come to this, however, we will turn to a discussion of the methodology used for studying the variables just described.

5. Methodology

Having in the previous chapters established the theoretical basis on which this thesis rests and defined the linguistic features to be examined, we now change our focus somewhat. This chapter aims to describe the methods used to collect the data which lays the foundations for the results that will be presented in the following chapter. The first section discusses how informants were chosen and recruited, while in the second the criteria for the choice of communities included are presented along with a characterization of those communities, as well as a brief discussion of my impressions of the general atmosphere in each community as it was felt to be at the time of data collection. In the third section, a description is given of the different types of data collected and how this was done. This is then followed by a section on how the data was handled and by a final summary.

It should be noted that it is not the purpose of this thesis to delve deeply into methodological issues nor try to lead to any significant improvement of sociolinguistic methods. Rather, methods used in previous work on language change and language use are utilized here, although of course some adaptation to specifically Icelandic circumstances has been necessary.

5.1 The informants

In this section a description will be given of, first, how the informants who provided data for this study were chosen and, secondly, how these informants were recruited.

5.1.1 Choosing informants

With one exception (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002) previous empirical research on the linguistic features under discussion here has limited itself to respondents aged between 10 and 20 (see e.g. Halldórsson, 1982; Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997; Svavarsdóttir, 1982). In Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's most recent work on 'new passive' adults of various ages were also included for comparative purposes. This strong tendency to exclude adults partly appears to be a result of the general assumption that the new forms in question are only used by children and teenagers, whereas adults have apparently learnt to use the "correct" forms. This, I feel, is a major methodological shortcoming for two main reasons. First, it seems somewhat odd to decide *a priori* that adults can not be affected by the 'dative sickness' or show a tendency for 'genitive avoidance'. This is particularly peculiar as the authors of these previous studies appear to see their results as indicative of change in progress, but how can that be the case if everyone stops using the new forms once they grow up? Furthermore, even if it was the case that adults do not use these new forms, how can we be sure that the

age of 20 or thereabouts is such a strong linguistic boundary? Secondly, even if one assumes that adults refrain from using the new forms, it nonetheless seems to be necessary to confirm that assumption by including adult informants, thereby also arriving at a much clearer picture of the overall spread of the new forms than this exclusive choice of younger informants allows for.

For the above reasons, it was decided to include three age groups of informants in this study; teenagers, adults/middle-aged, and senior citizens. In the first group it can be said that the approach is the opposite to the one found in other studies of a similar kind carried out in Iceland, as here only 16-20 year olds are included, while younger teenagers and children are excluded. The reason for this is that I want to avoid the impact of language acquisition as much as possible; Icelandic children get their last formal instruction in Icelandic grammar either at the age of 15 when they are in the last year of elementary school or, in the case of those who go on to high school, a year later, during their first year there. This means that after this age they should have a fair grasp of Icelandic grammar as it is taught in schools, which, at least as yet, does not include the new features. Also at this age they are likely to have reached, or be about to reach, a point in their personal development where language use becomes an intrinsic part of their identities (Berger, 2003), which in turn may or may not stand in opposition to what they were taught at school and the message given there about not using non-standard language.

I am aware that drawing the lower line at 16 may seem to be about as arbitrary a decision as was drawing the upper line at 20 in the earlier research mentioned above. I believe, however, that the reasons I have given for this decision are further strengthened by Svavarsdóttir's (1982) point mentioned in section 4.1 above about her informants in a test on dative sickness having been too young to have fully mastered the features in question. Her informants were 11 years of age, but five more years of formal education should enable the teenagers to reach as high a level of proficiency as they are likely to reach in this way, and variation in their usage of the forms in question can no longer be explained by a lack of maturity or lack of immersion in Icelandic grammar.

The other two age groups probably need less by way of explanation and justification in addition to what has already been said above. It should be mentioned, however, that I am aware that the group of adults/middle-aged is a very broad one as it contains people aged between 20 and 65 and there may well be some differences between the older and the younger group members. In this respect, it is especially noteworthy that most of the previous empirical studies mentioned above were carried out around 1980 which means that the informants in these studies, who were young people at the time, should now be close to 40 years of age. As was mentioned above, the authors of these studies seem to interpret their results as indicative of ongoing change and therefore it will be interesting to see whether any difference emerges between those below 40 and those above 40 in my material.

As for the decision to have a separate group of senior citizens, this decision rests largely on the concept of “life stages” presented by Eckert (1997). As she points out “the individual’s place in society , the community, and the family changes through time” (p. 155). 65 is the standard age of retirement in Iceland and with it most people’s general societal position changes somewhat, not the least in that they leave the labour market and thereby also leave a large linguistic market which has its own standards and exerts specific points of linguistic pressure (see e.g. Sankoff & Laberge, 1978). It was hoped that the possible effects of this might be captured through the age grouping used. Furthermore, this oldest age group consists of people born 1937 or earlier; most were in fact born between 1920 and 1930. This means that they were born, and most of them even grown up, before the effects of the aftermath of the Second World War were truly felt, but shortly after the war the Icelandic society took huge steps from being highly isolated and in many ways backwards to becoming highly modernized and very much in step with the advances that were made in neighbouring countries. These large-scale societal changes may of course have led to some linguistic differences which should be easier to recognize by letting senior citizens to stand as a group in their own right.

As will be discussed in more detail in the next section (5.2), nine different locations were included in the study. In each of these locations data was collected from 12 informants, four in each age group. This means that the total number of informants was 108. Obviously, how large a sample should be is always a highly debatable issue. The sampling universe, or the population, to which I would ultimately like to apply the results of this study are native speakers of Icelandic aged 16 and above. At the time of data collection, this was a group of about 220,000 out of the approximately 285,000 inhabitants in Iceland (www.hagstofa.is), and the natural assumption is probably that a much larger sample than 108 is needed to do bring any clarity into the linguistic situation. However, as Milroy and Gordon (2003) point out, the nature of the data involved in most linguistic work of this kind means in practice that it is well-nigh impossible to use very large samples as they would result in an extremely time-consuming phase of data analysis and handling and might thus even become counterproductive.

These practical considerations are the main reason for using a sample of 108 informants, and even though this means that it may not reach a high level of representativeness in a strict statistical sense, I believe that the sampling techniques used ensure that the sample is a good reflection of the sampling universe. The division into age groups has already been discussed, but as a few more social categories are studied here in terms of their relationship to language variation they were also taken into consideration when decisions were taken on the sample. Thus an effort was made in all locations to include as even a number as possible of men and women in all age groups. This means that each age group in each location was intended to consist of two female and two male informants,

and this goal was achieved on 22 occasions out of a total of 27, resulting in an even number of men and women (six of each gender) in four of the nine locations. One age group in each of the remaining five locations consisted of either one woman and three men or vice versa, meaning that the total gender division in these locations was seven of one gender and five of the other. The final result of this was that 55 women were included in the study and 53 men. An overview of the structure of the sample is given in table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Division of sample by location, age and gender

<i>Location</i>	Teenagers		Adults/Middle aged		Senior citizens	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Central Reykjavík	2	2	2	2	3	1
Suburban R.vík + neighb. municipalities	2	2	2	2	2	2
Reykjanesbær	2	2	2	2	2	2
Akranes	1	3	2	2	2	2
Patreksfjörður	2	2	2	2	2	2
Siglufjörður	1	3	2	2	2	2
Akureyri	2	2	2	2	3	1
Neskaupstaður	2	2	3	1	2	2
Flúðir	2	2	2	2	2	2

To this it should be added, as will be discussed in greater detail shortly (section 5.2), that the locations included were chosen not only to ensure that none of the main geographical regions of Iceland were omitted, but also as representatives of the different types of towns and villages that can be said to exist in Iceland. Furthermore, care was taken in each location to construct a sample of people with varied socio-economic backgrounds which at the same time reflected the general societal structure and characteristics of the municipality in question at each time. Thus, to give one example, the samples from the traditional fishing villages chosen for study naturally include fishermen and/or people involved in the local fishing industry, but subjects were also included from e.g. other industries or the service sector which can be found in almost any Icelandic village regardless of how generally dependent it may be on fishing. As for the teenagers most of them were high-school students but otherwise their socio-economic backgrounds were just as varied as that of the two older age groups. In the case of high-school students care was also taken to include informants at various levels of performance in terms of school-work.

5.1.2 Recruiting informants

Informants were primarily approached and recruited with a variant of the “friend-of-a-friend” method used e.g. by Lesley Milroy in Belfast (Milroy,

1980). In her description of this method Milroy (1980, p. 53) writes the following:

[A]t the level of personal relationships, the second order network contact (friend of a friend) has a definite status *vis à vis* ego's first order zone. If the network is dense ... the first order zone is in effect a bounded group. Friends of friends perform an important social function by extending the range of goods and services which members of the first order zone are able to provide. Therefore, if a stranger is identified as a friend of a friend, he may easily be drawn into the network's mesh of exchange and obligation relationships. His chances of observing and participating in prolonged interaction will then be considerably increased. ... With this specific purpose, I approached each of the Belfast communities in the specific capacity of 'a friend of a friend'.

This is in essence what I tried to achieve in the different Icelandic municipalities described below, albeit on what can be considered a lower level. I have lived in four of the municipalities and have since then contacts with people who could serve as recruiters in each of the communities and point out to me friends of their own who might agree to taking part in my research. As for the municipalities with which I had no direct contact myself, I at least know or am related to one or more persons from each of them and here these persons served as my recruiters. In each case, these recruiters were asked to make the initial contact with potential informants, provide them with some basic information on my research, and ask for permission for me to contact them. When this permission was given, I contacted the people in question, informed them further of their role in the project, and asked for their participation. Those who consented were then asked to participate in recording sessions of the kind described in section 5.3.1

Apart from the reasons already given, this variant of the "friend-of-a-friend" method was primarily chosen since I felt that this was the method most likely to be fruitful in recruiting informants. I feared that e.g. advertising in local newspapers would not give any results in this respect, while showing up as a total stranger at various places of work, in schools, homes for the elderly etc., is just as likely to have been viewed as a disturbance, with the result that few would be interested in taking part. Furthermore, by bringing the recruitment to a more personal level, I felt that my informants were more likely to trust me and thereby I might be able to avoid certain problems I expected to run into due to certain external reasons. Here I am referring to the fact that in the last few years prior to my fieldwork, deCODE genetics, a biopharmaceutical company in Iceland, had been attempting to set up a centralized database on the genetic makeup of the Icelandic population. Initially, the entire Icelandic population was to be included in this database and information was to be collected from various medical records without obtaining informed consent from the informants.

Informants were able to sign out of this database, but the initiative for this had to come from themselves. As could probably be expected, this became a hotly debated issue as many found it hard to accept that highly personal information was to be included in the database without prior consent and, to cut a long story short, deCODE failed in its ambitions and has now changed its focus. As my fieldwork followed in the wake of the debate concerning this genetic database, I feared that using more impersonal methods, such as a traditional survey presented to randomly selected potential informants, would prove highly problematic. This was accentuated by the fact that the type of data I intended to collect could also be said to be highly personal – albeit probably less so than medical records – and possibly somewhat sensitive given the linguistic atmosphere in Iceland.

Another aim of personalising the recruitment process and gaining the informants' trust was to enable them to relax more in the recording sessions. I hoped, in turn, that this would result in more “natural” conversations in the sense that the informants were less attentive to the situation they were in and could behave more as if they were taking part in a normal conversation under everyday circumstances. It should be noted, however, that due to time limitations I did not reach the level of “prolonged interaction” with my groups of informants that Milroy writes about reaching in Belfast. This may of course have had a negative effect on the “naturalness” of the conversations recorded, even though the effects on the other types of data described in section 5.3 are not likely to have been significant. I also hope that my having lived in some of the municipalities, as well as the general Icelandic feeling of “everybody-knows-everybody”, decreased the impact of these drawbacks to some extent.

Finally, this “friend-of-a-friend” method gave me some control over just what informants were recruited. As mentioned above, I did not want all my informants in e.g. the adult/middle aged age group to be male 40-year-old teachers or belong to some other single category. Rather, I wanted an even spread of ages, gender and socio-economic backgrounds and this my recruiters were asked to keep in mind when approaching potential informants on my behalf, since they were likely to have some basic knowledge of their friends'/relatives'/neighbours' background. It would probably have been far more cumbersome and time-consuming to obtain this level of control without the method used and the help of the recruiters.

This “friend-of-a-friend” method was used to recruit a total of 90 informants, but an even more direct technique was applied to approach the remaining 18. As mentioned above, I have lived in four of the municipalities included in the study, and on occasion this meant that I could contact old acquaintances or distant relatives directly without using a recruiter. Of course, the same criteria for inclusion in the sample were used here as when the “friend-of-a-friend” method was used and I also avoided contacting close friends or relatives as I felt that some distance between me and the informants was

necessary in order to avoid certain potential ethical and personal dilemmas, both during the data collection and in the presentation of the results.

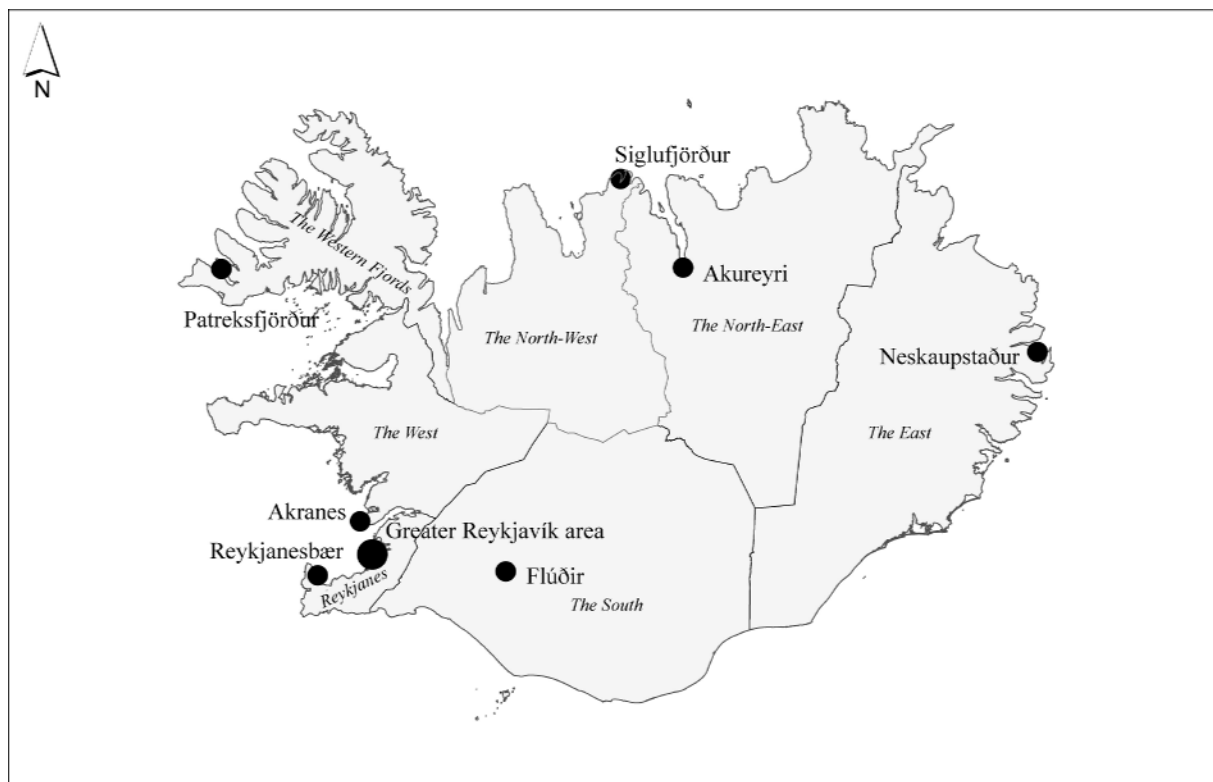
It may of course seem that the sample I ended up with is essentially my own extended network of friends and relatives, which may be representative primarily of itself rather than the general Icelandic population. Let me therefore clarify that, even though I have above referred to my main recruiting method as a “friend-of-a-friend” method, I had never met the vast majority of the 90 informants recruited in this way prior to the recording sessions. Thus, even though the recruiters used can in most cases be characterized as my friends and/or relatives, the same does not apply to the people they contacted on my behalf. A special mention should perhaps be made of the fact that none of the recruiters also functioned as informants. It should also be reiterated that the 18 informants which I recruited directly were not chosen on the basis of our friendship or family ties; rather, they were chosen in an attempt to ensure that my sample in each location reflects as closely as possible the socio-economic structure of the community in question. All in all, I believe that by including both female and male informants from three main age groups within the various types of communities that can be said to exist in Iceland, and by ensuring that each community’s socio-economic structure was reflected by its group of informants, I obtained a sample with a high level of representativity of the general Icelandic population. That I happened to know some of the informants should not affect this.

As a final note it should be added that the recruitment methods described here turned out to be just as fruitful as they were hoped to be. Thus, I only needed to approach 19 people to recruit the 18 informants I made the initial contact with myself, as only one person in this category refused to take part. As for the “friend-of-a-friend” method, my recruiters generally claimed that they had had little trouble in finding people, and no one changed his or her mind when contacted by me after the initial approach by the recruiters.

5.2 The communities

The communities which were studied for this thesis were chosen on the basis of a combination of practical and scientific criteria, some of which were hinted at above (section 5.1) The first criterion was that they should be evenly spread throughout the country. For a number of administrative and official purposes, Iceland is divided into eight different regions; Höfuðborgarsvæðið (the greater Reykjavík area), Reykjanes (the Reykjanes Peninsula), Vesturland (the West), Vestfirðir (the Western Fjords), Norðurland vestra (the North-West), Norðurland eystra (the North-East), Austurland (the East), and Suðurland (the South). To reflect this division, which is generally acknowledged by most Icelanders even for less official purposes, one community from each region was chosen.

Within this framework, a second criterion was added as it was felt to be necessary to include, to the extent possible, communities that are representative of the different basic kinds of communities that can be said to exist in Iceland. Thus, at one extreme, the fishing towns Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður were chosen as typical representatives for three of the eight regions, and Flúðir represents the inland towns and villages in the South, which largely function as service centres for the surrounding agricultural areas. At the other extreme Reykjavík was chosen essentially as a representative of itself as the only Icelandic community which can in most respects be characterized as a modern western city, even though it is much smaller than most cities it likes to compare itself with. Finally, Akureyri, in the North-East, falls in between these two extremes and the same can be said about Akranes in the West and Reykjanesbær in the Reykjanes Peninsula. A more detailed characterization of the communities is given below. Their location is displayed on map 5.1



Map 5.1 Communities included in the study
(Map: Tom Barry)

Convenience was the basic factor in the third criterion. This is to say that, given that the communities chosen had gone through the filter of the first two criteria, I chose towns and villages where I either already had contact with potential recruiters or felt that the necessary contacts could be easily established. This was done to facilitate the process of approaching and recruiting informants with the “friend-of-a-friend” method described earlier. In effect, this criterion only had to

be applied in relation to the three fishing villages of Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður and as we will come to later, in the descriptions of each of these localities, this should not have affected the level of representativity of the communities chosen.

As some readers may have noticed eight regions are included in the study at the same time as it has been stated earlier that nine different locations are under scrutiny. This can be related to the fact that the greater Reykjavík area has here been divided into two parts; central Reykjavík, on the one hand, and suburban Reykjavík and the neighbouring municipalities, on the other. This is done for two main reasons: Firstly, Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area is by far the largest urban centre in Iceland. Thus on December 1st 2001, i.e. shortly before data was collected, this area had 178,000 inhabitants, or 62%, out of a total of 286,250 in all of Iceland. Of these 178,000 inhabitants, Reykjavík itself had 112,268 inhabitants, or 39% of the Icelandic population (www.hagstofa.is). For this reason, it was judged necessary to include at least twice as many informants from this area as from any of the other locations. The second reason – and this also explains the division of the greater Reykjavík area used here – is the clear difference there emerged in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's (2001, 2002) research (see section 4.4) between central Reykjavík, on the one hand, and the rest of the country, on the other, including the suburban areas of Reykjavík and the neighbouring municipalities, in terms of acceptancy rates for 'new passive'. As I thought it would be interesting to see whether this difference is reflected as far as usage of 'new passive' and the other features studied is concerned I decided to divide the greater Reykjavík area into two parts in the same way as Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling did.³⁰

5.2.1 Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area

As was mentioned above, present-day Reykjavík can in most respects be described as a modern Western city, despite only having about 112,000 inhabitants at the time of data collection. This, however, makes it by far the largest municipality in Iceland, as the second largest one, Kópavogur, which can be said to be a suburb to Reykjavík, had about 25,000 inhabitants, while the largest town outside the greater Reykjavík area, Akureyri, had about 16,000 inhabitants in 2002 (www.hagstofa.is). With this in mind, it is not surprising that, besides being the capital of Iceland, Reykjavík is also the country's administrative, commercial, educational and cultural centre. This is reflected by the fact that in 2001 91.3% of the city's work force were employed in the various branches of the service sector such as health care, commerce, education and tourism (*Árbók Reykjavíkur 2001*, 2001).

³⁰ Note that when I carried out my fieldwork, Jónsson and Eypórsson's study (2003), which used a division of the Reykjavík area similar to that used by Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001, 2002), had not been published.

In the last 150 years or so, Reykjavík – and in fact all of the greater Reykjavík area – has also been characterized by its rapid growth, largely, at least in the last few decades, at the expense of municipalities in most other parts of the country. Thus, Reykjavík had little more than 2,000 inhabitants in 1870 but 50 years later this figure had risen to about 17,700, and if another 50 years are added the population reaches about 82,000 (Júlíusson, Ísberg & Kjartansson, 1992, 1993). The current number of inhabitants then reveals that this growth has by no means stopped yet, even though the other municipalities within the greater Reykjavík area have in recent decades grown faster than Reykjavík itself.

As for the division of Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area into two parts it has been discussed above, but some consideration should probably be given to the different areas of Reykjavík and the neighbouring municipalities included in the study.

Firstly, central Reykjavík can also be said to be “old” Reykjavík, as it is here that an early village emerged which then expanded into the present-day city. In this central part, which consists of a number of smaller neighbourhoods, one also finds the bulk of the various administrative centres, educational institutions, companies, and cultural facilities on which the leading role of Reykjavík in Icelandic society is based. At the time of data collection, about 63,000 inhabitants altogether, or nearly half of all the inhabitants in Reykjavík, lived in this part of the city (*Árbók Reykjavíkur 2001*, 2001).

Turning then to the areas outside central Reykjavík, informants from three suburban areas of Reykjavík and two neighbouring municipalities are included in the study. The suburban areas – or neighbourhoods – in question are Árbær, Breiðholt and Grafarvogur, and these together, with Grafarvogur to the north and Breiðholt to the south, form the eastern boundaries of Reykjavík. The two neighbouring municipalities are Hafnarfjörður, about 10 kilometres south of Reykjavík, and Mosfellsbær, which is just to the east of Grafarvogur.

Breiðholt, which took shape as a residential area in the 1960s (Líndal, 1986), is presently the largest neighbourhood in Reykjavík, with about 22,000 inhabitants in 2001 (*Árbók Reykjavíkur 2001*, 2001), and is often mentioned as the first true Reykjavík suburb. This is a mixed area in terms of its socio-economic structure and apart from the residential areas there is a number of service centres scattered around Breiðholt with shops, health care centres, pharmacies, post offices, etc. Árbær, which is located between Breiðholt and Grafarvogur, is the smallest of the three suburban neighbourhoods included and had about 9,000 inhabitants in 2001 (*Árbók Reykjavíkur 2001*, 2001). Like Breiðholt, Árbær, which started taking its current shape in the mid 1960s (Líndal, 1986), is first and foremost a residential neighbourhood of a mixed socio-economic structure with a few service centres, schools and sports facilities. The last of the suburbs, i.e. Grafarvogur, is the most recent addition to Reykjavík as this largely residential area has been built up only since 1983 (Líndal, 1986). Since then it has expanded rapidly and had at the time of data

collection about 17,500 inhabitants, making it one of the largest neighbourhoods in Reykjavík (*Árbók Reykjavíkur 2001*, 2001). Grafarvogur can in most ways be described as a typical relatively well-off suburb, where apart from the dominating residential areas one primarily finds various service centres and facilities of the kind just described in Breiðholt and Árbær.

As mentioned above, Mosfellsbær is just to the east of Grafarvogur and now the easternmost parts of the latter can be said to have grown together with the westernmost parts of the former. This is in fact a characteristic of the greater Reykjavík area in general and it is not always easy for the uninitiated to know when Reykjavík itself is left and another municipality entered. In 2002 Mosfellsbær had about 6,500 inhabitants (www.hagstofa.is) and is by many regarded as a “bedroom community” for Reykjavík, i.e. as a town mainly inhabited by people who prefer to live some distance away from the hustle and bustle of the city despite continuing to work there. As for the community itself, the main forms of employment are in industries and services along with greenhouse farming, thanks to the geothermal heat in the area (Jósepsson, Steindórsson & Línadal, 1982; www.mosfellsbaer.is).

With its nearly 21,000 inhabitants (www.hafnarfjordur.is), Hafnarfjörður was at the time of data collection the third largest municipality in Iceland, after Reykjavík and Kópavogur, and it has maintained this position since then. Kópavogur also divides Hafnarfjörður from Reykjavík in a geographical sense, along with Garðabær, as these two towns are located directly to the south of Reykjavík, while Hafnarfjörður is just southwest of Garðabær, surrounded by extensive lava fields. Hafnarfjörður first emerged as a trading post in the beginning of the 15th century and later became a major fishing harbour although the relative importance of the fishing industry has decreased in recent years while various industries and services have gained importance (*Byggðabrunnur 1997*, 1997; Jósepsson & Steindórsson, 1981). The socio-economic origins and character of Hafnarfjörður itself thus largely resemble those of Akureyri, which we will come to shortly, but in a wider context Hafnarfjörður is of course very much a part of the greater Reykjavík area, although some efforts have been made to maintain its small-town characteristics.

Map 5.2 shows how Reykjavík was divided into two main parts for the purpose of this study and specifically displays the relevant suburban areas and neighbouring municipalities outside central Reykjavík.



Map 5.2 Division of the greater Reykjavík area
(Map: Tom Barry)

5.2.1.1 Fieldwork in Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area

Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area was visited for data collection on three occasions; 20th – 22nd October 2002, 18th – 25th November 2002 and 20th – 25th January 2003. As mentioned earlier, Reykjavík can in most ways be characterized as a modern western city and this is an aspect which appeared to be greatly appreciated by the inhabitants. Thus, some of my subjects mentioned that nearly every day they could choose from a multitude of events to attend. An international outlook is also clearly reflected in the atmosphere amongst the subjects who, while being anchored in their personal spheres and Reykjavík in general, were often very global in terms of what subjects they discussed during the recording sessions. Thus various international affairs or comparisons between Iceland and the outer world came up frequently amongst the adult subjects while the teenagers tended to discuss e.g. impending visits by foreign rock bands or the latest Hollywood films they had seen. In all the other communities visited, the discussion materials were more locally based, albeit to a varying degree. It should be noted, though, that while several of those living in the suburban areas and in Hafnarfjörður and Mosfellsbær were happy with having all the opportunities Reykjavík offers right at hand, they were equally pleased about not living right in the thick of things in the central parts of the city and generally expressed a strong affinity for their home locality.

One more interesting aspect of the greater Reykjavík area should be mentioned. The relative denseness of the population there and its outgoing public character appears to create a stronger need than in all the other localities included in this study to protect the private sphere, at least as far as the adult and senior age groups are concerned. At the first instance of contact with me, most of the subjects involved here asked questions about how their anonymity and personal integrity would be protected and how the data they submitted would be protected. This did not happen anywhere else. However, no one in the greater Reykjavík area refused to take further part in the research after having been informed about how these matters would be dealt with and there are no signs of a higher level of self-consciousness in the recording sessions in Reykjavík than in other parts of the country. Thus, for research purposes, this issue was intriguing rather than problematic.

5.2.2 The fishing villages; Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður

If an Icelander were asked to take a foreign guest to a typical Icelandic town s/he would in all probability take the visitor to one of the many fishing villages that lie scattered along the country's coast. If the greater Reykjavík area and the South are excluded, fishing villages are the most common type of communities in all the regions mentioned above and 57 of the 95 “urban” nuclei which existed in Iceland in 2001 can be characterized as fishing villages (www.hagstofa.is).

The villages chosen for study in this thesis are the following: Patreksfjörður in the Western Fjords, Siglufjörður in the North-West, and Neskaupstaður in the East. What they have in common is that they emerged as villages in the last decades of the 19th century after having previously mainly served as import and export ports and as a kind of market places for the population in the neighbouring rural areas. Also, as the term “fishing village” implies, the socio-economic life of these villages is largely based on the fishing industry in one way or another even though there are some differences between the villages in terms of e.g. size and general character – at least as felt by the inhabitants themselves – which justifies a brief description of each of them.

5.2.2.1 Patreksfjörður

The village Patreksfjörður is situated on two sandbanks on the northern shore of a fjord which also bears the name Patreksfjörður, after St. Patrick. This fjord is the southernmost of the so called Western Fjords. The first hints of the present village of Patreksfjörður emerged in the last quarter of the 19th century, primarily due to the emergence and quick growth of a local fishing industry. In the following decades Patreksfjörður became one of the leading fishing villages

in all of western Iceland and reached a population of 1,000 in 1964 (Jósepsson, Steindórsson & Línadal, 1982). From this point onwards, however, recurring difficulties in the fishing industry and lack of opportunities in other branches have meant that the tide has turned for Patreksfjörður and the Western Fjords in general, so that this area is now a particularly clear example of a particular type of urbanization, i.e. the so called “landsbyggðarflótti” (= ‘flight from the countryside’) to Reykjavík, which emerges as a decrease in the population in nearly all parts of Iceland other than the greater Reykjavík area. Thus, Patreksfjörður only had about 750 inhabitants in 2001, and the population of the Western Fjords as a whole went from 9,756 in 1991 to 8,012 in 2001, a decrease of 17,9% (www.hagstofa.is).

Despite the difficulties in the fishing industry, it still forms the backbone of the local economy in Patreksfjörður as more than 40% of the work force is occupied in fishing or fish processing. The other main forms of employment are in other industries and various services (*Byggðabrunnur 1997*, 1997). Patreksfjörður is e.g. the administrative centre for the municipality of Vesturbyggð, which was formed in 1994 from Patreksfjörður, the small village of Bíldudalur, north of Patreksfjörður, and the rural area of Barðaströnd, all of which were formerly independent municipalities. There is also a small hospital in Patreksfjörður and the local elementary school is also attended by older pupils from Bíldudalur.

As was mentioned above (see section 5.2), Patreksfjörður was chosen partly on the basis of convenience as I have both friendship and family ties there which facilitated the recruitment of subjects and thereby the collection of data. This, however, does not change the fact that Patreksfjörður can be seen as a good representative of the Western Fjords. First, this region can be said to be highly homogeneous in that, with one exception, all 13 “urban” nuclei found here cannot be characterized as anything else than fishing villages. At the same time, the rural population is very small, both in numbers and as a proportion of the total population of the Western Fjords (www.hagstofa.is). On this basis, any of the 12 fishing villages could have been included in this study as a valid representative for this region. However, a certain argument weighs in Patreksfjörður’s favour. Of the villages in the Western Fjords, Patreksfjörður is intermediate in size. This means that Patreksfjörður can be argued to combine the characteristics of the smaller villages, such as Flateyri and Suðureyri, which are almost solely dependent upon fishing in one way or another, and the two larger villages, Bolungarvík and Ísafjörður, which cover a somewhat broader socio-economic spectrum. When the convenience factor is added to this, Patreksfjörður seemed like a natural choice.

5.2.2.1.1 Fieldwork in Patreksfjörður

Data was collected in Patreksfjörður during a single visit which lasted from the 21st until the 27th of May 2002. Apart from a lively political debate, which was due to the fact that my fieldwork in Patreksfjörður coincided with the elections for the local government, the general atmosphere in the community was in most ways sadly low-spirited. Even though most of the inhabitants spoken to expressed a fondness for their hometown, they were also generally aware of the effects the above mentioned “landsbyggðarflótti” had had and still had on the village and the Western Fjords as a whole, and were understandably disheartened by this development. This situation was largely blamed on the Icelandic government and changes made by it on the fishing quota system which – with a great deal of simplification – allowed large companies in the largest towns, i.e. primarily in the greater Reykjavík area and Akureyri, to buy quota away from Patreksfjörður and other small fishing villages.

Despite the downcast atmosphere, I was very well received in Patreksfjörður and there were no hints of the suspicions I met in Reykjavík. When informed about their role in my research and how their anonymity would be protected, people tended to just shrug their shoulders and say that they would not mind at all if someone else listened to how they talked. In fact, the smallness of Patreksfjörður and the resultant closeness between its inhabitants posed an entirely different problem, as I quickly found out that it was just about impossible for me to keep my informants faceless since they tended to make no secret of their participation, and news about my fieldwork spread quickly in the community. Thus, Patreksfjörður took the general Icelandic feeling of “everybody knows everybody” to another level, which can be described as “everybody knows what everybody else is doing”. This pattern was repeated to a greater or lesser degree in the other smaller communities included in the study, i.e. Siglufjörður, Neskaupstaður and Flúðir.

5.2.2.2 Siglufjörður

Siglufjörður, which is probably one of Iceland’s best known fishing villages, is situated on a sandbank on the west coast of a small fjord – which bears the same name as the village – in the far north of Iceland. The development of Siglufjörður resembles in many ways that of Patreksfjörður. It emerged as a village in the latter part of the 19th century, when the fjord of Siglufjörður became the centre of shark fishing in the north of Iceland, due both to its excellent natural harbour and its proximity to the best fishing areas north of the country. Then, in 1903, Norwegian fishing companies started large-scale herring fisheries in Icelandic waters and they made Siglufjörður their main base in the north of Iceland with the result that Siglufjörður grew more quickly than any other village in Iceland in the following decades and reached a peak of 3,100

inhabitants in 1948. Of course, this is not a large figure in an international context but it nonetheless meant that Siglufjörður became the 5th largest municipality in Iceland. However, the herring industry collapsed in the 1960s (www.siglo.is) and the result of this was the rapid decrease of the village's population, and even though it regained stability in the local economy has slowed down this deterioration somewhat, it has not stopped and Siglufjörður had at the time of data collection only about 1,500 inhabitants (www.hagstofa.is). Despite the collapse of the herring industry, Siglufjörður is still predominantly dependent on its fishing industry which employs about 40% of the work force. Various services and commerce are the other mainstays of the local economy (*Byggðabrunnur 1997, 1997*).

Like Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður was chosen partly for the sake of convenience, based on connections I have in the village. Again, however, this does not change the fact that Siglufjörður can be seen as an adequate representative for the North. Admittedly, the North is nowhere near as homogeneous an area as the Western Fjords as, even though the majority of villages and towns in this region are predominantly reliant on fishing in one way or another, there are also a few, such as Blönduós and Hvammstangi, which cannot be termed fishing villages despite being located by the coast. Rather these villages can be seen as industrial communities and/or service centres for the surrounding countryside. However, including a village of this latter kind rather than a fishing village as a representative of the North would give a skewed picture of the region. This holds not the least as Akureyri is included in this study. As we will come to in more detail in section 5.2.4, Akureyri is the largest town in the North – and, in fact, the largest town in Iceland outside the greater Reykjavík area – and its socio-economic structure is a mixture of industry, fishing and various services, including services provided to the surrounding rural areas. Akureyri can thus be seen both as a representative of itself as the biggest town outside the greater Reykjavík area and of the relatively heterogeneous socio-economic character of the North, which is also reflected in e.g. Blönduós and Hvammstangi, albeit on a smaller scale. However, as the majority of the villages in northern Iceland can still be characterized as fishing villages, rather than as villages with a socio-economic structure resembling Blönduós and Hvammstangi, the picture would not be complete without their representative. From this basis, Siglufjörður was chosen for much the same reasons as Patreksfjörður; of the fishing villages in the North, it is of intermediate size and thereby combines the reliance of the smaller villages on the fishing industry with at least some parts of the broader socio-economic spectrum of the larger villages. Together, Siglufjörður and Akureyri are thus here judged to give as good a representation of the North as was possible within the framework of this study.

5.2.2.2.1 Fieldwork in Siglufjörður

Data was collected in Siglufjörður during the period 13th – 18th September 2002. At this time the atmosphere in the town can, with only slight simplification, be summed up in four words: waiting for the new tunnel. Siglufjörður has a long history of isolation and until a tunnel was constructed through the mountain Strákar in 1967 the village was practically unreachable by car in the wintertime. At the time of my fieldwork, the planning process for a new tunnel was well underway and some preparatory work had been carried out. This tunnel, which is presently under construction, will link Siglufjörður directly with the Eyjafjörður area to the south-east, rather than with the Skagafjörður area to the west, as the tunnel from 1967 does. Nearly everyone I spoke to in Siglufjörður, both informants and other people, initiated some discussion about the new tunnel and the hopes they tied to it. From the comments made by most of these people, it can be judged that they saw the tunnel as a means of rescue from a downwards spiral in which Siglufjörður has been caught in the last few decades.

Despite being aware of the difficulties Siglufjörður currently faces, the inhabitants I talked to generally spoke fondly of their hometown and clearly appreciated the close ties and family atmosphere they claimed to exist in the village, not least due to its relative isolation from the outer world. This was especially characteristic amongst the slightly older inhabitants who were also quite familiar with and proud of Siglufjörður's historical past, especially what is regarded as the golden age of the “herring years”. Feelings were more mixed amongst the teenagers who have grown up in more troublesome times, and many of them could not picture themselves living in Siglufjörður in the future even though that was the picture some wanted to see.

5.2.2.3 Neskaupstaður

In Neskaupstaður we once again see the same pattern as in the two fishing villages hitherto discussed. The village is located on the northern shore of the fjord Norðfjörður, which is part of the so called Eastern Fjords, and here a village was first formed in the late 19th century, primarily thanks to an emerging fishing industry. From this point onwards, Neskaupstaður enjoyed a steady growth for the next century or so, supported e.g. by “herring years”, similar to those in Siglufjörður, between 1957-1967 (Jósepsson, Steindórsson & Línal, 1982). The town reached a peak of 1,754 inhabitants in 1990 but since then it has been struck by the “landsbyggðarflótti” mentioned above, albeit on a slightly lower scale than both Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður. In 2002, i.e. when fieldwork was carried out in Neskaupstaður, the village had about 1,500 inhabitants. It had also become a part of the larger municipality of Fjarðabyggð, which was formed from the three municipalities of Neskaupstaður, Eskifjörður and Reyðarfjörður in 1993, and had a total of 3,190 inhabitants in 2002

(www.fjardabyggd.is). There were signs that this municipality, as well as the neighbouring ones in the Eastern Fjords, might benefit greatly from a large aluminium plant which was, at the time of my visit, under construction in Reyðarfjörður fjord. The construction itself created a number of new jobs in the area and even more have now been added after the plant became operable. However, the fishing industry, which at the turn of the century employed about 40% of the work force in Neskaupstaður (*Byggðabrunnur 1997, 1997*), in 2002 held its status as the backbone of the economy alongside a diversified service sector.

Neskaupstaður is included here on much the same grounds as Patreksfjörður. Like the Western Fjords, the East is a relatively homogeneous region in that all but one of the “urban” nuclei can be characterized as fishing villages. Thus, even though Egilsstaðir, the one “urban” nucleus in the East which is not a fishing village, was in 2002 amongst the largest villages in this region with its 1600 inhabitants, another 8,000 inhabitants lived in the 12 fishing villages along the region’s coastline. A fishing village was thus judged to be the natural choice in the East. That Neskaupstaður was then chosen over other fishing villages depended on a combination of convenience – this was the only village in the East in which I had any connections – and the fact that Neskaupstaður is comparable in size and division of labour to a number of other fishing villages in the East, which meant that any of them could be chosen without altering the level of representativity.

5.2.2.3.1 Fieldwork in Neskaupstaður

In Neskaupstaður data was collected in a single visit which lasted from the 29th of May until the 4th of June 2002. Thus I arrived shortly after the elections for the local government, but whatever impact the political process may have had on the local atmosphere, this was largely overshadowed by the positive spirit provided by the hopes the inhabitants tied to the much anticipated aluminium plant. As mentioned above the plant was, at the time of my visit, being erected in Reyðarfjörður fjord which is just south of Norðfjörður fjord in which Neskaupstaður is located. Still, this means that the plant might be too far away from Neskaupstaður to have an immediate economic effect there but nonetheless it was regarded as an opportunity to turn the tide for the Eastern Fjords in general and thereby also Neskaupstaður which, as already referred to, has in recent years undergone much the same development and problems as have Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður.

Otherwise, the atmosphere in Neskaupstaður largely resembled that of Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður. The inhabitants appeared to have strong ties to their hometown and talked about it in affectionate terms, even though some of the youngsters doubted that they would live there in the future after having completed their education of choice, which, it should be noted, they can to some

extent obtain in the local high school. In Neskaupstaður the closeness between the inhabitants and the general feeling was also quite evident when I walked through the village with my local recruiters who we were stopped at just about every corner for a quick chat with other inhabitants many of whom knew perfectly well what I was doing there and who took part in my research.

5.2.3. Flúðir

Flúðir is a small village which serves as a service and administrative centre for the otherwise rural municipality of Hrunamannahreppur. This municipality is in turn located in the northern part of the so called “Suðurlandsundirlendi”, i.e. the Southern Lowland, which, as a whole, is one of the most fertile agricultural areas in Iceland.

The Hrunamannahreppur area has been inhabited since the first days of settlement in Iceland (Þorsteinsson, 2003), but the first signs of a village in Flúðir did not appear until shortly before 1950. The present population of Flúðir is about 250 while Hrunamannahreppur as a whole has about 750 inhabitants (www.hagstofa.is). Prior to a recent growth, the number of inhabitants in the municipality had remained stable for decades, or even centuries, as Hrunamannahreppur had 504 inhabitants as early as 1703 (Þorsteinsson, 2003). Flúðir is rich in geothermal heat and this can be said to be the basis of the existence of the village as it allows the local population to grow various vegetables and flowers in greenhouses, the production of which is the mainstay of the local economy alongside more traditional farming in the neighbouring countryside. More than 50% of the work force in Hrunamannahreppur is employed in some form of agriculture, while industry and the service sector provide employment for another 27% (*Byggðabrunnur 1997*, 1997). Also, in recent years tourism has come to play an increasingly important part in the economic life of the area. Being a landlocked town, Flúðir is thus not largely dependent on the fishing industry, a characteristic it shares with only a handful of Icelandic villages, most of which are also to be found in the Southern Lowland. It should be noted, though, that even though the south of Iceland is here characterized as primarily a farming area, there are a few fishing villages spread along the southern coast. However, these villages only have about 2,500 inhabitants together, out of a total of about 17,000 inhabitants in the south of Iceland (www.hagstofa.is), so it is clear that the characterization given above of Flúðir and the other inland villages applies to the greater part of these inhabitants, which means that an inland town is a better representative for this area than a fishing village would be.

5.2.3.1 Fieldwork in Flúðir

Three visits were made to Flúðir to collect data. The main bulk of the data was collected during a visit which covered the period 27th – 30th September 2002. However, two more sessions were needed to complete the required set and these were carried out on the 4th and the 7th of October 2002, thus using gaps in the schedule mentioned for Reykjanesbær below.

Despite being smaller than any of the three fishing villages described above, the atmosphere in Flúðir and its surroundings was much more positive. In my conversations with the local population it quickly became evident that factors such as the above mentioned geothermal heat and growing tourism have meant that the economic situation of the municipality of Hrunamannahreppur is more stable than that of most other Icelandic municipalities. Furthermore, the municipality boasts some of the most fertile agricultural areas in Iceland. This stability seems to allow for greater optimism than in the fishing villages as far as future prospects are concerned. The main threat might be that the agricultural roots of Flúðir and Hrunamannahreppur, which still form the economical backbone of the community, do not seem to attract the teenagers I spoke to. Thus, some of them expect to move away within the next few years, even though they show much the same affinity towards their home community as do teenagers in other communities visited.

This optimism for the future also seemed to result in a generally light-hearted and relaxed atmosphere through which the traditional rural values of hard work and independence nonetheless shone. The inhabitants appeared to appreciate the quietness of this small community, which, according to some of them, offered everything they needed on a daily basis, while, if they wanted to break up the everyday routine, Reykjavík is only a little more than an hour's drive away. The affinity for the home community was further witnessed in the topics discussed in the recording sessions as they tended to focus on local news and gossip rather than on more national or international subjects.

5.2.4 Akureyri

Akureyri, which is located in the southern end of Eyjafjörður fjord in the central northern part of Iceland, is Iceland's largest town outside the greater Reykjavík area and had 15,635 inhabitants at the end of 2001 (www.hagstofa.is). It is also one of the few towns outside the greater Reykjavík area which still enjoys a steady growth. The town's foundations can be said to have been laid in 1602 when it became the main port in Eyjafjörður fjord by a royal decree from Denmark (Hjaltason, 1990), but it was not until the late 19th century that a true village emerged, thanks primarily to a rapidly growing local fishing industry. Akureyri is still quite a stronghold of the fishing industry although its relative importance has diminished quite drastically at the expense of various other

industries and services. Thus, only 12% of the present population is employed in the fishing industry, while 18% are employed in other industries and another 34% in various services (*Byggðabrunnur 1997, 1997*).

Akureyri is by most Icelanders – especially those living in Akureyri – seen as the leading town in “landsbyggðin” i.e. in the countryside. Part of the reason for this view is probably that Akureyri offers most of the services, educational opportunities, cultural events, etc. that Reykjavík does, albeit on a much smaller scale, and even though Akureyri has a strong fishing industry it can by no means be characterized as a typical Icelandic fishing town. As was hinted at in the section (5.2.2.2.) discussing the character of Siglufjörður above, this position of Akureyri as a counterbalance to Reykjavík and the largest town in “landsbyggðin” meant that it was felt to be necessary to include Akureyri in the study as a representative of itself at the same time as its inclusion ensures that socio-economic characteristics others than those of fishing villages are represented in the North.

5.2.4.1 Fieldwork in Akureyri

Akureyri is my hometown which means that no special tours were needed to collect data there. Rather, this was done where it could be fitted into the schedule for data collecting in other locations. Thus, both the first and the last collecting sessions took place in Akureyri, on 2nd – 6th May 2002 and 5th – 6th February 2003 respectively. The remaining sessions were undertaken in between travels to other towns and villages during a period ranging from 18th June until 12th December 2002.

It should be noted that I consider myself very much an “Akureyringur”, i.e. as originating from Akureyri, despite only having moved there as a 12-year-old in 1985 and having spent most of the period 1993–2002 living elsewhere in Iceland or abroad. This feeling means that I may not be the person best suited to make judgements about the general atmosphere in the town at the time of data collection, so the following statements should probably be read with some precaution. Nonetheless, I believe that having been away for the best part of the decade prior to my fieldwork gives me some of the distance necessary to look more neutrally at the current situation than if I had lived there all my life.

As was hinted at above, the inhabitants of Akureyri tend to view their hometown as the leading town outside the greater Reykjavík area. This also means that those who live in Akureyri often portray themselves as the main rivals of the greater Reykjavík area, albeit in a light-hearted way, and the relation between Akureyri and Reykjavík is probably much the same as one finds between e.g. Gothenburg and Stockholm in Sweden and Bergen and Oslo in Norway. As for the atmosphere amongst my informants, it appeared to be quite positive in general. This in turn seemed to be traceable to the steady growth of Akureyri, supported e.g. by a relatively lively cultural scene and a

recently founded university. At the same time the informants spoke in appreciative terms of the closeness provided by living in a community of no more than 16,000 inhabitants and appeared to be aware of the town's roots in the fishing industry as well as other industries. What this adds up to is that the atmosphere in Akureyri is a mixture between quite a modern outlook with a strong consciousness of the outer world and more traditional local values based largely on the work ethics of the industries and the fishing industry, where hard work and toughness are held in high esteem.

5.2.5 The seaside villages; Akranes and Reykjanesbær

The three fishing villages described above can probably be characterized as archetypical. The same cannot be said about Akranes and Reykjanesbær which, despite having similar origin to that of the traditional fishing villages, have developed somewhat differently from them and have adapted better to the general decrease in importance of the Icelandic fishing industry. This means that a term like “seaside village”, is probably more appropriate than “fishing village” to portray Akranes and Reykjanesbær.

Both these villages are less typical of the regions they represent than e.g. Patreksfjörður is of the Western Fjords and Neskaupstaður of the East. In the choice of Akranes and Reykjanesbær, both of which are the largest villages in their respective regions, more consideration was given to including villages of their size and character. This, however, does not mean that these villages are in any way atypical of Reykjanes, in the case of Reykjanesbær, or the West, in the case of Akranes. Thus, through its origins as a fishing village and the maintained high level of importance of the local fishing industry, Reykjanesbær largely shares its basic characteristics with other villages in Reykjanes, even though these are smaller and proportionally more reliant on the fishing industry than Reykjanesbær is. Similarly, Akranes originally emerged as a fishing village and the fishing industry still employs a relatively large proportion of the inhabitants which means that this village has much the same foundations as do e.g. the smaller villages of Ólafsvík, Grundarfjörður and Stykkishólmur in the Snæfellsnes peninsula. At the same time, the more modern influence of commerce and other industries than the fishing industry means that Akranes has some features in common with Borgarnes, the second largest village in the West. However, including Akranes as a representative of the West hides the importance of agriculture in the inland areas of this region. Let us now examine each of Akranes and Reykjanesbær a little closer.

5.2.5.1 Akranes

The village of Akranes stands on a small peninsula which stretches into Faxaflói bay from the northern part of the mouth of Hvalfjörður fjord. Akranes first

emerged as a fishing village in the middle of the 17th century and was thereby amongst the first of its kind in Iceland (www.akranes.is). Fishing was to remain the only reason for the existence of a small village here for the next two centuries or so, and even today the local fishing industry employs about 15% of the work force. However, as can be seen by the figure just mentioned, Akranes is by no means as dependent on its fisheries as are the fishing villages described above, i.e. Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður. Thus commerce thrives well in Akranes today and provides employment for more than 10% of the work force, and the third main form of employment in the village is industry, which is the occupation of about 25% of the work force (*Byggðabrunnur 1997, 1997*).

In 1998 a tunnel was constructed under the fjord Hvalfjörður and this shortened the distance between Akranes and Reykjavík by 60 kilometres, so that the drive to the capital now only takes about 40-45 minutes. The tunnel also spelled the end for Akraborgin, a ferry which for decades sailed between Akranes and Reykjavík. While the tunnel was under construction some feared that its existence would weaken Akranes as more and more people would try to find employment in the greater Reykjavík area. So far, the opposite seems to have happened as even though quite a large number of the inhabitants of Akranes do go to Reykjavík on a daily basis for employment or educational purposes, there are even more who appear to appreciate the relative quietness of Akranes in comparison with Reykjavík and thus continue living there. Thus, Akranes is one of the few municipalities outside the greater Reykjavík area which has enjoyed some growth in the last decade or two; in 2002 it had about 5,600 inhabitants compared to 5,074 in 1996 (www.hagstofa.is).

5.2.5.1.1 Fieldwork in Akranes

Data was collected in Akranes during the period 15th – 24th November 2002, thus overlapping partly with the second visit to Reykjavík, which is in turn explained by the above mentioned fact that it only takes about 40-45 minutes to drive between Akranes and the capital.

This new closeness to Reykjavík was also very evident in the general atmosphere in Akranes. Several of my informants there claimed that it was nice to know that Reykjavík and all it has to offer is just around the corner, and apparently many go there for a night out in theatres, cinemas and cafés, or to shop for just about anything that is more specialized than the daily groceries. At the same time, however, people I spoke to in Akranes greatly appreciated the fact that the town is still quite well distanced from Reykjavík which means that once one has done some shopping or had a night out in the capital one can go home and enjoy the quietness and safety of the hometown.

The inhabitants of Akranes also struck me as being quite proud of their town. This seems to rest partly on the relative importance the town has for both

the neighbouring areas and for Iceland in general through its strong fishing industry, as well as other industries. Another important factor is the strong sports tradition the town takes pride in. It was also evident that the inhabitants experienced the town's cultural life as rich, at least when size is kept in mind, and some mentioned that even though it was nice to know of Reykjavík, there was rarely any real need to go there as Akranes itself had plenty to offer in cultural terms. All in all, this translates into a positive attitude amongst the inhabitants towards their hometown, which is witnessed not the least through the remarks made by the teenagers included in the study, most of whom found it likely that Akranes would remain their hometown in the future.

5.2.5.2 Reykjanesbær

Reykjanesbær consists of the two former municipalities Keflavík and Njarðvík which were united in 1994. The town is located on the north-western shore of the Reykjanes peninsula, about 40 kilometres west of the greater Reykjavík area, and had about 10,500 inhabitants in 2002 (www.hagstofa.is).

Keflavík is believed to have been a trading place since ca. 1500. However, as was the case with the other fishing and seaside villages described so far, Keflavík was not to emerge as a village in any real sense until the late 19th century when the foundations of a local fishing industry were laid. These foundations were strengthened in the first decades of the 20th century when Keflavík became one of the leading harbours in Iceland for export of fish products, a position which it still holds (Jósefsson & Steindórsson, 1981). As for Njarðvík, which is located just to the south-east of Keflavík, a fishing village emerged there in the first decades of the 20th century following the introduction of engine-driven boats, which in turn called for fish processing factories, freezing plants and other elements of the fishing industry (Jósefsson & Steindórsson, 1981).

The fishing industry is still an important factor in the economic life of the two villages that make up Reykjanesbær today, and employed about 14% of the work force at the turn of the century (*Byggðabrunnur 1997*, 1997). This means that Reykjanesbær is a major centre of fishing and fish processing in Iceland, although in recent decades other branches, such as new industries, commerce and construction, have become increasingly important. This principally due to the effects of the presence of the American army base, which was, until its closure in 2006, located just outside Reykjanesbær and employed a considerable number of people from the municipality.

5.2.5.2.1 Fieldwork in Reykjanesbær

Reykjanesbær was visited for data collection during the period 3rd – 9th October 2002. During this visit, two characteristics of the local atmosphere were most prominent. Firstly, just as in Akranes, the inhabitants of Reykjanesbær display a

mixture of, on the one hand, an affinity for their hometown and its local small-town values and, on the other, an appreciation of the closeness to Reykjavík and the possibilities it offers. Secondly, the American influence, which could be traced to the American army base just outside the town, was quite evident, both through the large number of Americans I encountered in the streets and restaurants in Reykjanesbær and through the subjects that came up in discussions with my informants. Despite occasional friction between the local population and American soldiers, the general attitude towards this American influence appears to be positive, which can probably in no small part be traced to the fact that for decades the army base was a major source of employment for the inhabitants of Reykjanesbær.

Thus, spirits appeared to be fairly high in Reykjanesbær. As mentioned above, the town has adapted quite well to the decreasing relative importance of the fishing industry and has thus avoided many of the problems now faced by the smaller fishing villages. At least the inhabitants themselves appeared to regard Reykjanesbær as a thriving community, offering a surprisingly lively cultural life as well as other forms of recreation. Another telling characteristic that Reykjanesbær shares with Akranes is that its youngsters appear to have plenty of space for their hometown in their future plans.

5.2.6 The communities in sum

As can hopefully be seen from the previous sections, the communities included in this study may be said to cover the range of community types found in Iceland. Thus, we have, on the one hand, Reykjavík, the capital, which is in essence a modern Western city, and, on the other, the three small fishing villages Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður, the inclusion of which reflects the importance of the fishing industry for the Icelandic community as a whole and the fact that fishing villages are the most common type of villages in Iceland. Akureyri, Akranes and Reykjanesbær can then be placed in between these two extremes, both through their size and socio-economic character which can be said to be based on a mixture of the traditional fishing industry and the more industrial and commercial character of Reykjavík. Finally, Flúðir represents the largely rural South as a service and administrative centre for the surrounding farming areas.

Given this range of communities, it is not surprising that they vary considerably with regard to the general atmosphere within them. Nonetheless, a few recurrent themes can be found which it may be worthwhile to comment on briefly. Thus, the general spirit in the communities appears to depend largely upon how the process of urbanization has affected the community in question in recent decades. Accordingly, there is generally a positive spirit in communities such as Akranes and Akureyri which have held their own or even grown, while the rapid expansion of the greater Reykjavík area has given its inhabitants the

opportunity to enjoy most of the comforts most modern Western cities offer, and this seems to be appreciated. Conversely, the fishing villages have gone through a period of decline which has had a negative affect on the local spirit, especially in Patreksfjörður which does not have the ray of light provided to Siglufjörður by the tunnel and to Neskaupstaður by the aluminium plant. At the same time, another contrast appears; the emergence of Reykjavík as a modern city appears to have resulted in a higher level of stress there than elsewhere, as well as in a certain need amongst people to protect their private sphere. Elsewhere, especially in the smaller fishing villages and Flúðir, the atmosphere is much more relaxed and strangers (at least in my case) are met with curiosity rather than scepticism. Interestingly, informants living in the suburban parts of Reykjavík, or the neighbouring municipalities, frequently mentioned that while it was good to have access to the hustle and bustle of the central parts of the city it was equally good and relaxing to be able to shut it out by not living there. This sentiment is mirrored by informants living in those other communities that were closest to the greater Reykjavík area, i.e. Reykjanesbær and Akranes, and even to some extent in Flúðir.

Despite the generally downbeat spirit in most of the communities negatively affected, it is here that I found the greatest fondness for the home community amongst the inhabitants. Hence, while e.g. the inhabitants of Akureyri are generally proud of their hometown and people in Reykjavík may pride themselves of the city's global outlook, I did not sense the same attachment to the community as I did in e.g. Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður. However, this fondness appears in some ways to be at odds with the reality of urbanization as in the fishing villages the teenagers spoken to generally expected to more or less be forced to move away even though they might not want to do so. In Akranes and Reykjanesbær, on the other hand the teenagers regarded it as quite likely that they would remain in their present home community. In many cases, this expectation seemed to be traceable to the short distance between these communities and Reykjavík. In Akureyri the feeling was somewhat mixed as while the greater Reykjavík area certainly had its appeal to some teenagers the home community offers others certain opportunities not found in smaller villages. Finally, and noticeably, the teenagers in Flúðir generally expect to move away, despite a general fondness for their home community and the fact that it has not suffered the same decline as the fishing villages. In this case, I got the feeling that the reason for these future views was that the teenagers saw the agrarian society of their youth as somewhat old-fashioned.

It may of course seem likely that the varied socio-economic character and general atmosphere of the communities included in this study should result in clear variation in linguistic terms as well. However, certain factors which may work against this diversification should not be forgotten. Thus, Iceland can in many ways be said to be quite centralized. The educational system is the same throughout the country with the same basic teaching materials being used in

most schools. Also, most of the few television and radio channels and daily newspapers there are have national coverage. This is relevant as both mass media and the educational system have been used as channels for the Icelandic language policy. Furthermore, at the same time as my informants frequently displayed a high level of local loyalty my formal interviews with them, described in more detail in section 5.3.3 below, no less frequently revealed a strong sense of nationalism amongst them. We will come to this in greater detail while discussing the results in chapter 6, and then we will see whether these unifying factors outweigh the difference in character between the various communities.

5.3 Types of data

Various types of data were collected for the purpose of this thesis. Understandably, the main bulk consists of linguistic data which can in turn be divided into two parts; spoken language and written language. This data was then studied in relation to a set of personal information obtained through individual interviews with all informants. This information can be divided into three main parts; first, the subjects' attitudes towards and awareness of language change in general and the features in question in particular; second, information about the subjects' social networks; and, third, other background information about the informants, i.e. regarding their age, gender, home municipality, educational level and occupation. Using the last type of data mentioned here has become standard practice in sociolinguistic research and including such data here is aimed at enabling a sociolinguistic characterization of what linguistic variation may appear in the data on spoken and written language. Then, in line with the discussion in chapter 2 above, data on the informants' social networks was added to other background information as a valuable complement. This is chiefly due to the stability approach of this thesis, but as seen in section 2.4 above, social networks have been used in a historical context to explain the high level of stability of the Icelandic language at least until the middle of the 19th century (Milroy & Milroy, 1985). For this reason, I found it interesting to examine whether present network patterns in Iceland could be said to be an explanatory factor behind the state of modern Icelandic, irrespective of whether this state is one of change or of stability. Finally, the inclusion of data on the informants' attitudes can be traced to the discussion in section 2.4 and chapter 3 above. There I argued that if we want to understand language stability we need to take into account factors such as attitudes, nationalism and language planning. Therefore, should the linguistic data be indicative of stability rather than change, I felt it was necessary to include in the data some measure of the informants' attitudes and how they might be linked to e.g. nationalism and language planning, and then run this data against the results pertaining to the informants' language use.

5.3.1 Spoken language

The main focus of this thesis is on spoken language. To be more precise, the aim was to collect material that resembled as closely as possible informal everyday language use of the informants. In Labovian (1970) terms this means that along the stylistic range the target here is the vernacular, i.e. the style in which speakers pay minimum attention to monitoring their own speech. The main reason for focusing on this part of the stylistic range rather than those parts of it where speakers pay greater attention to their own speech is that, as pointed out by Labov (p. 31), “[o]bservation of the vernacular gives us the most systematic data for our analysis of linguistic structure.” It has also been pointed out (see e.g. Labov, 1970; Wolfram and Fasold, 1974; Wolfson, 1976) that in order to obtain casual speech from informants, the approach most likely to be successful is peer-group sessions where people who know and interact with each other are brought together and their conversations recorded. The assumption here is that the normal interactions of the group overcome the effects produced by the informants’ awareness of being recorded. On this basis, the informants in this study were recorded in groups of 2-4, where all the members of each group knew each other prior to the recording sessions (and in most cases knew each other well, as e.g. most of the groups comprising adult and senior informants were married couples). The recordings were also carried out in the home of one (or more) of the informants in each group, or, as was the case with the teenage groups in four localities, at school. The external situation was thus always familiar to the informants.

The main rule for these recording sessions was that I was not present and when possible the recording equipment was left with the informants for the better part of a day, or at least for a period considerably longer than the recording itself was supposed to last, and the informants were asked to carry out the recording when it best suited them during this period. This was done in order to meet the effects of Labov’s (1970) well-known observer’s paradox. As mentioned above, the aim was to obtain recordings of the informants’ vernacular, i.e. the style in which they pay minimum attention to their own speech. However, as ethical considerations prevent other approaches, the informants were aware of being recorded which may in turn have affected their style of speech. It was hoped that my absence from the recording sessions and the relatively wide time frame the informants were given to record themselves would result in them taking a relaxed stance towards the situation which, in turn, was expected to result in their language use being similar to what it would have been outside a recording session. It should be noted that I do not want to use the term “normal” or “natural” language too much in this context for, as has repeatedly been pointed out (see e.g. Milroy & Gordon, 2003), it is just about impossible to define what is the “normal” language of a given person in a certain context. Rather, I would like to think of my approach as an attempt to create a

situation which the informants do not experience as special or deviating sharply from their everyday life and can therefore use the language they would use in any case in a relaxed conversational context involving friends or family members. Furthermore, even if all my informants may have felt the effects of the recording situation – and are in fact likely to have done so, even though I hope to have minimized them e.g. through using peer-group recording sessions – they are likely to have been felt in much the same way by all informants, since the situation from one recording to another was essentially the same. Thus, even though I may not have perfectly “natural” language, in the sense that the informants may make some adjustments to their everyday language use to meet the recording situation, the level of “unnaturalness” should be about the same in each recording, meaning that the basis for comparisons between them is still quite solid at the same time as this “unnaturalness” can of course be said to be quite normal for the situation in question. This is accentuated by Wolfson (1976, p. 209) who comments that “[i]f speech is felt to be appropriate to a situation and the goal, then it is natural in that context.”

As for the linguistic features under study in this thesis, a key element in obtaining examples of the informants’ everyday usage of them is the fact that they were not informed about my specific interest in the features until after the recordings were made. In the initial approach by me, or my recruiters, the informants were only told that I was studying modern Icelandic in an everyday context and those who gave their oral consent to take part on the basis of this information were then recorded. Since at least some of the features under scrutiny are highly stigmatized and it was estimated that there would be a high general level of awareness of them it was deemed necessary to ensure that the informants did not know exactly what features were being studied as the data would otherwise become quite unreliable. This is due to the fact, pointed out e.g. by Labov (1970), that when speakers are aware of which stigmatized features are being examined, they are likely to deviate from the vernacular they use outside an examination context towards producing either more standard forms of the features in question or towards producing forms which contrast sharply with the standard. To this it should be added that the informants were given a free rein in terms of subject matters in the recording sessions. The reason for this is that I did not want to affect the data by introducing subjects likely to result in e.g. an unusually high frequency of passive sentences or impersonal verbs, since the aim of this study was not only to obtain information on the proportionate frequency of ‘new passive’, ‘dative sickness’ and the other non-standard forms, but also on the overall frequency of these features.

Of course, this method gives rise to serious ethical questions as part of my data is collected before the informants’ informed consent is obtained and confirmed in writing. I believe, however, that the justification of this method given above is quite strong, and to this it should be added that immediately after the recording session the informants were given detailed information – both in

writing and orally by me – about just what features I was looking for and were after that given the opportunity to withdraw from the project. Fortunately, however, no one refused to take further part in the research after this additional information was given and all those recorded gave their written consent for further participation, which of course included the possibility to ask for withdrawal at any time. A special note should be made of the fact it was only after this written and informed consent was given by the informants that the data described in the following sections (i.e. written data and data on linguistic attitudes, the informants' social networks and their personal background) was collected. Finally, a description of the project and the methodology used in it was submitted for inspection to the Icelandic Data Protection Authority where none of the above mentioned issues were regarded as problematic.

As a final note on the question of “naturalness”, it should be added that, judging from the subject matters discussed by the informants in the recording sessions, they seem likely not to have paid too much attention to the recording situation as such. As can be expected, the first five minutes or so of nearly all the recordings are somewhat rigid and hesitant and the main topic of conversation is the recording session itself and the recording equipment, and phrases such as “So, what should we talk about?” are quite common. This is probably only natural and, as pointed out by Bergmann (1990), there may be greater reason to be suspicious of recordings where no references are made to the recording situation. After this stuttering start to the recording sessions the informants appear to gradually focus less on the situation they are in and more often than not surprisingly personal topics are discussed. Thus the teenagers do not shy away from talking about e.g. their relationships and their relations to their parents, while the adults often discuss e.g. problems at work and gossip about their friends and neighbours. In some cases the subject matter even became uncomfortably personal. Thus there are two examples of discussions of serious illnesses in the families in question. Perhaps this apparent sense of comfort amongst the informants is aided by the fact that a mini-disc recorder (Sony Walkman MZ-R700PC) and a small microphone (Sony ECM-717) were used for the recordings. The equipment itself is thus very small, and on the occasions when I set it up an effort was made to keep it as much out of sight as possible. Similarly, when the equipment was left with the informants for them to record themselves when it suited them, they were asked to place the equipment out of sight. Of course, I have no guarantee that the informants who set up the equipment themselves followed my instructions, but there is nothing in these recordings which suggests that they did not. In general, it does therefore seem safe to assume that there was little in the informants' physical surroundings during the recordings which reminded them of the situation they were in. The above mentioned fact that the equipment was, whenever possible, left with the informants for the better part of a day in order for them to carry out the

recording when it best suited them may well have added further to the general sense of comfort amongst the informants.

Having said all of the above, it should be noted that the main rule mentioned earlier about me not being present during the recording sessions was broken on three occasions. On all these occasions the informants in question were senior citizens, elderly couples to be more precise, who felt ill at ease with the recording equipment and/or the pressure to “have to” talk for a certain amount of time and hence specifically asked me to not to leave and take part in their conversation. In these cases I decided to oblige as I felt that the effects of my presence would not be as severe as those of my absence, due to the reasons just mentioned. In all these recordings, I also tried to keep as low a profile as possible, mainly getting the conversation going and keeping it going when necessary, at the same time as I did my best to make the informants feel at ease.

A note should also be made of the fact that it was not always possible to leave the recording equipment with the informants for any longer period of time. In most cases this was the simple result of time pressure on the informants, especially those in Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area. The response to this was to make a specific appointment, meaning that I turned up with equipment at a given time which best suited the informants. I then briefed them on their role and left them to carry out the recording, to then return an hour or so later. Having listened closely to both the recordings where I was present and the recordings just described, I do not feel that they differ significantly from the other recordings.

To then turn to the length of the recordings, this was quite varied. On the occasions where there were two participants in the recording session, they were asked to record at least 30 minutes, while groups of three or four were asked to record no less than 40-45 minutes. This was observed on all occasions, and more often than not at least a few extra minutes were included. The upper length limit can be said to have been the length of the mini-discs used, which was 75 minutes. Three groups produced recordings of this length. The total length of the recordings was 29 hours and 50 minutes, spread over a total of 44 recordings. If this is broken down in terms of the number and length of the recordings in each of the localities included the following emerges:

Central Reykjavík: 5 recordings (4 groups of 2, 1 group of 4); 3 hours 50 minutes.

Sub. R.vík and neigh. mun.: 5 recordings (4 groups of 2, 1 group of 4); 2 hours 38 minutes.

Reykjanesbær: 5 recordings (4 groups of 2, 1 group of 4); 2 hours 54 minutes.

<i>Akranes:</i>	5 recordings (4 groups of 2, 1 group of 4); 2 hours 55 minutes
<i>Patreksfjörður:</i>	5 recordings (3 groups of 2, 2 groups of 3); 4 hours 34 minutes
<i>Siglufjörður:</i>	4 recordings (2 groups of 2, 2 groups of 4); 3 hours 44 minutes
<i>Akureyri:</i>	4 recordings (2 groups of 2, 2 groups of 4); 2 hours 59 minutes
<i>Neskaupstaður:</i>	6 recordings (6 groups of 2); 2 hours 50 minutes
<i>Flúðir:</i>	5 recordings (4 groups of 2, 1 group of 4); 3 hours 26 minutes

As can probably be expected, the amount of speech on the recordings also varies, primarily according to the activity the informants are engaged in during the recording session. A special note was made of telling the informants that they were by no means supposed to sit right in front of the recording equipment and talk relentlessly for at least 30 minutes. Rather, when possible, they were free to record themselves during whichever activity they chose. Thus dinner is being prepared on a few of the recordings, while the home of one family is being decorated for Christmas on one other recording. However, most of the groups did not use the liberties given and simply sat down to have a chat. Interestingly, and probably largely due to the fact that the informants in each group knew each other, this often resulted in the informants making comments about them having had a good time during the recording. One couple even thanked me especially for giving them the opportunity to discuss a certain family matter for which they had been trying to find time for over a week. On some occasions, such as with the teenage groups recorded at school, the “chat” setting was more or less predetermined as the domestic situation of someone’s home could of course not be recreated there. Nonetheless, the chats these situations resulted in do not appear to differ in any significant way from the other recordings.

5.3.2 Written language

The first decision to be made regarding the written material collected was whether this should consist of material written specifically for the purpose of this study or already existing material which the informants had produced for various purposes and still had available. The latter option was taken and for this there are two main reasons. Firstly, material written outside the framework of

the research was preferred as this was felt to result in more authentic data which gave a better reflection of the informants' everyday usage of written language than work written specifically for the project would have done, even if this work had been carried out in connection with the initial recording sessions, i.e. before full information about the project was given. The research situation as such is likely to have had some effect on this material, but this was of course not the case with the material collected. Admittedly, it is unlikely that the effect of the research situation would have been much greater in the context of the written language than in that of the spoken language, but since this effect could not be avoided as far as the spoken language was concerned, while it was assumed that there was a considerable amount of written data available that was entirely free of it, the decision was made to use this data.

The second reason is time. As has been mentioned, all informants took part in recording sessions that lasted at least 30 minutes. In addition, all informants were interviewed to obtain the data described in the following sections, and these interviews lasted a minimum of 15 minutes. This means that each informant had given the research at least 45 minutes of his or her time, apart from the several extra minutes it took to present the research, set up the recording equipment and take care of other practical issues. When this is considered, it was judged to be unjustifiable to ask the informants to also put the effort and considerable time required into producing written material substantial enough for the purposes of the research, especially as I believed that many of the informants already had perfectly usable material which they had produced for other purposes.

This approach turned out to be less fruitful than I hoped. Of the 108 informants included in this study, only 52 submitted written data. Furthermore, these 52 were quite unevenly spread as regards the different social categories included. Thus, while e.g. ten informants from both Flúðir and Neskaupstaður and a further nine from Patreksfjörður submitted written material, only two informants from both Akranes and Keflavík did so and another three from each of Siglufjörður and central Reykjavík. Similarly, written material was obtained from 23 teenagers but only from 13 seniors.

This is of course a major shortcoming as it means that it is more or less impossible to carry out any detailed comparisons of the written and spoken language of the informants. Instead, very broad and general comparisons of the spoken data as a whole and the written data as a whole will have to suffice. In fact, even the limited value of this comparison may be decreased somewhat by the fact that the written material submitted by the informants is of a very varied nature and thus contains both personal letters and e-mails as well as meeting notes, formal schoolpapers and even short passages of local history intended for publication, but these different types of data are of course on opposite ends of the formality scale of written language and thus differ quite strongly from each other. At the same time, however, this diversity ensures that quite a large

proportion of the range of written language is included, which means, that if the data is taken as a whole rather than divided into its smaller components, it may give a reasonable reflection of this larger picture which can in turn be compared to the spoken data at hand.

Obviously, it would have been desirable to obtain written material from all informants. Quickly, however, the simple fact emerged that quite a large proportion of the informants in my sample had little or no reason or need to use written language in their everyday lives and thus carried out very little writing. In effect this meant that if I had insisted on including in the sample only people who could submit written material, the sample would have become quite skewed. Of course, this problem could have been side-stepped by asking those who had no pre-existing material available to write a short piece specifically for the study. That, however, would have meant that I received two different sets of written data and therefore this path was not chosen. Instead, as spoken language was the main priority in this research, people were included in the sample on the basis of the criteria discussed earlier, and those who could provide me with written material were asked to do so. Of course a slightly higher figure than 52 could have been expected, but the fact that it is nonetheless as low as this can probably mainly be explained by the fact that even if people were asked to bring what written material they had available to the recording sessions, quite a few simply forgot to do so. Then, despite promises to send me some examples of their written language they claimed to have available and reminders from me to do so, some informants ended up not submitting any written material. In this context it should be added that the informants who fell into this category were either called up or sent reminding messages on two occasions. If this did not suffice to elicit any response, no further action was taken as it was feared that this might simply alienate the informants in question from the research as a whole.

5.3.3 The interviews

Once the recording sessions were over and the informants had given their informed consent for further participation they were interviewed individually to obtain the remaining information, i.e. about their attitudes towards and awareness of language change and the features in question as well as about their social networks and other background details. The interviews were recorded on mini-discs and lasted 15-40 minutes each.

There are a number of reasons for choosing interviews over questionnaires which the informants would have answered in writing. The first of these is time. The basic list of questions on the informants' attitudes as well as their social networks was quite extensive, and it would have taken the informants a considerable amount of time to answer these questions with anything more than "yes-or-no" answers. Secondly, these individual interviews

gave me the opportunity to elicit more detailed answers than a written questionnaire would have done as by this means it was possible for me to ask the informants to elaborate on their answers at the same time as I could expand on the basic list of questions in order to adapt to the setting and development of each interview. This was a particularly useful aspect as the societal variation between the different localities, as well as between e.g. the different age groups, often called for spontaneous adjustments or additions to the basic questions. Thereby I believe that valuable information was gained which would probably have gone lost had a standardized set of questions been used throughout. Finally, I wanted the informants' answers to be spontaneous rather than carefully thought out before being written down. Obviously, this was not such a big issue as regards much of the background information, but it was felt to be all the more important when it came to questions about the informants' linguistic attitudes. As we have seen, some of the features under study are highly stigmatized, and in many cases there appears to be a general consensus on what the attitude should be. This could, in turn, result in the informants' replying according to what they believed was the appropriate answer rather than on the basis of their own standpoint. It was hoped that the interview situation would promote spontaneous answers of this latter kind. This is indeed one of the arguments for carrying out the interviews on an individual level rather than group-wise; by interviewing each informant individually I hoped to avoid responses based on any potential pressure from the group in question at each time.

5.3.3.1 Background information about the informants

In the first part of the interviews, the informants were asked questions about their personal background. First they were asked to indicate their age, and this was then followed by questions about their education and occupation. The teenagers were also asked about their parents' education and occupation. Information about the informants' gender and where they lived was obvious enough for me to simply record it without posing any specific questions.

As has been mentioned (section 5.1.1), the construction of the sample aimed at an even number of informants from each of the localities as well as from each age group. Also, the gender division was supposed to be as even as possible. However, it was deemed unfeasible, and even undesirable, to attain the same level of control over the categories of education and occupation. The main reason for this is of course that this study takes several locations into consideration, each of which has its own socio-economic characteristics. This means that while including an equal number from each educational and occupational category in each of the localities would have given some grounds for comparison, these grounds would essentially have been false as the categories are represented to a highly varying degree in the different localities. This situation is then further complicated by issues such as status, but as Milroy

and Gordon (2003) point out “persons of the *same* class may have very different *statuses* if they live in cities with different class structures; a lawyer in Belfast or Newcastle is likely to enjoy more prestige than a lawyer in Tunbridge Wells or Colchester” (p. 44). This can in all likelihood be transferred directly to an Icelandic context and thus a lawyer in Reykjavík is likely to have a higher status than a lawyer in Patreksfjörður, at least in a national context. Due to issues of this kind, the approach discussed above was taken, i.e. to try to ensure that the sample in each location reflects the societal structures found there. The cost of this is of course that all comparisons that will be made here, based on the categories of education and occupation, will have to take the differences between the localities strongly into consideration.

A special note should probably also be made of the fact that here the categories of education and occupation can be said to be used as a certain measure of the more common category of class. The concept of social class is of course a notoriously diffuse one, not the least when linked to linguistic variation (see Milroy & Gordon (2003) for a more detailed discussion), and I do not want to delve too deeply into this area as that is not the purpose of this thesis. However, it should be said that as a native Icelander it seems safe to say that the general feeling amongst the population is that the nation is relatively free of any strong class divisions, while what small divisions there exist are primarily based on occupation and education. Thus, by using these categories as a socio-economic indicator I can in some way integrate the informants’ own views and social definitions of themselves, thereby following the example of e.g. Rickford (1986) in his work in Guyana and Eckert (2000) in her work on “jocks” and “burnouts”. Furthermore, in what little sociolinguistic work that has been carried out in Iceland before (see e.g. Jónsson & Eypórsson, 2003; Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson and Þórlindsson, 1984), occupation and/or education have been used as certain class indicators and through using these categories in a similar fashion I obtain some ground for comparison.

5.3.3.2 Social networks

In order to obtain information on the informants’ social network they were asked a series of questions during the interview. For this purpose a list of basic questions was prepared which is founded on the ideology discussed in the sections on social networks above (2.2.2-2.2.4) and borrows heavily from e.g. Lippi-Green’s (1989) work in Grossdorf and Milroy’s (1980) work in Belfast, at the same time as an effort was made to adapt it as well as possible to the Icelandic context. Still, the word “basic” should probably be emphasized here as, even though the list, which is given with an English translation in Appendix 1, was based on the same foundations in all the interviews, it had to be adapted repeatedly, according to the circumstances in each of the localities as well as to

the setting of each personal interview. Thus, in the end, this part of the interview was much more open-ended than the list as such may indicate.

To then look a bit more closely at the list itself it consists of five main sections. The first dealt with the informants' family and kin ties and included questions on what members of the family they had contact with and how close and intimate this contact was. The second section covered friendship ties and included questions of essentially the same nature as did the section on family ties. However, questions about the informants' ties to their neighbours were also included here. The third section aimed at gaining information, where applicable, about the informants' ties to the people they worked or attended school with, and whether or not they had any contact with them outside the workplace or school. In the fourth section, the informants were asked about their participation in various social activities and how they were connected to the people they had contact with through this part of their lives. Finally, in the fifth section, questions were asked about the informants' integration into their home municipality; how long they had lived there, whether or not they felt themselves to be part of the society in question and what their attitude towards it was. Of course, there was also some overlap between the different sections of the list as some questions aimed at finding out whether the informants were linked to people in more ways than one, e.g. as relatives, co-workers and members of the same club all at once.

5.3.3.3 Attitudes to language and language change

The final part of the interviews consisted of a set of questions about the informants' linguistic attitudes. The first question posed was about their attitude towards language change in general and this was followed up by a question about whether they had noticed any particular signs of change in their linguistic environment. Also, those who expressed a negative attitude were asked if there were any particular features that aroused these feelings. As can be expected this question was not always necessary as some informants immediately linked their answer to the first question to a given feature.

The remainder of the questions in this part of the interviews concerned the features studied in this thesis. For each of these features, three basic questions were asked. First, the feature in question was mentioned, and if the informants were not familiar with the term for it or the description given, they were provided with an example or two. Then they were asked if they were familiar with the feature. If the answer to this first question was positive, it was followed up by a question about to what extent the informants felt they heard or saw the feature in question. Finally, all informants were asked about their attitudes towards the feature. Note that even those who claimed not to be familiar with the feature at each time were asked this question. By being native speakers of Icelandic they were nonetheless judged to be able to express an opinion.

The questions asked, along with an English translation, can be found in Appendix 2.

5.4 Handling the data

In this section a brief description is given of how each of the types of data described in section 5.3 was handled.

5.4.1 Spoken and written data

Starting with the spoken data all the recordings of the subjects' conversations were transcribed and analysed in full. As has been mentioned, the first few minutes of conversation in most of the recordings were somewhat stiff due to the subjects' awareness of the situation. These parts of the recordings are nonetheless included as the subjects were at this stage not aware of what part of their language was being studied. Hence, while this relatively high level of self-consciousness at the beginning of the recordings is likely to have had some effect on the informants' general language use such that they used a more formal style than their vernacular (Labov, 1970; see section 5.3.1 above), it was judged to be unlikely that it would affect their usage of the grammatical features in question to a greater extent than other parts of their language. Furthermore, it would have been extremely difficult to determine for each recording just when it stopped being "stiff" to become more fluent and thus, in a sense, more natural. The more hesitant parts of the first minutes can, in other words, be viewed as just as normal or natural as can the latter minutes as it is quite normal for the subjects to take some time in adjusting to the situation at hand.

The transcription standard used is a somewhat simplified and modified version of the Modified Standard Orthography (version 6) developed within the research program Semantics and Spoken Language at the Department of Linguistics at Göteborg University (Nivre, 1999). The features studied were excerpted from the transcriptions and registered in accordance with the descriptions and definitions given in chapter 4 above. Note also, that since the frequencies of the non-standard forms in question were calculated as a proportion of possible occurrences, their standard counterparts were also excerpted. Furthermore, I was not only interested in the correlation between the social categories included and the subjects' language use, but also in the possible effects of the conversational context and language internal factors. Thus, for each speaker a file was created which not only contained information on the number of standard vs. non-standard forms used, but also both a full list of all non-standard as well as standard forms in their conversational and grammatical context and descriptions of the relevant grammatical features. In relation to 'dative sickness' this included information on the grammatical form of the verbs and subjects in question, i.e. on the tense, number and aspect of the

verbs and the number and gender of the subjects, along with a note on what non-standard case was used. As for ‘genitive avoidance’ and other deviant case inflections, records were kept of what word-classes were used, what syntactic role each form played, what case was used instead of the standard one and of the context in each case. Records were also kept of what verbs were involved in creating examples of ‘new passive’, and these examples were classified according to whether they originated in nominative passives or oblique passives. Besides this, I kept a written record of which subjects and objects were used in ‘new passive’ sentences as well as standard passive sentences and which word classes these belonged to. Finally, the ‘am-to-frenzy’ was treated slightly differently from the other features. As discussed in section 4.5, it is less than clear how this feature should be defined in terms of standard vs. non-standard usage and just what verbs and conversational and grammatical contexts allow for non-standard forms. This means, in effect, that it was impossible to count the occurrences of non-standard forms of this kind as a proportion of the total of possible occurrences. Hence, the approach was taken here to register only clear examples of non-standard forms in a first attempt to determine in which contexts they can appear in everyday language use.

To then turn to the written data, it was quite simply treated in the same way as the spoken data with, of course, the exception that the material provided by the speakers was photocopied rather than transcribed for analytical purposes. Another exception was that the conversational context did not have to be taken into consideration here. However, attention was paid to the varying nature of the submitted material, which, as discussed in section 5.3.2 above, covered quite a wide range of styles. Here, the level of formality of the material in question was recorded. All the other features discussed in connection with the spoken data were registered in the same way as was the case with the spoken material and the results of this registration were added to the informant-files mentioned above.

5.4.2 The interview data

In this discussion of how the various types of interview data was handled, the same order as in section 5.3.3 above is followed. This means that first data regarding the informants’ personal background is treated. Then the discussion moves on to data on the informants’ social networks and finally the handling of data regarding their attitudes to language and language change is described.

5.4.2.1 Background information about the informants

The interviews with the informants were not transcribed in full; rather, the relevant pieces of information from each part were registered and analyzed. For much of the subjects’ personal background this was quite a straightforward

matter, as the home locality, sex, age group and exact age of each subject was simply registered in the personal datafiles. As for the categories of education and occupation, both were divided into three sub-categories. The first educational sub-category consists of those who have compulsory education only (or less), while the second and third incorporate education at high school and university levels. The three occupational sub-categories are partly linked to their educational counterparts. Thus, the first of these includes manual labour work, while the second includes non-specialised non-manual work (which, nonetheless, in many cases requires high school education) and the third involves work which requires specialisation, normally at the level of university education. The main reason for this division into sub-categories is that a highly similar approach was used in the previous work on both ‘dative sickness’ (Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984) and ‘new passive’ (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002), which should enable some comparisons to be made to my material. This classification was also added to the datafiles profiling each subject.

As a special note, it should be added that the teenagers in this study were placed in the educational/occupational categories according to their study choices in high school or, in the cases where they had left school, their present level of education and form of employment. Thus teenagers attending academically oriented high-schools, the primary role of which is to prepare their students for further studies at university level, were placed in the highest category while those who had dropped out of school and worked as non-specialized manual labourers were placed in the lowest category. Teenagers studying at high school level towards becoming e.g. electricians or paramedics were placed in the second category. In the previous work on ‘dative sickness’ (Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984) and ‘new passive’ (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002) it varies whether the educational/occupational level of the mother or the father of the informants is used as an indicator of the informants’ social class. This means that regardless of which option I had chosen, i.e. the educational/occupational level of the mother or the father, I would have ended up with a categorization system different from at least some of the previous work with which I would like to compare my results. One other option would of course have been to set up a system to find an average for the educational/occupational level of the teenagers’ parents and find the relevant category for the teenagers on that basis. However, even though both parents are in many cases likely to have been placeable in the same educational/occupational category, which might have given a strong indication about the likely placement of the teenager in question, I felt that there would have been an equal number of cases where e.g. an average of one parent in the third category and another in the first would give quite an unclear picture. Furthermore, this method obscures the fact that, unlike the children and teenagers participating in the previous work mentioned above, the teenagers

participating in this study are at an age where they have made certain choices with respect to their education and/or working career, which may or may not reflect the educational/occupational level of their parents. I felt that it was necessary to take these choices made by the teenagers into account as they can be seen as a good indication of the teenagers' present intentions and ambitions which could, in turn, be used to form the basis for their placement in the three educational/occupational groups.

5.4.2.2 Social networks

As mentioned in section 5.3.3.2 above, a set of questions, based on the work of e.g. Lippi-Green (1989) and Milroy (1980), was used to obtain information regarding the informants' social networks. However, the approach in this thesis differs in one important aspect from that of Lippi-Green and Milroy. These researchers had a predetermined point-scale attached to their questions, which they then used to establish the strength of their informants' networks. Thus an informant in Lippi-Green's (1989) study scored one point for claiming to be socially active in Grossdorf, another for always having worked in Grossdorf, and so on, while negative answers to the same questions gave no points. A high total score indicated a strong local network. In the present study, however, it was deemed unfeasible to use a single predetermined point-scale. The main reason for this was that this is a multi-locality study and, as is pointed out in section 5.3.3.2, the basic set of questions used in this part of the interviews (see appendix 1) had to be adapted to each community. This meant that each community had to be analysed separately in terms of social networks and, in essence, a separate scaling system was established for each community. This is to say that this was an attempt to adapt the scaling system to the network patterns found in each community rather than vice versa.

In this adaptation of the scaling system the first step was to analyse the information obtained in order to evaluate the social networks of the informants in each community. In this analysis an attempt was made to not only note the strength and density of each informant's social network, but also to relate the networks in each community to each other in order to be able to create a general picture of the local network structures. This analysis was then used as a basis for establishing a scale of 5 network categories in each community in which the informants could be placed. Informants with particularly weak and low-density social networks, relative to the other networks found in the community in question, were placed in category 1 while informants with particularly strong and high-density networks were placed in category number 5. Informants with relatively weak networks were placed in category 2, informants with networks of intermediate strength in category 3 and informants with relatively strong networks in category 4.

The most striking result of this analysis of the local social networks in the various communities is the general picture of uniformity which emerged. Thus the majority of the 108 informants were judged to have networks of category 3 (42 informants) or 4 (39 informants), i.e. intermediate or relatively strong networks. 20 informants were placed in category 2 while only three informants were placed in category 1 and four in category 5. This may seem somewhat suspect and could possibly be interpreted as a result of the approach described above; i.e. that by, in a sense, analysing the networks on the basis of the general picture in each community the differences between the different categories may have been levelled out to some extent. Having gone through the data I would nonetheless like to argue that it would have mattered little which scaling system was used; within each community the majority of the informants related essentially the same number of contacts with friends and family, the same involvement in social activities, the same affinity towards the home community, etc. The end result would, in other words, have been quite similar to the one in this study.

Having just said the above about the uniformity of the networks in each community, it should be added that some differences emerged between the different localities. This is to say that what constitutes a strong network on a local scale in Reykjavík does not have to be as dense and multiplex as a strong network in some of the smaller communities. For this reason, the strength of each informant's social network was also estimated on a national level, using the same five-point scale as for the local networks. This was done to obtain some comparison between the different communities. Generally speaking, this resulted in informants who had strong local networks in small communities also being given a high national network strength score on the basis of their frequent contact with friends and family. On the other hand, informants from the Reykjavík area, Akureyri and, to some extent, Akranes and Reykjanesbær tended to be ranked as having slightly weaker networks on a national than on a local level as, even though they regarded their networks as tight, the sheer frequency and number of their contacts was considerably lower than the contacts of informants living in smaller communities. Similarly, informants living in small communities who scored relatively low regarding their local networks tended to raise their score somewhat on the national level, while a low local network strength score amongst informants in the larger communities translated into a low score on a national level as well. Thus, each informant ended in one category on the basis of the strength of his or her local social networks and another on the basis of the strength of his or her networks on a national level. As for the networks on a national level, four informants were placed in category 1, 24 in category 2, 26 in category 3, 38 in category 4, and 16 in category 5.

5.4.2.3 Attitudes to language and language change

The data on the informants' linguistic attitudes and awareness was treated as follows. All answers about their attitudes towards both linguistic change in general and towards each of the features in question were ranked on a five-point scale which moved from "very positive", via "positive", "neutral" and "negative", to "highly negative". Answers relating to whether or not the informants were familiar with the linguistic features were registered simply as "yes" or "no", whereas answers about how extensively the informants felt they came across the features were ranked on another five-point scale ranging from "never" to "very often" via "seldom", "from time to time" and "often". Finally, a note was made of which features were mentioned when the informants were asked if they noticed any particular signs of change.

In this context it should be added that, as has been mentioned earlier (section 5.3.3.), the stigmatization attached to some of the non-standard forms studied could lead to the informants' expressing the attitude they believe they should have rather than providing an answer based on their own standpoint. On a few occasions this also seemed to be the case, as some informants made certain remarks about their attitudes towards a given feature which contradicted statements made in other parts of the interview. Also, a few informants made derogatory remarks on one non-standard form or the other, but then went on to use it a few minutes later. While this was kept in mind during the analysis of the answers, they were nonetheless taken at face value as they were the responses received when questions addressing attitudes in particular were posed.

The point should also be made that the measurements for how frequently the informants felt they came across the non-standard forms are by no means exact as there can be quite a large variation in the informants' perception of this. This is to say that what one person may regard as happening very often could just as well be perceived as happening rarely by another person. Thus, the results from this analysis, which will be presented in the next chapter along with the other results, should be read with precaution, even though they are likely to add a valuable perspective on the informants' linguistic attitudes in general.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, a description has been given of the methods used in the research for this thesis. Data was collected from a total of 108 informants from nine different localities in Iceland. In each locality the informants were divided into three age groups; teenagers, adults/middle-aged and senior citizens, and care was taken to include as even a number as possible of men and women within in each age group. Furthermore, the sample of informants in each location was constructed so as to include people with a variety of socio-economic backgrounds which also reflected the societal structure of the locality in

question at each time. The majority of the informants were recruited by using a ‘friend-of-a-friend’ method, where people I have contact with in most of the localities functioned as “recruiters” in that they pointed out and made the initial contact with potential informants. An even more direct technique was used to recruit the remainder of the sample; I have lived in four of the localities included and this enabled me to directly contact old acquaintances or distant relatives when the need arose.

As for the choice of localities, two main criteria were used. First, care was taken to include localities from all eight regions Iceland is generally divided into for various administrative and official purposes and, secondly, the choice was intended to include communities that are representative of the different kinds of communities there exist in Iceland. Once these criteria had been met, the final choice of communities was based primarily on convenience as I opted for towns and villages which allowed for easy access to ‘recruiters’ or straightforward establishment of direct contacts with potential informants. On this basis, the villages of Patreksfjörður, in the Western Fjords, Siglufjörður, in the North-West, and Neskaupstaður, in the Eastern Fjords, were included as typical representatives of fishing villages, which are the most common type of communities in Iceland, especially in the regions just mentioned. However, there are also examples of seaside villages which have developed from being solely dependent upon the fishing industry to become more socio-economically diverse. Reykjanesbær, in the Reykjanes Peninsula, and Akranes in the West function as representatives of this type of communities. The small inland town of Flúðir then serves as a representative of the service centres for the largely agricultural areas in the South, while Akureyri, in the North-East, mainly represents itself as it is the largest and most socio-economically varied town outside the greater Reykjavík area. Finally, Reykjavík and the greater Reykjavík area were included since, just like Akureyri, Reykjavík mainly represents itself as it is the only true city in Iceland and serves as the country’s centre as regards administration, commerce, education and culture. However, Reykjavík was split into two parts for this study; central Reykjavík, on the one hand, and suburban Reykjavík with neighbouring municipalities, on the other. This division was created both as the comparative size of Reykjavík called for the use of a larger sample there than in the other localities and because previous research indicates that there may be linguistic differences between the two parts involved.

All localities were visited by me for data collection during the period May 2002 – February 2003. The main type of data consisted of recordings of the informants’ spontaneous speech. They were recorded in familiar surroundings in groups of 2-4 where the members always knew each other well. Each recording session lasted 30-75 minutes and the total length of all 44 recording sessions is just under 30 hours. With three exceptions; I was not present during the recording sessions and the informants were given no instructions about which topics to discuss. They were also not informed beforehand on the linguistic

features I was studying even though they were told that I was studying modern Icelandic in an everyday context.

Once each recording session was over, the informants in question were provided with full information on the purpose of my research and were then asked to give their written consent to further participation (which all did). Following this they were asked to provide me with samples of their written language. 52 informants were able to do so, and the material was of a quite varied nature; personal letters and e-mails, school assignments, meeting notes, etc. None of this was written specifically for the purpose of the research. This written material and transcriptions of the spoken material were then analysed for the linguistic variables described in chapter 4.

Apart from strictly linguistic data, information was obtained from the informants on their personal background and attitudes to language. The personal information concerned the informants' age, gender, place of residence, education and occupation. Furthermore, each informant was interviewed about his or her social networks. In the interviews about their attitudes to language the informants were first asked about their attitudes towards language change in general and whether or not they noticed any particular signs of change in their linguistic environments. These questions were then followed by more specific ones about the informants' attitudes towards the linguistic variables under study. The information obtained from these interviews was subsequently matched with the linguistic data to obtain the results we will now turn to.

6. Results

It is now time to turn to the results of the project described in the previous chapter. The presentation will be divided into two main parts in terms of content. In the first, which consists of sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3, the results relating to the linguistic variables will be presented. In the first of these sections, the focus will be on results from the spoken data, while the second deals with the written data. In each of these sections, the order followed will be the same as that in chapter 4 above, i.e. the results for ‘dative sickness’ and other signs of instability in the usage of impersonal verbs will be presented first, to be followed by those for ‘genitive avoidance’, other case inflections, ‘new passive’, and ‘am-to-frenzy’. Where applicable in the section on spoken language, the linguistic variable under discussion will also be examined in relation to the various social factors included. This last division is generally not possible for the variables in written language, due to the relative lack of written data and the unbalanced sample of informants who submitted such data.

In the last of the three sections in this first part of the chapter, i.e. section 6.3, a look is taken at whether the informants used more than one type of the non-standard forms mentioned above and, if so, whether there was any patterning regarding which non-standard features appeared in the data produced by the same informant.

The second main part, which consists of section 6.4, deals with results from interviews with the informants on their language attitudes and awareness. Here, the discussion mainly follows the order of the questions posed in the interviews. Accordingly, the informants’ general views on language change will be dealt with first. This is then followed by a presentation of their answers to the questions that covered their views on the linguistic variables examined in this thesis. As a full analysis of the results in this section would probably require a separate thesis, an overview of the general picture will have to suffice on most occasions, even though the most interesting patterns regarding how attitudes and awareness emerge in the various social groupings included will of course be mentioned. However, some emphasis will be placed on matching the results in this section with the results from section 6.1 in order to see if there is any relationship between attitudinal factors and the usage of the linguistic variables. Due to reasons outlined above, the results from section 6.2, i.e. those emerging from the written data, will not be included in this matching. Finally, a summary of the results is given at the end of the chapter, in section 6.5.

6.1 Spoken language

In this section, results on the linguistic variables in the spoken data collected for this research are presented. The order of the variables will be the one mentioned above; first, ‘dative sickness’ and other signs of similar ‘verb sicknesses’ will be

discussed, followed by a presentation of the results for ‘genitive avoidance’, other case inflections, ‘new passive’, and ‘am-to-frenzy’.

6.1.1 ‘Dative sickness’ and other ‘verb sicknesses’

As can be seen in section 4.1 above, there is some evidence that ‘dative sickness’, i.e. a tendency to use dative case subjects with impersonal verbs which in standard language take accusative case subjects, has become relatively firmly rooted in modern Icelandic, at least in the written language of children (Gíslason, 2003; Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984). These previous studies also indicate that children in Reykjavík are less likely to be affected by ‘dative sickness’ than are children elsewhere in the country and that there is some correlation between ‘dative sickness’ and social class, where children from higher classes show a lower degree of the ‘sickness’ than do children in lower classes. Furthermore, the more recent studies indicate that the general level of ‘dative sickness’ has risen somewhat since this feature was first studied more than 20 years ago.

However, these previous studies have their limitations. One is that they focus almost exclusively on children and another that the data collected was produced under test circumstances, rather than in the informants’ own spontaneous writing. Most seriously, however, these studies did not include spoken language at all which means that in this respect we have as yet no reliable information about the rate of ‘dative sickness’. In light of this, the following results should provide us with a clearer overview of the present ‘dative sickness’ situation in Iceland than previous studies do, as the data used here is based on spontaneous language, both spoken and written, and includes material from not only teenagers but also from adult speakers of various ages.

We now turn directly to the results for ‘dative sickness’ from the spoken data. First, a broad overview is given of the total results and this is then followed by a closer look at the relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and each of the social factors examined.

6.1.1.1 General results

In the spoken data, so-called accusative verbs, i.e. verbs which in standard language take accusative case subjects, are used on a total of 99 occasions by a total of 57 speakers (out of the full sample of 108 speakers). Amongst these 99 instances there are 13 examples of ‘dative sickness’ which come from 13 different speakers. The overall frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is thus 13.13% in this part of the data. Furthermore, these figures mean that 12.03% of the total sample show some signs of ‘dative sickness’ while, if only those speakers who use accusative verbs in the first place are included, this percentage rises to 22.81%.

Apart from these 13 instances of ‘dative sickness’ a further four examples were found of ‘nominative sickness’. These will be examined further below (section 6.1.1.8). Together these figures mean that the standard accusative case was used on 82 of the 99 occasions, or 82.83%.

As for the verbs involved *langa* (= ‘want’/‘long’) is used in 52 of the 99 instances of use of accusative verbs and is thus by far the most common one. On eight, or 15.38%, of those 52 occasions a non-standard dative subject is used. The second most common verb is *vanta* (= ‘lack’/‘need’) which is used 18 times and in three, or 16.67%, of these a dative subject is used. *Vanta* is followed in terms of frequency by *minna* (= ‘(seem to) recall’) which is used 11 times, always according to the standard. The verbs *dreyma* (= ‘dream’) and *reka* (= ‘drift’) are used four and three times respectively. They are used twice each with a non-standard subject which is on all of these occasions in nominative case and will thus be further discussed later. Three verbs are used twice each; *saka* (= ‘be harmed’) and *svima* (= ‘feel dizzy’), which are always used with a standard accusative subject, and *muna (um)* (= ‘make difference’), which is used with a standard subject on one occasion and a dative one on another. Another five verbs are used once each. Of these *gruna* (= ‘suspect’), *klæja* (= ‘itch’), *skorta* (= ‘lack’), and *kitla* (= ‘be tickly’) are used with a standard accusative subject while *sviða* (= ‘hurt’) appears with a dative one. These findings are summarized in table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Accusative verbs used and instances of ‘dative sickness’

Verb	Occurrences	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’
Langa (= ‘want’/‘long’)	52	8	15.38%
Vanta (= ‘need’/‘lack’)	18	3	16.67%
Minna (= ‘recall’)	11	0	0%
Dreyma (= ‘dream’)	4	0	0%
Reka (= ‘drift’)	3	0	0%
Saka (= ‘be harmed’)	2	0	0%
Svima (= ‘feel dizzy’)	2	0	0%
Muna (= ‘make difference’)	2	1	50%
Gruna (= ‘suspect’)	1	0	0%
Klæja (= ‘itch’)	1	0	0%
Skorta (= ‘lack’)	1	0	0%
Kitla (= ‘be tickly’)	1	0	0%
Sviða (= ‘hurt’)	1	1	100%
Total	99	13	13.13%

In this context it may be interesting to note that if the three most commonly used verbs, i.e. *langa*, *vanta*, and *minna* are grouped together they show an average relative ‘dative sickness’ frequency of 13.58%. This can be compared with the relative ‘dative sickness’ frequency of 11.11% if the ten less commonly used verbs are grouped together. There does, in other words, not seem to be any clear relationship between the frequency with which the verbs are used and the rate of ‘dative sickness’.

A similar pattern to the above emerges when a look is taken at table 6.2 below which shows which subjects were used with the accusative verbs in the spoken data.

Table 6.2 Subjects used with accusative verbs and instances of ‘dative sickness’

Subject	Occurrences	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’
1 st pers. sing. pronoun	64	3	4.69%
2 nd pers. sing. pronoun	9	1	11.11%
3 rd pers. sing. masc. pronoun	6	1	16.67%
3 rd pers. sing. fem. pronoun	5	3	60%
Common nouns	4	1	25%
<i>Maður</i> (pron. usage) ³¹	3	1	33.33%
1 st pers. plural pronoun	3	0	0%
3 rd pers. plural masc. pronoun	3	1	33.33%
3 rd pers. plural neuter pron.	1	1	100%
<i>Einhver</i> (indef. pronoun)	1	1	100%
Total	99	13	13.13%

Here the 1st person singular pronoun (*mig* in the standard accusative case, *mér* in its ‘dative sickness’ form) stands out as by far the most common one as it is used as a subject for 64 of the 99 instances of accusative verbs. 60, or 93.75%, of these subjects are in the standard accusative case, while three, or 4.69%, are cases of ‘dative sickness’. The one remaining subject is an example of ‘nominative sickness’, meaning that the nominative *ég* is used rather than the accusative standard, *mig*. As mentioned before, this ‘nominative sickness’ will

³¹ This is used in much the same way as ‘one’ is used in English, as in the following:

Maður gæti sagt að...
Man could say that...
 One could say that...

be discussed in greater detail later. The 2nd person singular pronoun (*þig* in the standard accusative case, *þér* in its dative form) is the second most common subject. It is used on a total of nine occasions, on one of which, or 11.11%, a non-standard dative form is used. On the remaining eight occasions the standard accusative form is used.

Other subjects used frequently include various forms of 3rd person pronouns. Thus, the singular masculine form is used on five occasions in the standard accusative case (*hann*) and once in dative case (*honum*). The corresponding figures for the singular feminine form are one instance of standard usage (*hana*) and three of non-standard dative usage (*henni*). To this one instance of nominative case (*hún*) can be added. Furthermore, the plural masculine form of the 3rd person pronoun is used in accusative case (*þá*) on two occasions and once in dative case (*þeim*), while the plural neuter form is only used once, in the non-standard dative case (*þeim*) instead of the standard accusative (*þau*). The remaining subjects consist of the following: four common nouns, only one of which is used in the standard accusative case, while there is one instance of dative case being used and a further two of nominative case; three instances of the pronominal usage of *maður*, two of which appear in the standard accusative form *mann*, while one is the dative *manni*; and the indefinite masculine pronoun *einhver* (= ‘someone’) which is used on one occasion, in the dative form *einhverjum* rather than the standard accusative *einhvern*. Finally, there are three instances of the 1st person plural pronoun *við* being used in the form *okkur*. As this form is the standard for both accusative and dative case, it is of course impossible to determine which of them the speaker in question is actually using, but at the same time it is clear that he or she does not stray away from the impersonal usage by using the nominative form.

As a final note regarding the subjects used in the data, it should be mentioned that if the 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns, which share the same case inflectional pattern, are grouped together they show up a ‘dative sickness’ frequency of 5.48%. On the other hand, if the remaining subjects are grouped together, with the exception of the 1st person plural pronoun as it is impossible to determine the level of ‘dative sickness’ there, this frequency reaches 39,13%. This is of course indicative of a tendency for this latter group of subjects to be more sensitive to ‘dative sickness’ than are subjects that are 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns and a regression analysis carried out in SPSS shows this to be a significant difference ($p = <0.001$).³²

A look should also be taken at how verbs and subjects combine to form the constructions used. Here, the combination of the 1st person singular pronoun and the verb *langa* is, as could be expected, the most common one. All in all

³² In most cases, the number of non-standard tokens for the linguistic variables examined in this thesis was too low to allow for any detailed statistical analysis. On the few occasions this was nonetheless applicable, the program SPSS12.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used.

this, construction is used on 38 occasions, two, or 5.26%, of which produced examples of ‘dative sickness’. The second most common construction was *mig minnir* (= ‘I seem to recall’) which appeared on all 11 occasions of the usage of the verb *minna* and was always used according to the standard.³³ This might seem to indicate that *mig minnir* is a set phrase in Icelandic, but the more varied use of subjects with this verb in the written data points to the contrary. Other constructions were used less frequently, and it is perhaps more interesting to point out that no construction appeared more than twice as an instance of ‘dative sickness’. Apart from the combination mentioned above of 1st person singular pronoun and *langa*, the constructions that appeared twice in this way were *þeim vantar* (= ‘they(DAT) lack’) and *henni langaði* (= ‘she(DAT) wanted’). This is also indicative of the tendency mentioned above of subjects that are 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns to be less sensitive to ‘dative sickness’ than are other subjects, apart from the 1st person plural pronoun. Thus, when *langa* is used with a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun the rate of ‘dative sickness’ is 6.82% (three out of 44) and it does not occur at all when subjects of this kind are used with *vanta*. However, when these verbs are used with the other group of subjects the average frequency of ‘dative sickness’ rises to 62.5% (five out of eight) for *langa* and 42.86% (three out of seven) for *vanta*. To this it can be added that apart from the constructions already mentioned earlier, another seven constructions appeared once each with an example of ‘dative sickness’ and in five of those a subject other than a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun is used.

We now return to the speakers to conclude this overview before the results are further broken down according to the social factors studied. As we have seen, 57 of the 108 informants use accusative verbs. Also, 13 of these 57 speakers produce one example each of ‘dative sickness’. For six of the 13 speakers who thus show some signs of ‘dative sickness’ they were found on the only occasion they used accusative verbs. Three more speakers use non-standard dative on one of the two occasions they use accusative verbs and for another two speakers this rate is one out of three. Finally, one speaker uses dative rather than accusative on one of the four occasions she uses accusative verbs and another uses a total of five accusative verbs, one of which appears with a dative subject. All in all, therefore, these speakers use accusative verbs on 27 occasions which means that their average rate of ‘dative sickness’ is 48%. A further interesting point is that three of the seven speakers who use accusative verbs both with standard and non-standard subjects show signs of variation in the usage of the

³³ Note that this exclusive usage of the seemingly stable subject *mig* with *minna* only has a slight effect on the comment made above about there being no relationship between the frequency with which accusative verbs are used and the rate of ‘dative sickness’. Thus, if *minna* is excluded from the group of the most common verbs, to leave only *langa* and *vanta*, the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ rises from 13.58% to 15.71% which can again be compared to the 11.11% average relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in the group of less commonly used verbs.

same verb. Thus, one of these speakers uses the verb *langa* with a standard accusative case on two occasions and a non-standard dative case on one occasion. Similarly, another one of these speakers uses *langa* with an accusative case subject on one occasion and with a dative one on one occasion. The difference between the standard and non-standard instances is essentially the same for both speakers; in both instances of standard usage the former speaker uses the 1st person singular pronoun while the non-standard instance involves the pronominal usage of *maður* mentioned earlier, and the second speaker uses, on the one hand, the standard accusative case for the 2nd person singular pronoun but, on the other, the dative case for the 3rd person singular masculine pronoun, which is thus *honum* rather than the standard *hann*. Finally, the third speaker uses the verb *minna* with both an accusative and a dative form of the 1st person singular pronoun. In fact, these instances appear directly after each other in the same utterance, where the non-standard dative form *mér* is used first but is then immediately “corrected” by the standard accusative *mig* (‘*mér mig minnir að...*’ = ‘I(DAT) I(ACC) recall that...’).

As no previous evidence existed on the rate of ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language, it was unclear what was to be expected in the spoken data analysed here. Of course, however, the relatively high rate of ‘dative sickness’ found in the written test data in previous research led me to believe that the informal and spontaneous spoken language from which the results presented here are drawn would be clearly affected by this “disease”. At the same time, I tried to keep in mind that the difference in nature between the previous written data and my spoken data might be slightly diminished by the fact that even the youngest informants in this study are older than those in the previous studies and may thus be more aware of the stigmatization attached to ‘dative sickness’, even though they did not know, at the time of recording, that this was one of the features studied. Also, the youngest informants in this study are likely to have gained more training in using the relevant verbs than the younger children examined in previous studies. Nonetheless, quite a high general level of ‘dative sickness’ was expected to appear in the spoken data.

The general picture presented thus far does not bear out these expectations. As we have seen, the overall relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is 13.13% in my spoken data, which, contrary to my expectations, is considerably lower than the general figures from previous studies. Furthermore, only 22.81% of the speakers who use accusative verbs show any signs of ‘dative sickness’ which is in strong opposition to the 90.8% of the informants in Jónsson and Eypórsson’s (2003) study who do so.

Another general pattern which emerges is that subjects that are either 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns appear to be more stable than other subjects, i.e. they show a smaller tendency to appear in dative case with an accusative verb. There are, on the other hand, few signs of any particular accusative verb being more prone than others to appear with a dative subject.

6.1.1.2 The communities

The results from the previous studies on ‘dative sickness’ indicate that it is not as firmly rooted in Reykjavík, especially its central parts, as in other parts of Iceland (Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984). As was shown in the previous section, the overall level of ‘dative sickness’ is lower in my data than in the data used in these previous studies, but as this general difference is probably not traceable to geographical factors, the basic regional pattern found in earlier results was expected to be repeated in mine.

Table 6.3 below summarizes the results for the usage of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’ in the nine different locations or communities in which data was gathered for this study.

Table 6.3 Distribution of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’ in the communities studied

Community	No. Of informants who use acc. verbs ³⁴	Tokens of acc. verbs	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’
Central Reykjavík	7	12	0	0%
Suburban R.vík + neighb. municipal.	5	7	1	14.29%
Reykjanesbær	9	17	3	17.65%
Akranes	6	9	1	11.11%
Patreksfjörður	8	16	2	12.5%
Siglufjörður	7	11	3	27.27%
Akureyri	5	8	1	12.5%
Neskaupstaður	4	7	2	28.57%
Flúðir	6	12	0	0%
Total	57	99	13	13.13%

As can be seen from the table, the results here only partly reflect earlier results. Thus, two of the communities, central Reykjavík and Flúðir – rather than suburban Reykjavík –, stand out as the speakers from there show no signs of ‘dative sickness’ in the data at hand. It should also be noted that this does not seem to be relatable to a lower general level of usage of accusative verbs in central Reykjavík and Flúðir than in other parts of the country. Rather, both the number of informants using accusative verbs and the number of accusative verbs used by speakers in these two communities are quite comparable to the figures found amongst speakers in the other communities. Having said that, it should be kept in mind here that we are in general dealing with very low figures in this

³⁴ As mentioned in chapter 5, the total number of informants in each community was 12.

data on ‘dative sickness’. The total number of accusative verbs used by speakers in all the communities is only 99 and the total number of instances of ‘dative sickness’ is 13 and these are spread relatively evenly amongst the seven communities which display any signs of the ‘sickness’. Thus, no community’s speakers produce more than three instances of this non-standard usage. Therefore, it can be seen as questionable just how much central Reykjavík and Flúðir stand out by not showing any signs of ‘dative sickness’ at all.

Despite these warning comments about the generally low numbers on which they are based, a few more results are noteworthy here. Thus, the highest frequency of ‘dative sickness’ emerges in the fishing villages of Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður, with 27.27% and 28.57% respectively. In the remaining five communities, this frequency ranges between 11.11% (Akranes) and 17.65% (Reykjanesbær) and they are thus close to the total average frequency of 13.13%. One of these five communities is suburban Reykjavík and the neighbouring municipalities and here it is interesting to note that the level of ‘dative sickness’ in this part of the capital area is 14.29% while no instances of the ‘sickness’ were found in the central part. Here, however, the modifying remarks above must be repeated as these 14.29% are based on only one instance of ‘dative sickness’ out of a total of seven accusative verbs used by speakers in suburban Reykjavík. In other words, no certain conclusions can be drawn from this.

Some of the possible groupings of the communities included in this study may produce slightly more reliable results. Thus, it is interesting to note that if the greater Reykjavík area is taken as a whole, the speakers from there use a total of 19 accusative verbs, for only one of which a non-standard dative subject is used. The relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in this area is thus 5.26%. Speakers from the remaining seven communities produce 80 accusative verbs and for 12 of these a dative subject is used. This makes for a relative frequency of 15%. Thus, the Reykjavík area as a whole may, after all, be slightly less affected by ‘dative sickness’ than the rest of the country.

To what was said above about the fishing villages of Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður showing the highest frequencies, it may be interesting to add the third fishing village, Patreksfjörður, to complete this group and compare it with the other communities. If this is done, it emerges that the fishing villages are the source of seven, or slightly more than half of the 13 instances of ‘dative sickness’, while the speakers from there produce 34 accusative verbs, i.e. just over one-third of the total 99. The average frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in the fishing villages is thus 20.59% which can be compared to 9.23% in the other communities. Another comparison that can be made is that between the fishing villages and other communities outside the Reykjavík area. This average frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in this latter group is 10.87%.

As can be deduced from the general comments made in section 6.1.1.1 above, *langa* (= ‘want’/‘long’) is the only verb which occurs frequently enough

to warrant any real attempts at an analysis in relation to social factors. As regards the geographical aspect of ‘dative sickness’ in connection with this verb, it can be said largely to reflect the overall pattern of the fishing villages showing a somewhat greater tendency for ‘dative sickness’ than the other communities. Thus, five of the overall eight examples of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* originate in the fishing villages, with the speakers in Patreksfjörður displaying it on two occasions out of seven, while the corresponding figures for Neskaupstaður and Siglufjörður are two out of three and one out of four respectively. Two of the remaining examples of ‘dative sickness’ of this type come from Keflavík, while the last one originates in suburban Reykjavík.

Another interesting aspect here relates to the subject used. Thus both examples from Patreksfjörður of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* occur with a subject that is neither a 1st nor 2nd person singular pronoun. However, the five instances there are of standard usage all include a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun. This pattern is repeated in suburban Reykjavík where, on the single occasion of non-standard usage, the subject is the 3rd person singular masculine pronoun, while in all the five examples there are of standard usage the subject is a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun. The pattern alters slightly in Neskaupstaður, where both examples of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* do indeed include the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun, but here the 1 instance of standard usage emerges with a common noun, rather than a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun. On the other hand, both the single example of non-standard usage from Siglufjörður and the two from Keflavík include subjects that are 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns. Interestingly, there is also one example from Siglufjörður of standard usage of the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun with *langa*. In Keflavík, however, all six instances of standard usage appear with the 1st person singular pronoun.

Finally, a slightly closer look at the subjects used by the speakers in the different communities may hold a partial explanation for the seeming non-existence of ‘dative sickness’ in central Reykjavík and Flúðir. As can be seen from the preceding pages, subjects that are 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns appear to be much less sensitive to ‘dative sickness’ than other subjects. Furthermore, as mentioned in section 6.1.1.1 above, the 1st person singular pronoun may even be slightly less sensitive than the 2nd person singular pronoun. In both Flúðir and central Reykjavík the speakers produced a total of 12 accusative verbs and in each community 11 of these were used with a 1st person singular pronoun, which is a higher proportion than in any of the seven other communities, where there is greater variation in the subjects used. At the same time the fishing villages as a group show a comparatively low proportion of 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subjects which might go some way towards explaining the relatively high rate of ‘dative sickness’ in these communities.

Any generalizations about the distribution of ‘dative sickness’ in the different communities in this study should be made with great care. This is due

to the fact that, even though they result in some differences between the communities as regards the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’, we are here dealing with very low numbers of tokens. However, there are some signs that ‘dative sickness’ has become more established in the fishing villages, especially Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður, than elsewhere in the country. There is also a weak indication that speakers in the Reykjavík area are less likely than speakers elsewhere to use a dative subject with an accusative verb. This last tendency agrees with that found in earlier work on ‘dative sickness’ (Jónsson & Eypórssón, 2003; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984).

6.1.1.3 Gender

The indications provided by earlier studies regarding the gender division of ‘dative sickness’ are somewhat mixed. Thus Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson and Þórlindsson (1984) found that gender of the respondent was generally not a relevant factor for the occurrence of ‘dative sickness’ but claimed at the same time that outside the Reykjavík area there was a clear difference between the genders. Sadly, however, this difference is not further discussed. Then, 20 years later, Jónsson and Eypórssón (2003) found that boys were more prone to ‘dative sickness’ than girls. No strong expectations can be based on these mixed findings, although it is tempting to assume that the proximity in time between my study and that of Jónsson and Eypórssón should lead to similar results as regards ‘dative sickness’ and gender.

Table 6.4 below shows the overall gender division of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’.

Table 6.4 Distribution by gender of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’

Gender	No. of speakers who use acc. Verbs	Tokens of accusative verbs	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’	% of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ ³⁵
Female	30	54	11	20.37%	36.67%
Male	27	45	2	4.44%	7.41%
Total	57	99	13	13.13%	22.81%

The most striking feature here is of course that the weak expectations mentioned above were not borne out at all. Admittedly, there appears to be a marked difference between women and men as regards the frequency of ‘dative sickness’, but the tendency found in Jónsson and Eypórssón’s study is here

³⁵ The sample this proportion is based on consists of the 30 female and 27 male speakers who use accusative verbs. If all speakers are included, this figure decreases to 20% for women and to 3.77% for men.

reversed. Thus, the average frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is 20.37% amongst women, while it is 4.44% amongst men, which is a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.024$). In a similar fashion, examples of ‘dative sickness’ are found amongst 11, or 36.67%, of the 30 women who use accusative verbs, while the corresponding figures for men are two out of 27, or 7.41%. Here, however, it should be kept in mind – as was discussed in section 6.1.1.1 – that each of these 13 speakers produces only one example of ‘dative sickness’. Also, one of the men in this group uses an accusative verb only on the one occasion on which he produces his example of ‘dative sickness’, whereas the other man also produces one example of standard usage. The women show greater variation in this respect as, even though five of them use a non-standard dative subject on the one occasion they utter an accusative verb, the remaining six use standard accusative subjects between two and five times, apart from the one example of non-standard usage they each produce.

As was seen in section 6.1.1.2, the differences in the subjects used for accusative verbs by the informants may be part of the reason for the varying degrees of ‘dative sickness’ found in the different communities. This, however, does not seem to be equally applicable when it comes to gender. Thus, women and men use 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects, on the one hand, and other subjects, on the other, in nearly the same proportions. The lower level of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the men thus cannot be explained by them using the more stable subjects of the former type more than the women. This may be further accentuated by the fact that the two examples of ‘dative sickness’ that the men do produce both include the 1st person singular pronoun as a subject. As for the women, only one of their 13 instances of ‘dative sickness’ involves the 1st person singular pronoun. There is another single example of the 2nd person singular pronoun being used with a non-standard dative case, but other subjects are responsible for the remaining nine instances of ‘dative sickness’ amongst women. This means that the frequency of ‘dative sickness’ when the women use this type of subjects is 60%. This figure even rises to 69.23% if the two examples of the 1st person plural pronoun produced by women are excluded, but as stated elsewhere (section 6.1.1.1), it is impossible to tell whether this pronoun is being used in accusative or dative case. As mentioned above, both instances of ‘dative sickness’ amongst men occurred with a 1st person singular pronoun subject and thus the frequency of ‘dative sickness’ with other subjects is 0%, regardless of whether the 1 example of the 1st person plural pronoun produced by men is included or not.

To then come to the most commonly used verb, i.e. *langa*, the pattern here largely mirrors the picture presented this far. Thus, the women use this verb on a total of 34 occasions, on seven, or 20.59%, of which a non-standard dative subject is used. Both examples of dative 1st and 2nd person singular subjects are found here, but the remaining five examples of ‘dative sickness’ come from constructions where other types of subjects are used. As for the men, they use

langa on 18 occasions and one of the total two examples of ‘dative sickness’ is found here. To this it can be added that the second most commonly used verb, i.e. *vanta* is used all in all nine times by women and on three, or 33.33%, of these occasions a dative subject is used. On all three occasions the subject is from the “other” category, i.e. is neither a 1st nor 2nd personal singular pronoun. The men use *vanta* on another nine occasions, always with a standard accusative subject.

The picture which appears here as regards ‘dative sickness’ and gender is that women are likelier than men to use non-standard dative case subjects with accusative verbs. This is especially evident where subjects other than 1st or 2nd personal singular pronouns are used for these verbs and does not seem to be explainable by men using subjects of this kind to a lesser degree than women.

6.1.1.4 Age

No particular hypothesis was formed as regards the distribution of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the three age groups used in this study. This was due to the simple fact that, as has been mentioned on numerous occasions, former studies on ‘dative sickness’ focus almost exclusively on children and thus there is no real information available on the extent to which adult speakers are affected by this feature. However, the unspoken assumption in former work on ‘dative sickness’ seems to be that ‘dative sickness’ is hardly to be found at all amongst adults and in this light the results presented below are interesting.

Table 6.5 displays how the accusative verbs used by the informants and the instances of ‘dative sickness’ they produce are distributed in the three age groups they were divided into.³⁶

Table 6.5 Distribution by age groups of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’

Age group	No. of speakers who use acc. verbs	Tokens of accusative verbs	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’	% of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ ³⁷
Teenagers	17	39	5	12.82%	29.41%
Adults	20	31	5	16.13%	25%
Seniors	20	29	3	10.34%	15%
Total	57	99	13	13.13%	22.81%

³⁶ See section 5.1.1 for a description of this division of the sample into three age groups.

³⁷ The sample this proportion is based on consists of the 17 teenagers, the 20 adults and the 20 senior citizens who use accusative verbs. If all speakers are included, this figure decreases to 13.89% for both teenagers and adults and to 9.38% for senior citizens.

The table shows that the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is similar in all the age groups. The figure for teenagers is 12.82% in this respect, while it is 16.13% and 10.34% for adults and senior citizens respectively. However, the differences are somewhat greater when the proportion of speakers showing signs of ‘dative sickness’ is considered. Here, five, or nearly 30%, of the 17 teenagers who use accusative verbs show examples of ‘dative sickness’ while five, or 25%, of the 20 adults and three, or 15%, of 20 the senior citizens who use accusative verbs produce examples of this non-standard usage. As before, though, the fact should not be forgotten that each of the speakers uttering examples of ‘dative sickness’ does so on only one occasion. Furthermore, five of the six speakers who use non-standard dative with the one accusative verb they produce are adults or senior citizens. On the other hand, four of the seven speakers who, apart from the one instance of ‘dative sickness’ for each, use between two and five standard subjects for accusative verbs are teenagers. This might indicate that teenagers who tend to use dative subjects with accusative verbs do so to a lesser degree than adults and senior citizens who are affected by ‘dative sickness’.

Another interesting point is the fact that while the overall relative frequency of ‘dative sickness amongst teenagers places them between the adults and the senior citizens, they show the lowest frequency of non-standard dative usage of 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subjects. Here the level of ‘dative sickness’ amongst teenagers is 3.33% while it is 9.09% for adults and 4.76% for senior citizens. However, the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ with subjects other than 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns is highest amongst the teenagers and there reaches 44.44% while the corresponding figure for adults and senior citizens is 33.33% and 25% respectively. In this context it should also be noted that there are very small differences between the age groups as regards the proportional usage of 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects vs. other subjects. The teenagers use the former category on 76.92% of the occasions they use accusative verbs, and this proportion is 70.97% for adults and 72.41% for senior citizens.

As for the verb *langa*, the pattern here again reflects the overall pattern as the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in combination with this verb is 16% (four out of 25) amongst the teenagers, 18.75% (three out of 18) amongst the adults and 9.09% (one out of 11) amongst the senior citizens. If the instances of ‘dative sickness’ are examined more closely, it is interesting to see that three of the four cases found amongst teenagers include subjects which are neither 1st nor 2nd person singular pronouns, while one of the three subjects involved in the adults’ examples of ‘dative sickness’ is a 1st person singular pronoun and another one is a 2nd person singular pronoun. The single instance of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the senior citizens occurs with a subject from the “other” category.

Here again, the verb *vanta* may be of some interest, especially the fact that the three instances there are of ‘dative sickness’ in combination with it are spread across the three age groups. As for the overall usage of this verb, the teenagers use it eight times and the adults and the senior citizens five times each group. This also means that the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ with *vanta* is the lowest amongst teenagers, even though a statement of this kind is probably more or less meaningless due to the low overall number of these occurrences of ‘dative sickness’.

The strongest generalization that can be made on the basis of the results presented in this section is that ‘dative sickness’ appears to affect the three age groups to a similar extent. Admittedly, a higher proportion of speakers in the teenage group than in the two adult groups shows signs of ‘dative sickness’, but the unspoken assumption apparent in previous work on the feature, namely that it hardly appears at all amongst adult speakers, seems not to be tenable at all.

6.1.1.5 Class

On the basis of the earlier work on ‘dative sickness’, especially that of Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson and Þórlindsson (1984), some differences were expected to emerge between the different educational/occupational groups which are here used as an indicator of class. To be more precise, it was expected that a high educational level and a highly specialized form of employment would be connected to a relatively low level of ‘dative sickness’ which would then rise as the level of education and occupational specialization decreased.³⁸ As can be seen in table 6.6 below, this expectation was borne out to some extent.

The table shows a tendency for ‘dative sickness’ to increase as the level of education and occupational specialization decreases. This pertains both to the relative frequency of ‘dative’ sickness’ amongst the categories and percentage of speakers within each of them that produce examples of the ‘sickness’. Thus, while the highest educational/occupational group shows a relative ‘dative sickness’ frequency of 5.41%, the figure for the lowest group rises to 25%. Quite fittingly perhaps, the intermediate group stays as 14.29% and is thus neatly placed at the halfway line between the other two groups, at the same time as this figure closely reflects the 13,13% relative frequency of the entire sample. As the table shows, this pattern is then more or less repeated as regards the percentage of speakers who show any ‘symptoms’ of ‘dative sickness’. 10.53% of the speakers in the highest educational/occupational group utter constructions with examples of ‘dative sickness’ while 35.71% of the speakers in the lowest

³⁸ Here it should be kept in mind that, as was pointed out and explained in chapter 5, the teenagers in the sample were placed in educational/occupational categories based on their study choices in high school or, in the cases where they had left school, their present level of education and form of employment.

group do so and again the intermediate group is close to the halfway line, although this time is slightly closer to the lowest group than the highest.

Table 6.6 Distribution by educational/occupational groups of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’

Ed./occ. group ³⁹	No. of informants	No. of speakers who use acc. verbs	No. of accusative verbs used	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’	% of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ ⁴⁰
1	26	14	20	5	25%	35.71%
2	39	24	42	6	14.29%	25%
3	43	19	37	2	5.41%	10.53%
Total	108	57	99	13	13.13%	22.81%

In this context, it may also be of some interest to note that five of the six speakers who produce an example of ‘dative sickness’ on the one occasion they use an accusative verb are from the lowest educational/occupational category. At the same time, six of the seven speakers who, while producing one example of ‘dative sickness’ each, also use accusative verbs with a standard case subject on between two and five occasions, are from the higher two educational/occupational categories. This might of course be seen as a further confirmation of the pattern which emerges in the table above and shows some connection between ‘dative sickness’ and a low educational/occupational level. Interestingly, however, there are also some figures which indicate that the divergences between the different educational/occupational groups may not be as great as the figures discussed thus far seem to suggest. Thus, it is possible that part of the reason for the low level of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the highest educational/occupational group is traceable to the fact that speakers in this group use the relatively stable 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns as subjects on 86.47% of the occasions that they use accusative verbs. The corresponding figure for the lowest educational/occupational group is 55% while for the intermediate group it is 71.43%, which is, once again, very close to the overall average. It also seems that the highest educational/occupational group is particularly stable in its usage of 1st and 2nd person singular subjects, as its members produce no examples of ‘dative sickness’ when using them. The other

³⁹ As discussed in section 5.4.2 the group division is as follows: 1: Compulsory education only/manual labour. 2: High-school education/non-specialized non-manual labour. 3: University education/specialized non-manual labour.

⁴⁰ The sample this proportion is based on consists of the 14 speakers from group 1, the 24 speakers from group 2, and the 19 speakers from group 3 who use accusative verbs. If all speakers are included, this figure decreases to 19.23% for group 1, 15.38% for group 2, and to 4.65% for group 3.

two groups produce two each, which means that the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ for these subjects is 18.18% amongst the lowest group while it is 6.67% amongst the intermediate group. However, if the remaining subjects are examined, it emerges that the two examples of ‘dative sickness’ produced by the highest educational/occupational group can be found here amongst a total of five instances of accusative verbs. This means that the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ for subjects other than 1st and 2nd person pronouns is 40% amongst this group of speakers. The corresponding figure for both the other groups is 33.33%, with the lowest using non-standard dative case on three out of the nine occasions these “other” subjects are used and the intermediate group doing so on four out of 12 occasions.

If the verb *langa* is again examined specifically, the main point of interest is probably that the differences between the educational/occupational groups are smaller here than in the overall results. Thus, the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ with this verb is 17.65% (three out of 17) for both the lowest and the intermediate groups and then decreases to 11.11% (two out of 18) for the highest group. As for the types of subjects used on the instances of ‘dative sickness’, the lowest group uses a 1st person singular pronoun as subject on two of these occasions and a subject from the “other” category on one. These figures are essentially turned around in the intermediate group which uses subjects from the “other” category on two occasions and a 2nd person singular pronoun on one. From what has been said above, it is then obvious that both examples of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* produced by the highest educational/occupational group are used with subjects from the “other” category.

Finally, a quick look at *vanta* reveals that it is primarily used by the intermediate educational/occupational group. Here this verb occurs on 12 occasions, on one of which it appears with a non-standard dative subject. The lowest group uses *vanta* four times, thereof twice with a dative subject. The highest group only uses this verb twice and with a standard accusative verb on both occasions. As before, *vanta* is probably used too rarely for any strong conclusions to be made, but the figures here can nonetheless be seen as indicative of the general pattern discussed above.

Overall, it therefore seems that the generalisations that can be made here are that there appears to be some connection between ‘dative sickness’ and class in terms of educational/occupational level which, emerges in the frequency of ‘dative sickness’ rising as the educational/occupational level decreases. This is particularly applicable to 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects, whereas the educational/occupational groups are more similar to each other as regards the level of ‘dative sickness’ when other subjects are used.

6.1.1.6 Social networks

As discussed in section 2.4 very little work exists on social networks in Iceland in general and none that deals specifically with the effect these networks may have on the linguistic situation in the country. Therefore, no particular hypotheses were formed for this part of the results.

The approach used here of examining the social networks of the informants in both a local and a national context was explained and discussed in sections 5.3.3.2 and 5.4.2.2 above. Apart from repeating that in both contexts the informants were ranked on a 5-point network strength scale, where 1 indicated weak and low-density networks whereas 5 indicated strong and high-density networks, we will not dwell further on this division here but rather focus on the results, starting with the connection between ‘dative sickness’ and the networks in their local context. The overall results are shown in table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7 Distribution by local network types of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’

Network type	No. of informants	No. of speakers who use acc. Verbs	No. of accusative verbs used	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’	% of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ ⁴¹
1	3	3	6	1	16.67%	33.33%
2	20	12	23	4	17.39%	33.33%
3	42	21	33	4	12.12%	19.05%
4	39	20	36	4	11.11%	20%
5	4	1	1	0	0%	0%
Total	108	57	99	13	13.13%	22.81%

The table can be interpreted as being indicative of speakers categorized as having weaker types of networks being somewhat more prone to show signs of ‘dative sickness’ than are speakers with stronger types of networks. Thus, the average relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ amongst speakers in the two weakest types of networks is 17.24% while this figure for speakers who have networks of the three remaining and stronger types stays at 11.43%. Similarly five, or 33.33%, of the 15 speakers in networks of types 1 and 2 who use accusative verbs do so with one example each of ‘dative sickness’ whereas

⁴¹ The sample this proportion is based on consists of the three speakers in network type 1, the 12 speakers in network type 2, the 21 speakers in network type 3, the 20 speakers in network type 4, and the one speaker in network type 5 who use accusative verbs. If all speakers are included, this figure remains at 33.33% for speakers in network type 1 and, of course, at 0% for speakers in network type 5. However, it decreases to 20% for speakers in network type 2 and to 9.52% and 10.26% respectively for speakers in network types 3 and 4.

eight, or 19.05%, of the corresponding informants in networks of type 3, 4 and 5 show examples of ‘dative sickness’ on one occasion each. It should be underlined, however, that the differences here can not be regarded as substantial and this may be further underlined by the fact that no clear pattern emerges as regards those who, on the one hand, produce an example of ‘dative sickness’ on the one occasion they use an accusative verb and, on the other, those who produce one example of dative sickness but also two to five examples of standard case for subjects of accusative verbs.

A look at the rate of ‘dative sickness’ in connection with the subjects involved may go a long way towards explaining the relatively small differences that appear in the overall figures. Speakers from the two weakest types of networks, on the one hand, and speakers from the three stronger network types, on the other, show nearly the same rate of ‘dative sickness’ with 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects; it is 4.55% (one out of 22) for the former group and 5.88% (three out of 51) for the latter. However, with other subjects the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is 57.14% (four out of seven) amongst speakers with weaker types of networks while it is 26.32% (five out of 19) amongst speakers with the stronger network types. In this context it should also be pointed out that the proportional usage of 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects vs. other subjects is essentially the same for both groups of network types.

It is also interesting in this light to look at the results for *langa*. Here the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the two weakest types of networks is 12.5% (two out of 16) while the corresponding figure for the three stronger types of network is 16.67% (six out of 36). When these results are added to the results in connection with the subjects used it seems that speakers in networks of type 1 and 2 are just as likely as speakers in the other three network types to use the standard form of the most common constructions, i.e. those including the verb *langa* and/or a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subject. However, constructions including other and less frequent subjects and/or verbs may be more problematic to speakers in the lower types of networks than to other speakers. This is underlined not only by the figures presented above for the rate of ‘dative sickness’ with subjects other than 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns, but also e.g. by the spread amongst the network types of constructions which occur with ‘dative sickness’ with the verb *langa*. Here both instances of ‘dative sickness’ found amongst speakers in the two weaker network types involve a subject from the “other” category. Conversely, three of the six instances of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* amongst the three stronger network types occur with a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subject, while the remaining three instances occur with an “other” subject. To this it can be added that two of the three instances that were found of ‘dative sickness’ with the verb *vanta* (which is the second most commonly used verb, but which nonetheless occurs much less frequently than *langa*) come from speakers in the

weaker network types, even though speakers from the stronger network types use this verb more often.

The ‘dative sickness’ pattern that emerges when the local social networks are examined changes when the sample of informants is treated as a whole with regard to their networks on a national level. At the same time, the picture becomes much less clear than in the local networks. This can be seen by a quick glance at table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8 Distribution by national network types of accusative verbs and ‘dative sickness’

Network type	No. of informants	No. of speakers who use acc. Verbs	No. of accusative verbs used	Instances of ‘dative sickness’	Relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’	% of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ ⁴²
1	4	3	6	0	0%	0%
2	24	14	23	3	13.04%	21.43%
3	26	15	26	6	23.08%	40%
4	38	17	33	2	6.06%	11.76%
5	16	8	11	2	18.18%	25%
Total	108	57	99	13	13.13%	22.81%

An interesting aspect here is that if, as was done above, the two weakest types of networks are grouped together, on the one hand, and the stronger three, on the other, the frequency pattern of ‘dative sickness’ is turned around here in comparison to the local context. This is to say that here speakers in the weaker types of network show a slightly lower frequency rate of ‘dative sickness’ (10.34%) than do speakers in the stronger types of networks (14.29%). Also, the proportion of speakers who show signs of ‘dative sickness’ is lower amongst speakers in the weaker networks types (17.64%) than amongst speakers from the stronger types (25%). This switch is, of course, interesting in itself, but the differences here are again relatively slight and the switch seems mostly to be traceable to the shift to a national perspective from a local one. By this I am referring to the fact, discussed in chapter 5, that many of the speakers in Reykjavík obtained a lower network score in the national context than the local one, while the opposite is true of many of the speakers in the fishing villages and Flúðir. As the rate of ‘dative sickness’ is generally comparatively high in the

⁴² The sample this proportion is based on consists of the three speakers in network type 1, the 14 speakers in network type 2, the 15 speakers in network type 3, the 17 speakers in network type 4, and the eight speakers in network type 5 who use accusative verbs. If all speakers are included, this figure does of course not change for speakers in network type 1, while it decreases to 13.04% for speakers in network type 2, to 23.08% for speakers in network type 3, to 5.26% for speakers in network type 4, and to 12.5% for speakers in network type 5.

fishing villages, the speakers from there raise the level of ‘dative sickness’ in the stronger network types through their upwards movement on the network strength scale. At the same time, speakers from the Reykjavík area, who display a comparatively low level of ‘dative sickness’, lower the frequency of the feature in the weaker types of networks through their downwards movement on the network strength scale.

Having noted this switch in the overall results in relation to social networks, it is intriguing to find that it does not seem to affect the pattern as regards the relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and the subjects used. Thus, speakers from the two weaker types of networks show a relative frequency of 4% (one out of 25) for ‘dative sickness’ when using a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subject, and 50% (two out of four) when using other subjects. The rate of ‘dative sickness’ with 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun subjects amongst speakers from the three stronger types of networks is 6.25%, while it rises to 31.82% for other subjects. These figures are largely unchanged from the corresponding figures above for the local network context.

The switch does, however, seem to be reflected to some extent in the results for *langa*, as here the speakers from the two weakest types of networks do not show any examples of ‘dative sickness’. This means that all six instances of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* originate amongst the three stronger types of networks, and the relative frequency is 16.22%. With *vanta*, however, we again go back to the pattern found in the local network context as here two of the three instances of ‘dative sickness’ are produced by speakers from the two weakest network types, even though the verb is used more often by speakers in the stronger network types.

These results render it difficult to make any generalizations as regards the relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and social networks, at least if the two network contexts used here are combined. Therefore, it may well be preferable to keep the local and the national contexts apart and make some separate suggestions. If this is done, it can be said that, as regards the former case, there are some indications that speakers who have relatively weak networks on a local scale are more prone to ‘dative sickness’ than are speakers who have strong networks. This especially applies to the cases where relatively rare accusative verbs are used with subjects other than the most common 1st or 2nd personal singular pronoun. As for the national network context, no clear pattern emerges which may in turn be an indication of the local network context being better suited as an analytical tool in Icelandic circumstances.

6.1.1.7 Summary: ‘Dative sickness’ in spoken language

Let us now briefly summarize the results presented in this section on ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language. The most important result to emerge is probably that the overall relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is 13.13% and that

22.81% of the speakers who use accusative verbs show signs of the “illness”. These figures are considerably lower than are the general figures from previous studies on ‘dative sickness’ (Gíslason, 2003; Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984). Another noteworthy feature that appears is that speakers are significantly less prone to ‘dative sickness’ when using a subject that is a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun than when using other subjects. At the same time, there are no clear indications that the usage of any particular accusative verbs is more likely to result in ‘dative sickness’ than is the usage of other such verbs.

As regards the social factors included in the study, gender appears to be the only statistically significant one and this emerges through women being clearly more likely than men to produce examples of ‘dative sickness’. Other signs of differences between the social groupings include e.g. that inhabitants in the fishing villages included in the study, especially Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður, seem to be more likely than other speakers to use dative subjects with accusative verbs. On the other hand, speakers in the Reykjavík area seem to be less likely than speakers elsewhere in the country to be affected by ‘dative sickness’. There also appear to be some differences between the three educational/occupational groups the informants in this study were divided into. The pattern that emerges here is that as the educational/occupational level rises, the level of ‘dative sickness’ decreases. In a similar fashion there is some indication that the strength and density of the speakers’ local networks is related to ‘dative sickness’ in such a way that the stronger the networks they belong to the less likely the speakers are to show signs of ‘dative sickness’. However, when the social networks are examined on a national level no clear pattern emerges. In this context it should also be noted that all three educational/occupational groups show a highly similar pattern in terms of social networks. Thus the networks in the lowest educational/occupational group appear in general not to be any stronger or weaker than the networks in the other two groups. Finally, ‘dative sickness’ appears to affect all the three age groups included to a similar extent. In this case it is the lack of difference between the groups that is quite interesting, as it often seems to be taken for granted that ‘dative sickness’ is only to be found amongst children and teenagers.

6.1.1.8 Other ‘verb sicknesses’

Let us now turn to the other ‘verb sicknesses’ described in chapter 4 above. The natural starting point here is probably ‘nominative sickness’ as four instances were found of it when accusative verbs were examined for ‘dative sickness’. As mentioned earlier, the verbs involved here are *dreyma* (= ‘dream’) and *reka* (= ‘drift’) which all in all are used four and three times respectively, thereof twice each with a non-standard nominative subject. In the case of *dreyma*, the subject used on one of the instances of ‘nominative sickness’ is the 1st person singular

personal pronoun, which thus appears as *ég* rather than in its accusative form *mig*. In the other instance of ‘nominative sickness’ the subject used is the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun which thus appears as *hún* rather than *hana*. As for the two instances of standard usage, the subject used on both occasions is the 1st person singular pronoun. Both instances of ‘nominative sickness’ with *reka* occur with the common noun *togarinn* (= ‘trawler-the’) which thus appears in this nominative form rather than its accusative form *togarann*. The one instance of standard usage also occurs with a common noun, namely *járnklukkuna* (= ‘iron bell-the’ (ACC)).

This available evidence on ‘nominative sickness’ is of course too scant for any strong conclusions to be based on it. Nonetheless, the few examples we have here of *dreyma* and *reka* at least indicate that these verbs have a tendency to appear with a nominative subject rather than a standard accusative one, although the extent of this tendency cannot be determined without the aid of further evidence. It is also interesting to note that for *dreyma* and *reka* to share this tendency is somewhat contrary to what would be expected on the basis of the semantic characterization of these verbs in some of the previous work on ‘verb sicknesses’ discussed in chapter 4. Thus, while *reka* assigns the thematic role of theme or patient to its subject and thereby belongs to the handful of impersonal verbs which can be expected to appear with nominative subjects (Jónsson & Eypórssón 2003), *dreyma* has been characterized as an experiencer verb which should thereby be attracted by dative subject constructions rather than nominative ones (Barðdal 2001b). However, there is some evidence from Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) research that, at least as regards 1st person singular pronoun subjects, nominative case may be no less common a deviant subject case for *dreyma* than dative is.

The limited evidence of course also means that ‘nominative sickness’ cannot be safely characterized in terms of any of the social factors included in this study. Here it will, therefore, suffice to say that the four instances of *dreyma* come from three women, none of whom are from the same age group or community. The two instances of non-standard usage thus also both appear amongst women. Otherwise the speakers have little in common as they do not belong exclusively to the teenage group, on the one hand, and the senior citizens group, on the other, but also come from two different communities and do not fall into to the same educational/occupational group. However, both women have relatively strong social networks, both in a local and in a national context. As a final point here, it can be added that the woman (the teenage girl) who uses the nominative form of the 1st person singular pronoun also uses – in the same utterance – the standard accusative form, with only a few seconds passing between the two instances of *dreyma*. One can of course only speculate about the causes of this, but one possible explanation is that while the standard usage occurs at the very beginning of the utterance, which is also the beginning of a longer narrative, the example of ‘nominative sickness’ occurs a few seconds into

the narrative. Possibly, the speaker's awareness of the standard is higher in the initial stages of her utterance. This, however, does not explain away a possible tendency for instability as regards the case of the subject used with *dreyma*.

As for *reka*, the two speakers who use this verb have much more in common than do the women who use *dreyma*. Thus, both the speakers in question are elderly men from one of the fishing villages, neither of whom is highly educated. The only notable difference is that the speaker who produces the two instances of 'nominative sickness' has stronger networks than the speaker who uses a standard subject on the one occasion he utters *reka*. Of course, no generalizations can be made on this basis, other than possibly that elderly men who have strong connections to the fishing industry and seafaring are more likely than others to use the verb *reka* (= 'drift') at all.

To these examples of 'nominative sickness' occurring with accusative verbs it can be added that in the data seven corresponding examples were found amongst a total of 680 dative verbs, i.e. verbs which in standard language take dative case subjects. However, I would argue that only one of these instances is a clear case of 'nominative sickness'. The verb in question here is *hvolfa* (= 'turn over/capsize') and the subject is the 3rd person singular masculine pronoun which appears in its nominative form *hann* rather than the dative form *honum*. *Hvolfa* is only used on this one occasion in the data which makes it impossible to draw any conclusions about its rate of 'nominative sickness', but as *hvolfa*, like *reka*, assigns the thematic role of theme or patient to its subjects, this example can be seen as a further indication of the tendency of verbs of this semantic character to take nominative subjects.⁴³ As for the speaker in this case, she is a teenage girl in the highest educational/occupational group who has strong networks.

As for the remaining six instances where a dative verb occurs with a nominative subject, I would argue that they are either simply slips of the tongue or the result of the conversational context or a particular syntactic organization. On one of these occasions the verb *detta* (*i hug*) (= 'think of'/'get an idea') is used. Here, the nominative *ég* of the 1st person singular pronoun is used rather than the dative *mér*, but even though this might of course be seen as an instance of 'nominative sickness', I would rather like to suggest that it is a slip of the tongue. This is based e.g. on the fact that this verb does not share the semantics of *reka* and *hvolfa*, but is rather an experiencer verb similar to most other dative

⁴³ It should be noted that the *hann* is also the accusative form of the 3rd person singular masculine pronoun and thus this example could be an instance of 'reverse dative sickness' rather than of 'nominative sickness'. However, due to the shared semantic characteristics of *hvolfa* and *reka*, the stance is taken here that a speaker using *hvolfa* would do so with a nominative subject rather than an accusative one. This is further underlined by the fact, discussed in footnote 26 in section 4.1 above, that both *reka* and *hvolfa* can be used as personal agentive verbs with nominative subjects, which may increase the likelihood of speakers using such subjects also with their impersonal thematic/patient forms.

verbs which are apparently quite stable. Furthermore, there are 22 instances of standard usage of this verb in the data, including one by the speaker who produces the one example of a nominative subject. There are, in other words, no further suggestions of instability regarding this verb in the spoken data.⁴⁴

There are also two examples of the verb construction *vera sama* (= ‘not care’/‘be indifferent’) being used with a nominative subject. On both occasions, however, the subject can be said to be split in that it consists of two words or parts, one of which stands in the usual phrase-initial subject position, while the other only appears at the end of the phrase. In both cases, the standard dative is used for the first part of the subject, while nominative is used for the latter part. This can be seen by looking at one of the two examples involved⁴⁵:

- (6.1) *honum er alveg sama kallinn*
he(DAT) is completely indifferent man-the(NOM)
 he is completely indifferent, that man

Besides these two examples of nominative subject case being used, *vera sama* is used on nine occasions with a standard dative subject. In all these nine instances, the subject is single and not split as in the example above. Thus, it appears to be this syntactic organization of splitting the subject which explains the usage of nominative in the latter part of it rather than any general tendency for this verb to take a nominative subject.

Finally, there are three examples of the verb *finnst* (= ‘think’/‘feel’) being used with a nominative subject. All three appear in similar conversational circumstances, which, I would argue, cause the seeming non-standard usage. This is exemplified by one of the instances:

- (6.2) *bara hann vill ekki sjá hana hann / bara finnst þarna...*
just he(NOM) wants not see her he(NOM)/just thinks there's...
 just he doesn't want to see her he / just thinks there's...

⁴⁴ Note that on this occasion the past tense of *detta* is used. This means that the verb appears in the same form, i.e. *datt*, regardless of whether it is used as an impersonal verb with a dative case subject or as a personal verb with a 1st person singular nominative subject. Thus, the form of the verb itself gives few clues as to whether this is a slip of the tongue or a sign of a tendency for ‘nominative sickness’.

⁴⁵ The other example is directly comparable to the one given in the main text (the personal name used has been changed to one from the same inflectional paradigm)

þeim er alveg sama þessar finu eins og eins og Guðrún
they (DAT) are completely indifferent these fine ones (NOM) like like Guðrún (NOM)
 They are completely indifferent, these posh ones like like Guðrún

Here the latter *hann* “should” appear in dative, i.e. as *honum*, as it is the subject of *finnast*. However, it seems likely that when the speaker utters the second *hann* he is about to use a personal verb, just as he did with the former instance of *hann*, and therefore uses a nominative subject. However, during the short pause he makes in his speech he changes direction to a dative verb but does not repeat the original subject in its standard dative form, possibly because he has already introduced a subject and repeating it is superfluous even though its case should, strictly speaking, be changed.

That contexts of this kind are – rather than a general tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ – the source of these few examples of nominative case subjects being used with *finnast* is further supported by the fact that this verb is used with a standard dative case subject on a total of 396 occasions. Thus, even though the examples just discussed were to be interpreted as signs of ‘nominative sickness’, these signs would be very weak indeed.

We have now seen that, with the possible exception of *hvolfa*, dative verbs show no real tendency for ‘nominative sickness’. As for the other ‘sickness’, i.e. ‘reverse dative sickness’ or ‘accusative sickness’, which previous work (Jónsson & Eypórssón, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982) indicates may affect this type of verb, it can simply be stated that no signs of it were found in the data. However, if we turn to the final ‘verb sickness’, i.e. ‘oblique case sickness’, which may cause the personal verbs *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kviða* (= ‘be anxious’) to appear with accusative or dative subjects (Jónsson & Eypórssón, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982), there is a small indication in the data that at least *hlakka* may be somewhat unstable.

Hlakka is used five times by three different speakers and on two instances it appears with an accusative 1st person singular pronoun subject rather than a nominative one. It is the same speaker who produces both these non-standard examples which do in fact occur right after each other in the same utterance. This speaker is a teenage boy from one of the fishing villages who belongs to the intermediate educational/occupational group and has a strong network in both a local and a national context. As for the instances of standard usage, one, which involves the 1st person singular pronoun, is produced by a teenage girl in Akureyri, who is in the highest educational/occupational group and has a score of 3 on both types of network strength scales. The remaining two standard instances, one of which involves the 1st person singular pronoun whereas the other involves the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun, are produced by an elderly woman in Akranes who is in the lowest educational/occupational group but has strong networks. Of course, no generalizations can be made on this basis, other than the one already made about these data indicating some possible tendency for ‘oblique sickness’ with *hlakka*.

As for *kviða* it is used only on one occasion, where it appears with the standard nominative form of the pronominal *maður*. The speaker in this case is a

teenage boy from Flúðir who is in the highest educational/occupational group and has strong networks.

In sum, the results presented in this section indicate that there is some tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ amongst speakers of Icelandic, at least as regards the theme/patient verbs *reka* and *hvolfa* and the experiencer verb *dreyma*. In a similar fashion, the personal verb *hlakka* shows some signs of being affected by ‘oblique case sickness’, which, however, in the cases found here, only involves accusative case. At the same time, there are no signs of a ‘reverse dative sickness’ and the examples there are of ‘nominative sickness’ and ‘oblique case sickness’ are too few to allow for any meaningful correlation to be made between them and the social background of the speakers.

6.1.2 ‘Genitive avoidance’

In this section, results for ‘genitive avoidance’ from the spoken data are presented. The little previous research that exists on this feature has mainly been aimed at identifying and defining it without making any real attempts at establishing its spread in the Icelandic linguistic community (Kjartansson, 1979, 1999; Svavarsdóttir, 1994). Due to this, no clear hypothesis could be formed as to what to expect from this part of the study, although the mere fact that ‘genitive avoidance’ has been identified as a possible change in progress was taken as an indication of the feature having established itself to some degree amongst speakers of Icelandic.

However, a quick look at the overall results indicates that ‘genitive avoidance’ may not have established itself as anything more than a vague tendency which may be the first sign of a larger-scale change. Thus, in the spoken data, a total of 1266 tokens/words are used in a context which calls for genitive case and in only 16, or 1.26%, of these instances examples of non-standard usage could be found. It should be noted, though, that these figures may in themselves be relatively uninteresting, as they include not only items or contexts which have been identified as “problematic” or as a possible source of ‘genitive avoidance’ in previous work on this feature, but also all other items, apart from a number of set phrases and items occurring within idioms (see section 4.2.1), that in the context they are used should, according to the norm, appear in genitive case. Therefore, what these first figures mainly tell us is that overall genitive case appears to be quite stable. It should also be mentioned in this context that this overall stability seems to apply to all the social groupings used in this study. Thus genitive case is used to a highly similar extent in all communities, by both genders, all three age groups, all three educational/occupational groups and the five network groups in both a local and a national context. Also, the few overall instances of non-standard usage that occur are scattered evenly across these groupings, with the possible exception that the central parts of Reykjavík may again stand out as no examples at all of

non-standard use of genitive case contexts were found there. However, while it may be no coincidence that central Reykjavík is the only community which shows no signs of either ‘dative sickness’ nor non-standard use in genitive case contexts, it is here again questionable just how much it stands out as no community produced more than three examples of deviant genitive usage and four of the communities produced one example each.

In the above discussion of the overall results, I mostly used terms such as ‘non-standard use in genitive case contexts’ rather than ‘genitive avoidance’. The reason for this is that if the 15 instances of non-standard use in genitive case contexts are examined more closely, it appears that only seven can be said to fall within the frame of ‘genitive avoidance’ as it has been described by Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994), and some of these may even be borderline cases.

In his first discussion of ‘genitive avoidance’, Kjartansson (1979) argues that it is most likely to occur in complex sentences which contain many case-inflected words, including one or more words which, according to the standard, should appear in genitive case. In the spoken data, 12 clauses of this kind were identified and within them two examples of this type of ‘genitive avoidance’ were found. One of these examples is as follows:

- (6.3) pæliði í að nenna að standa í þessu að vera með(PREP-ACC)
 eitthvert(ACC) annað(ACC) deildar(GEN) lið(ACC)
Think of to bother to stand in this to be with(PREP-ACC)
some(ACC) second(ACC) division(GEN) team(ACC)
 Imagine bothering with this training some second division team

Here, the preposition *með* governs for accusative case on *eitthvert* and *lið*. *deildar* is a genitive attribute of *lið* and accordingly appears in genitive case, whereas *annað* appears in its accusative (and nominative) form, despite strictly speaking being a genitive attribute of *deildar* which means that it should take on genitive case and appear as *annarrar*. It is possible that the case governing effect of *með* and the following accusative on *eitthvert* here play their part in causing the apparent confusion regarding the case of *annað*.⁴⁶

Another context which, according to Kjartansson (1979), is likely to cause ‘genitive avoidance’ is one where the word governing the case and the inflected word are separated by a string of words rather than being used each after the other. In the spoken data discussed here, one instance of this type of ‘genitive avoidance’ was found from the three occasions on which there was a clear gap

⁴⁶ Note that due to the accusative form *annað* the string ‘vera með eitthvert annað deildar lið’ could be read as ‘train some *other* division team’ rather than as ‘train some second division team’. On the former reading, using accusative for *annað* would be according to the standard. However, the wider context of this utterance makes it clear that the second division is the topic here.

of this kind between the case-governing word and the inflected word. The example is the following:

- (6.4) að fara til(PREP-GEN) messu(GEN) hérna þegar maður var krakki
það / sérstaklega jólamessuna(ACC)
to go to(PREP-GEN) mass(GEN) here when man was child it /
particularly Christmas mass-the(ACC)
to go to mass here when one was a child it / particularly the
Christmas mass

In this case the preposition *til* governs genitive case on *messu* and this case governing effect should strictly speaking be extended to *jólamessuna* which should then take the genitive form *jólamessunnar*. However, *jólamessa* appears in the accusative case and the reason for this is quite unclear as there is no item in this string (nor in the wider context of the entire utterance) which governs for accusative.

The fact that ‘genitive avoidance’, in Kjartansson’s (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir’s (1994) terms, appears twice in 12 clauses containing many case inflected words and once on the three occasions where there is a gap between the case governing word and the inflected word can – and should possibly – be seen as signs of this feature being relatively common in contexts of this kind. At the same time, however, it is questionable whether the term ‘genitive avoidance’ is appropriate here since, as we will shortly see in section 6.1.3, these contexts can not only cause some fluctuation in the use of genitive case but also as regards both accusative and dative case. This in turn poses the question whether it is really the case inflection as such which is “problematic” in these circumstances. It seems likely in these cases that, regardless of which case is the standard one at each time, the problem arises more due to difficulties with maintaining the case governing effect across a long distance or with keeping track of which case to use for which word in a string of inflected words.

In the examples above ‘genitive avoidance’ appears in that some other case is used in place of the genitive which is the standard in the given context. However, as Svavarsdóttir (1994) points out in her expansion of Kjartansson’s (1979) original identification of ‘genitive avoidance’, certain genitive endings, rather than the case itself, appear also to be unstable. In this context, Svavarsdóttir specifically pointed to a group of feminine nouns which in nominative singular end in *-ing*, and a group of women’s names. Words from both these groups take a genitive *-ar* ending in standard language, but according to Svavarsdóttir, there is a tendency for them to appear in genitive with an *-u* ending, which is the standard for both accusative and dative case. In the spoken data analysed here, only ten examples were found of genitive usage of words from these groups and on none of these occasions was the non-standard *-u* ending used. The overall number of examples is, of course, too low to draw any

strong conclusions, but the result nonetheless indicates that this type of ‘genitive avoidance’ occurs relatively seldom in groups of words which are rarely used, at least in genitive.

In light of the above, it is interesting to note that perhaps also Svavarsdóttir’s (1994) analysis needs to be expanded, as there are three examples in the spoken data of deviant case endings being used in the singular genitive form of other groups of feminine nouns which in standard language take an *-ar* ending on such occasions. However, it may be more appropriate to describe these examples as instances of a lack of case endings, rather than as instances of deviant case endings being used, since what sets these groups of words apart from the ones discussed above is that they do not display any case ending in accusative or dative but appear in the same form as in nominative. It then seems that this zero-ending also has a tendency to appear in genitive case. However, this tendency is not particularly strong as the three instances of zero-ending appear among a total of 37 words used from these inflectional groups. Furthermore, on two of the instances of zero-ending it may be questionable how well-established the *-ar* ending has become. These two instances involve the place-names *Vín* (= ‘Vienna’) and *Krít* (= ‘Crete’), both of which are of foreign origin and needed, apart from the standard genitive *-ar* ending, to undergo little integration to be accepted into Icelandic vocabulary. Several other place-names of foreign origin have been included in Icelandic vocabulary without any integration at all, meaning that not even a genitive ending is added, and this might be the pattern followed in the case above, at least by the speaker who uses *Krít*. In the case of the speaker who uses *Vín*, there are some signs that this might simply be a slip of the tongue. Thus *Vín* is uttered in the string ‘við fórum til Vín og Salzburg’ (= ‘we went to Vienna and Salzburg’), where the pronunciation of ‘Salzburg’ clearly shows that it is used in its original German form rather than its Icelandic counterpart *Salzborg* which would have called for a genitive *-ar* ending. A little later in the recording this speaker uses ‘Hamburg’ in a genitive context in its Icelandic form and there uses the standard *Hamborgar*, with an *-ar* ending. Finally, this speaker also uses *Róm* (= ‘Rome’) in a genitive context in the recording. *Róm* belongs to the same inflectional group as *Vín* and thus takes an *-ar* ending in genitive and this is observed by the speaker on this occasion. Thus, she seems to have at least some command of the *-ar* ending for genitive and the appearance of a zero-ending with *Vín* should possibly be seen as a slip of the tongue, or a result of the seemingly German context in which it is used.

The last of the instances where an *-ar* ending does not appear where the standard language requires it to do so occurs in the phrase *seint pétursborg* (= ‘Saint Petersburg’). Here the lack of *-ar* does not seem to be traceable to *pétursborg* being used in a foreign context, similar to that in the case of Salzburg above, as the pronunciation is clearly Icelandic in this case. However, the conversational context may here be as likely a source of the exclusion of *-ar*

as is a general tendency to leave this ending out in the genitive. The conversational context is as follows:

- (6.5) A: eru þau ekki að fara til(PREP-GEN) / í núna [í viku nei í]1
næstu viku
A: *are they not to go to (PREP-GEN) / in now [in week no in]1*
next week
A: aren't they going to / in now [in week no in]1 next week
- B: [seint pétursborg(NOM)]1
B: [*saint petersburgh(NOM)*]1
B: [St. Petersburg]1

Here speaker A can be said to set up the case inflectional frame by using the preposition *til*. However, she never mentions the locations this *til* refers to so speaker B, in an overlap, adds this but does so without observing the genitive frame set up by speaker A, and thus simply uses the nominative form *pétursborg* (which is also the accusative and dative form) instead of the genitive *pétursborgar*. The question here is whether or not it is reasonable in spoken language to expect one speaker to respect a case inflectional frame set up by another speaker. If the answer to this is positive, it would probably be normal to judge this case as an instance of a particular type of ‘genitive avoidance’. However, as is shown by a few more examples of a similar nature that will be discussed in the next section, it seems that respecting the case inflectional frame set up by another person is optional for any given speaker, which in turn means that it is probably unwarranted to treat examples of this kind as examples of non-standard usage.⁴⁷

The last instance of possible ‘genitive avoidance’, following the descriptions of Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994), is found with the verb + particle *verða áskynja* (= ‘become aware (of)’):

- (6.6) NN varð eitthvað(NOM/ACC) áskynja(VERB-GEN)
NN became(of) something(NOM) aware(VERB-GEN)
NN became aware of something

This particle verb is one of the few verbs in modern Icelandic which govern genitive case and it is also quite rarely used, as is shown e.g. by the fact that the example above is taken from the only occasion on which it is used in the spoken data. Kjartansson and Svavarsdóttir argue that the rarity of these verbs, and the fact that many of them can be used with a prepositional phrase instead without

⁴⁷ Note that no systematic attempt was made to calculate the proportion of instances where one speaker did not observe the case inflectional frame set up by another speaker. This applies both to this section and section 6.1.3 below.

changing the meaning (see section 4.2.), contribute to a general weakening of genitive case in Icelandic. *verða áskynja* does not have a direct counterpart involving a prepositional phrase, but its rarity alone may play its part in the speaker in question using the accusative form of the pronoun *eitthvað*, rather than the standard genitive *einvers*, but accusative is much more commonly used as an object case than genitive is. This example may thus be a sign of this trend mentioned by Kjartansson and Svavarsdóttir. However, it should be added that *eitthvað* can, at least in spoken language, also function as a quantifier, e.g. in phrases such as ‘ég er eitthvað þreyttur í dag’ (= ‘I’m feeling somewhat tired today’). In phrases of this kind only the nominative form *eitthvað* can be used. The possibility that *eitthvað* is in the example above used as a quantifier of *áskynja*, rather than as a pronoun functioning as an object (i.e. ‘he became somewhat aware’ rather than ‘he became aware of something’) probably cannot be excluded, and if this usage is what the speaker in question is aiming at the nominative form *eitthvað* is perfectly acceptable in standard Icelandic.

It is of course impossible to draw any conclusion on the social distribution of ‘genitive avoidance’ on the basis of only seven instances of it in the data. If, however, these seven instances are nonetheless examined in terms of how they are distributed across the social factors studied, there are hints of a pattern that resembles that found for ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language. Thus, none of the examples discussed above occurred in the Reykjavík area nor in Flúðir. However, Siglufjörður, one of the fishing villages, was also free of ‘genitive avoidance’ and this runs contrary to the lines drawn for ‘dative sickness’. As for the remaining five communities, one or two examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ were found in each. Another pattern which resembles the results from ‘dative sickness’ is that women produce five of the seven instances of ‘genitive avoidance’, while men are responsible for two. As for age, class and both types of social networks, the seven examples are evenly spread among the different categories, with the exception of the weakest and strongest networks in both a local and a national context where no instances of ‘genitive avoidance’ were found. This, however, is probably again mainly a result of the fact that overall very few of the informants have networks at either end of the network strength scales.

Of the remaining nine instances of deviant case or case endings being used in genitive case contexts, three occur in conversational contexts similar to the one in example (6.5). The main difference between example (6.5) and these three, and what caused me not to analyse the latter as instances of ‘genitive avoidance’ is that in these the words involved are not feminine words which take an *-ar* ending in singular genitive case. Instead, they take more common genitive endings which have not been pointed out as showing signs of variation and, indeed, in my data, do not show any such signs outside conversational contexts, where the case inflectional frame appears to be optionally transferable from one speaker to another. Thus, the context was judged to be responsible for

the deviant usage in these cases – that is, if the usage can at all be said to be deviant. It should also be mentioned that on these three occasions where one speaker does not respect the case inflectional frame set up by a conversational partner, nominative case is always used instead of genitive. In other words, if the case inflectional frame is not respected, nominative seems to be the case speakers return to.

Another three examples of usage of deviant case or case endings were analysed simply as slips of the tongue. This was done due to three main reasons: First, the genitive endings involved have not been identified as potential sources of ‘genitive avoidance’. Second, these examples did not occur in any of the previously discussed contexts that may cause ‘genitive avoidance’; rather they are single words which occur immediately after the speaker in question has uttered a word governing genitive case. Third, and most importantly, the speakers involved in these examples immediately correct their own “mistakes” and produce a standard form of the word used.

The final three instances of deviant usage occur with the kinship terms *bróðir* (= ‘brother’) and *systir* (= ‘sister’). However, as will become clear in the next section, a tendency for deviant usage with these terms is by no means restricted to genitive case. These three instances can, in other words, probably not be regarded as examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ and will therefore be discussed in connection with deviant usage in both accusative and dative case below.

From the results that have been presented in this section, it seems clear that the overall picture of the genitive is one of stability. Thus, there are only 15 examples of deviant usage out of a total of 1,266 words that are used in a context that requires genitive. With regard to ‘genitive avoidance’ more specifically there are only a few traces of it, as only seven of the 15 instances of deviant usage can be classified as instances of this feature. Furthermore, some of these examples can equally well be explained with reference to the context in which they occur as by a tendency to “avoid” genitive or genitive case endings. The appropriateness of the term ‘genitive avoidance’ may therefore be questionable and there seems to be little reason at present to regard the examples of deviant usage discussed here as anything more than low-level variation which may or may not become a large-scale change in years to come. At the same time, Kjartansson first identified ‘genitive avoidance’ in 1979, i.e. nearly 30 years ago, and the fact that this feature does not seem to have made any advances since then indicates that it may make little further progress, at least in the near future.

6.1.3 Other case inflections

We now turn to the results regarding case inflections other than for genitive (and in relation to impersonal verbs) in spoken language. This means that the focus

here is on accusative and dative case. As was mentioned in section 4.3 above, suggestions have been made, especially by teachers of Icelandic, that the entire case inflectional system of Icelandic is undergoing changes to the effect that accusative case is used instead of dative case (or vice versa) or that nominative case is used as a general replacement for the three oblique cases. However, these claims are as yet quite vague and unspecific and have not sparked any scientific examination. Due to this, no specific hypothesis could be formulated about the expected results here, apart from the general remark that, on the basis of the teachers' claims, some signs of instability were expected to emerge.

This rather unspecified expectation seems to be strongly refuted by the overall results. Thus, amongst a total of 15,668 tokens/words that appear in accusative contexts in the data, only 52, or 0.33%, appear in a non-standard form, i.e. in another case or with a non-standard case-ending. Similarly, 101, or 1.01%, of the total 9,994 tokens/words that appear in dative contexts deviate from the norm. Just as for 'genitive avoidance', it should be mentioned here that these figures include all case-inflected items, other than a number of idioms and set phrases (see section 4.3.1), which should be used in accusative or dative case in the context in which they appear. This could mean that while the features that are the real – but unspecified – source of the teachers' worries are included here, the same can be said about a number of others that should perhaps be excluded from that group. Nonetheless, it seems clear that, on the whole, both accusative and dative case are highly stable, just as genitive case is. At the same time, though, it is interesting to note the trace of a scale that appears as regards the stability of the three oblique cases. Thus, with a 1.26% relative frequency of non-standard usage, genitive case appears to be slightly less stable than dative case which, in turn, appears to be slightly less stable than accusative case. There is no self-evident explanation for this pattern (if indeed it is a pattern), but perhaps it is traceable to the fact that accusative case is the case most commonly used for direct objects of verbs, whereas a larger proportion of dative contexts are traceable to prepositions and genitive attributes are responsible for a large part of the genitive contexts. Another possibility lies in the sheer frequency with which the cases are used. As seen above, accusative case is used 15,668 times in the spoken data while dative and genitive are used 9,994 and 1,266 times respectively. Perhaps the higher frequency of accusative case strengthens its stability when compared to dative and genitive case.

We saw in section 6.1.2 above that the overall stability of genitive case seems to apply to all the social groups the informants in this study have been divided into. A similar picture emerges as regards accusative and dative case, since they are both used to a similar extent in all the groups, again with the exception of the strongest and weakest networks, in which very few speakers can be found. This pattern is largely repeated as regards the instances of non-standard usage with both cases, which are distributed quite evenly across the groupings, with one possible exception. Here I am referring to the fact that for

both accusative and dative case there are some signs that age might be a relevant factor. Admittedly, the differences between the age groups are slight, but as the pattern is the same for both cases it might be the case that it is indicative of a minor trend. To turn to the results themselves, the relative frequency amongst teenagers of non-standard usage for accusative case is 0.62% (32 out of 5,122), while it is 0.22% (11 out of 5,103) amongst adults and 0.16% (9 out of 5,473) amongst senior citizens. For dative case these figures are 1.36% (44 out of 3,226) amongst teenagers, 1.03% (32 out of 3,093) amongst adults and 0.68% (25 out of 3,675) amongst senior citizens. Having pointed out this pattern, it should, however, be emphasized that even though the teenagers have higher figures than the adults and the senior citizens, these overall figures are by no means high. Thus, even if the differences between the age groups might be interpreted as a sign of an emerging tendency of deviating from the case inflectional norm for accusative and dative case, this tendency would seem to be in its earliest phases. Furthermore, it should be kept in mind that in general the conversations in the teenage groups were carried out at a higher speed than the conversations in the other age groups. This might cause the teenagers to be more prone to slips-of-the-tongue than older informants, but, as we will see shortly, quite a few of the instances of non-standard usage in both accusative and dative case seem simply to be examples of the occasional mistakes every speaker makes when talking. The relatively small differences the results show between the age groups may thus be even smaller if these factors are taken into consideration.

If the instances of non-standard usage are examined, a pattern emerges which is in many ways similar to that found with respect to ‘genitive avoidance’. Thus, there is a number of examples of non-standard usage which seem to be traceable more to the context in which they appear than any problems with the case inflection as such. The contexts involved here are much the same as with genitive case, as the following examples show:

(6.7) mér finnst bara að horfa á(PREP-ACC) húsið(ACC) að utan sérstaklega fyrri byggingin(NOM)...

I think just to look at(PREP-ACC) house-the(ACC) from outside especially first building-the(NOM)...

I think that just looking at the house from the outside especially the first building...

Here the particle verb *horfa á* governs for accusative case on *húsið* and should do so on *byggingin* as well, which should thus appear as *bygginguna*. However, *byggingin* appears in its nominative form. In this case I would argue, just as I did in connection with example (6.4) above, that it is the distance between the case governing word and the latter case inflected word which contributes to non-standard usage rather than any instability in the case inflection itself. It seems

that by separating the case governing item and the case inflected item by a lengthy phrase or a clause, speakers may run into difficulties with maintaining the case governing effect. This I base not only on the contexts in question, but also on the fact that there is no pattern to be found as regards which words or case inflectional groups or endings are affected by these contexts. Similarly, we have seen that contexts of this kind can create difficulties in the usage of both accusative and genitive case and there are further examples where dative case is involved. If the difficulty here lay in case inflection as such, it seems likely that certain cases and certain words or case inflectional groups or endings would have appeared more frequently than others in non-standard forms in these circumstances. This, however, does not seem to be the case. Therefore, even though contexts of this kind are certainly a possible source of a potential future instability in the case inflectional system of Icelandic, the lack of systematicity amongst the non-standard forms found in them at the present time indicates that this stage has not been reached yet. As it is, these contexts are simply the frame in which speakers occasionally make random “errors”.

When discussing example (6.5) above, which showed how a seeming instance of non-standard usage can emerge through one speaker not observing the case inflectional frame set up by a conversational partner, I posed the question whether it is reasonable to expect a speaker always to follow the pattern created by another speaker. A tentative answer was that this is an optional operation on behalf of any given speaker. This question is raised again with a number of examples that mainly differ from example (6.5) in that they involve accusative or dative case rather than genitive. (6.8) below is one of these examples:

- (6.8)
1. A: ég ætla að kaupa(VERB-ACC) kaptein(ACC) morgun
 2. B: pela(ACC) flösku(ACC)
 3. A: flösku(ACC)
 4. B: e+ já
 5. C: ein(NOM)?
 6. A: mhm stór(NOM)
 7. C: hm?
 8. A: stór(NOM) kannski lítil(NOM)
-
1. A: *I'm going to buy(VERB-ACC) captain(ACC) morgun*
 2. B: *flask(ACC) bottle(ACC)*
 3. A: *bottle(ACC)*
 4. B: *e+ yes*
 5. C: *one(NOM)?*
 6. A: *ahm big(NOM)*
 7. C: *hm?*
 8. A: *big(NOM) maybe small(NOM)*

Here, we can see how, in line 1, speaker A sets up an accusative frame by using the verb *kaupa*. Speaker B observes this frame by using accusative for both *pela* and *flösku* in line 2 and A then carries this on in line 3 and there uses accusative for *flösku*. In line 5, however, speaker C, who had at this point been leafing through a newspaper for a few minutes without paying any particular attention to the conversation, enters the conversation and has either not noticed the case inflectional frame set up by speaker A or simply does not respect it, as he uses the nominative *ein* rather than the accusative *eina* when referring to the previously mentioned *pela* and *flösku*. Interestingly, speaker A appears to accept this change of case and uses nominative in lines 6 and 8, even though the original case inflectional frame should strictly speaking still be valid as the conversation still centres around what speaker A is going to *kaupa*, i.e. buy.

The examples of this kind in the spoken data involve both accusative and dative case. Thus, just as is the case with the contexts discussed in connection with examples (6.4) and (6.7), we here have examples from all the oblique cases, and to this it can be added that here again no words or case inflectional groups or endings appear with any systematicity. Therefore, the examples discussed here should probably not be regarded as an indication of any instability in the case inflectional system. Rather, they probably further strengthen the suggestion made earlier about the optionality of observing the case inflectional frame set up by another speaker. To this it should be added that, just as regards genitive case, nominative is in all instances the case speakers use when they do not observe an accusative or dative case frame set up by another speaker.

In this context, it should also be noted that a pause in a single speaker's speech can have much the same effect on case inflection as does the shift from one speaker to another. This is exemplified by (6.9) below:

- (6.9) hann er í(PREP-DAT) einhverju(DAT) svona /
 eitthvað(NOM/ACC) í menntageiranum
he is in(PREP-DAT) something(DAT) like / something(NOM/ACC)
in educational-branch-the
 he's in something like / something in the educational branch

Here the preposition *í* governs for dative case on the pronoun *einhverju* and as there does not appear any other case governing item it should also do so on *eitthvað* which is the nominative (and accusative) form of *einhverju*. However, the short pause just before *eitthvað* appears to annul the case governing effect of *í*. That it is not the case inflection itself which is problematic here is shown by the standard usage of *einhverju* in the first instance, and this is further strengthened by the same evidence as mentioned in connection with one speaker not observing the case inflectional frame set up by another speaker. This is to say that on the occasions when a speaker, following a pause in his own speech,

does not maintain the case governing effect of a verb or a preposition he uses himself, no pattern emerges as regards the words or case inflectional groups affected. Furthermore, examples of this kind are found in accusative as well as dative contexts.

We have now seen that some syntactical and conversational contexts can be the source of non-standard usage involving both accusative and dative case, but as I have argued this is not necessarily a sign of instability in the case inflectional system. However, only about half of the instances of non-standard usage in accusative and dative situations occur in such contexts. This means that there are a few instances left where the occurrence of deviant forms cannot be explained by the context, as on these occasions the case inflected word is directly linked to its case governing word without the link between them being broken or interrupted by e.g. a lengthy phrase, a pause or change of speaker. These occurrences are more likely to show what real signs there are of instability in the case inflectional system.

However, when these examples of non-standard usage are examined there are again very few patterns to be discerned. Thus, words from only two case inflectional groups of nouns appear systematically amongst the non-standard occurrences. These groups consist of, on the one hand, women's names, such as *Guðný* and *Fanneý*, which are compound names that end with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix in the nominative case, and, on the other, the kinship terms we have already briefly encountered when discussing the results for 'genitive avoidance' above. We will discuss these groups in greater detail shortly, but first it should be noticed that no other case inflectional groups or particular words appear in non-standard forms with anything that resembles any systematicity. Rather, there are single non-standard occurrences of a given word, which makes it tempting to interpret such instances simply as the occasional slip of the tongue. Admittedly, there is a total of 49 instances of this kind left, once the previously discussed syntactic and conversational contexts and the words from the two case inflectional groups above have been taken into consideration. It may well be the case that some of the single non-standard occurrences of a given word are the first signs of inflectional instability regarding the particular word in question. This may be further strengthened by the fact that on only four of these 49 occasions a self-correction by the speaker in question makes it seemingly indisputable that the original non-standard occurrence was a slip of the tongue. As yet, however, these single non-standard occurrences do not allow us to make any claims about what further tendencies there may be. For that more data is needed. Furthermore, even if we allow for the possibility of some of the single occurrences of non-standard usage being the first traces of systematic instability, something like 30-40 slips of the tongue that go unnoticed by the speakers in

question in a total of nearly 30 hours of speech is probably no more than can be expected.⁴⁸

Before we turn to the two case inflectional groups mentioned above, a third group should be briefly discussed. This group consists of masculine nouns which in singular dative may or may not take an *-i* ending. This is to say that words such as *hópur* (= ‘group’) and *flokkur* (= ‘flock’) can in dative appear as *hóp* or *hópi*, or *flokk* or *flokki*. Included here is also a number of men’s names, such as *Friðrik*, where the *-i* ending may or may not appear in dative case. This variation is a well-known phenomenon in Icelandic and seems to have been in existence since at least the 12th century (Óskarsson, 2001). In most cases, neither the *-i* ending nor the zero-ending seems to have acquired the status of a standard, with the possible exception of a group of words which refer to natural features such as *hóll* (= ‘hill’) or *ás* (= ‘ridge’). These words are also commonly used as place names in Icelandic, either on their own or as the latter element in a compound name such as *Borgarhóll*. Here, there appears to exist a rule of thumb which states that when these words are used as common nouns they should not take an *-i* ending in dative case, whereas they should do so when they are used as place names (Svavarsdóttir, 2001). Even here, however, the standardization effect appears to be rather weak and in general very little, if any, stigmatization can be said to be attached to either of the two possible dative variants of words in this group. The fact that this is a well-attested and non-stigmatized variation also means that it is in all probability not part of the inflectional instability which teachers of Icelandic claim to have noticed recently. For these reasons, and due to the fact that in most cases it is less than clear what the standard usage is, this variation in dative *-i* is not included in the figures above. Of course, this is not to say that this feature is not worthy of study; it is rather that it does not fall within the frame of this thesis. This, however, did not prevent a very general analysis of the feature being made, in order to obtain an overview of the current situation.

This overview reveals, if nothing else, that the variation between *-i* and zero as a dative singular ending for the masculine nouns concerned is still very much in existence. Thus, out of the total of 212 dative occurrences of words from this group, the *-i* ending was used on 158, or 74.53%, of the occasions, while a zero-ending was used in the remaining 54 instances. This, of course, indicates that the *-i* ending is much more common, but at the same time there are some signs that the zero-ending is gaining ground as its relative frequency is 38.57% amongst teenagers, while it is 20% amongst adults and 18.06% amongst senior citizens. As for the remaining social groupings, very small differences appear. Thus both genders show almost the same level of variation between *-i* and zero-endings and the same can be said about the three

⁴⁸ See Fromkin (ed.) (1980) for a discussion of various types of “slips” and the possible reasons behind them.

educational/occupational groups and the different types of networks in both a local and a national context. In the same way, the communities involved show similar levels of variation with the exception of central Reykjavík and, interestingly, Patreksfjörður, where the speakers use zero-endings considerably less than speakers in the other seven communities do. What may be the most noteworthy aspect of this overview, however, is that there are signs that individual speakers are not perfectly stable in their usage of *-i* versus zero-endings. Thus, 20 of the 79 speakers who use nouns from this group produce at least one example of each ending and four of these speakers even show variation within the same word. Furthermore, of the 44 speakers who only produce examples where an *-i* ending is used, 19 only produce one example each and the same applies to ten of the 15 speakers who only produce examples where a zero-ending is used. It seems likely that at least some of these speakers who only produce one example each would show signs of variation if there were more occurrences in the corpus.

The main conclusion of this brief overview of *-i* versus zero-endings in singular dative case of certain masculine nouns is probably that this feature is worthy of closer examination, not the least as it does not seem to have been the subject of any thorough sociolinguistic study. However, as this examination falls outside the scope of this thesis, for reasons mentioned above, and appears to be worthy of a study of its own, it will have to wait for a later study. Now we instead turn back to the women's names and kinship terms mentioned above.

6.1.3.1 Compound women's names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix

As mentioned above, one of the two inflectional groups the members of which appear frequently enough in a non-standard form to warrant any closer examination consists of compound women's names, such as *Guðný* and *Fanneý*, which end with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix in nominative case. In standard language, this *-ný* or *-ey* suffix of these names is replaced by *-ju* in both accusative and dative case, whereas in genitive case the standard ending is *-jar*. However, the data reveals a seemingly strong tendency for the *-ju* ending to be dropped in both accusative and dative case, with the nominative form being used for both these cases. Thus, names of this kind are used on five occasions in accusative contexts by five different speakers, and four of those use the nominative form rather than the standard accusative form with a *-ju* ending. The relative frequency of the non-standard form is thus 80%, and 80% of the speakers who use the *-ný/-ey* names in accusative case do so with a non-standard form.

The figures for dative case are similar to those for accusative case. Here, eight different speakers use *-ný/-ey* names on a total of 11 occasions. On nine of these occasions, involving six of the speakers, the non-standard and *-ju*-less nominative form is used. This means that the relative frequency of the non-standard form for dative case is 81.81% and that 75% of the speakers who use

the *-ný/-ey* names in dative case do so with a non-standard form. To this it can be added that there are signs in these dative examples that speakers are consistent in their non-standard usage, as one speaker uses the same name in the nominative form on three different occasions and another speaker uses one other name in the nominative form on two different occasions.⁴⁹ Furthermore, those two speakers are responsible for one example each of non-standard usage of *-ný/-ey* names in accusative case. To this it might be added that there are no examples of a speaker producing at least one example of non-standard usage and another of standard usage. At the same time, the three speakers who produce the examples of standard usage only produce one example each and hence no conclusions can be drawn regarding their possible consistency in the usage of standard forms.

When the figures for accusative and dative case are combined, 11 different speakers use *-ný/-ey* names on a total of 16 occasions and eight, or 72.72%, of the speakers produce 13 examples of non-standard usage which makes for a relative frequency of 81.25%. Admittedly, the number of examples these figures are based on is very low, but the overwhelming majority of non-standard instances amongst these examples nonetheless strongly indicates that there is a clear tendency for the nominative form to be used in accusative and dative case as well. In light of these results it is interesting to note that there are no signs of instability as regards the genitive form of these names. These forms are used on five occasions in the data, by four different speakers, and on all occasions they use the standard *-jar* ending. Interestingly, three of these speakers also use *-ný/-ey* names in accusative or dative on one occasion each and there the non-standard form is consistently used.

A possible explanation can be found in the data for this pattern of a non-standard *-ju*-less variant being used in accusative and dative while the standard genitive *-jar*-ending appears to be stable. This explanation lies in a group of women's nicknames, such as *Lilly* and *Sirry*, which in nominative end in *-ý*. These nicknames became popular in Iceland in the 1930s and some of them have since become common as given names as well (Kvaran, 2001). For these nicknames the standard inflectional pattern always seems to have been a zero-ending, i.e. the same form as in nominative, in both accusative and dative, while the same *-jar* ending as for the *-ný/-ey* names is used in genitive. This is confirmed by my spoken data where nicknames of this kind are used on 12 occasions in accusative and dative by eight different speakers, always with a zero ending. At the same time, these nicknames are used on four occasions in genitive case, always with a *-jar* ending. Admittedly, these four genitive examples are all produced by the same speaker, but nonetheless this total of 16 instances of usage of these nicknames is a clear indication of a pattern which

⁴⁹ The full names are not given here for ethical reasons. Both names in question here are quite rare in modern Icelandic which means that revealing them could lead to an identification of the persons referred to.

seems to have been transferred by analogy to the older *-ný/-ey* names. This is to say that the apparent tendency to use the *-ný/-ey* names with a non-standard zero ending in the accusative and dative case may be modelled on the standard zero ending in the accusative and dative case of the women's nicknames described above which, like the *-ný/-ey* names, have a *-jar* ending in the genitive.

The scarcity of examples of usage of *-ný/-ey* names of course renders any correlation of them with the social background factors more or less futile. We will, therefore, go no further here than simply noticing that women show a higher proportion of non-standard usage than men do and that senior citizens have a lower frequency of non-standard usage than the other age groups. As for the educational/occupational groups, speakers in the intermediate one show the highest proportion of non-standard usage, while speakers in the highest and the lowest group are at the same level. *-ný/-ey* names were used by speakers from seven of the communities, and in all of these communities at least one example of non-standard usage was found, which means that there are no clear regional patterns as regards this feature. Finally, the non-standard examples are spread quite evenly across the network groups the speakers of which used *-ný/-ey* names in the first place. All in all, therefore, what can be said about these names at the present time is that there appears to be a clear tendency amongst speakers to use their zero-ending nominative form in accusative and dative case, rather than the standard *-ju* ending. The genitive *-jar* ending seems, on the other hand, to be stable. More data is needed, however, before any defensible claims can be made about the social distribution of this variation.

6.1.3.2 Kinship terms

The second inflectional group which can be treated specifically as regards the appearance of its members in accusative and dative case consists of the kinship terms *systir* (= 'sister'), *dóttir* (= 'daughter'), *móðir* (= 'mother'), *bróðir* (= 'brother'), and *faðir* (= 'father').⁵⁰ Interestingly, *sonur* (= 'son') belongs to another inflectional group and shows no signs of instability and is therefore not treated further here. The standard inflectional pattern of the other kinship terms is that the nominative ending *-ir* changes to *-ur* in all three oblique cases, i.e. accusative, dative, and genitive. To this it should be added that the root vowel *a* in nominative *faðir* changes to *ö* in the oblique cases. In section 6.1.2 above we saw some hints that the nominative form tends to be used for these kinship terms in genitive case and this pattern is repeated as regards both accusative and dative case. Thus the nominative *-ir* ending tends to be maintained for all cases. An overview of the usage of standard versus non-standard forms of the kinship terms in the three oblique cases is shown in table 6.9 below.

⁵⁰ Note that only the singular forms of these kinship terms are discussed here. No signs of any non-standard usage were found amongst the corresponding plural forms found in the data.

Table 6.9 Occurrences of standard vs. non-standard forms of kinship terms in accusative, dative and genitive case

Term	Accusative		Dative		Genitive		Total S/N-s.
	Standard	Non-stand.	Standard	Non-stand.	Standard	Non-stand.	
<i>systir</i>	3	3	5	7	1	2	9/12
<i>dóttir</i>	2	5	2	4	3	0	7/9
<i>bróðir</i>	4	2	3	2	1	1	8/5
<i>faðir</i>	5	0	0	0	1	0	6/0
Total	14	10	10	13	6	3	30/26

A few points should be made regarding this overview. First, it should be mentioned that *móðir* is simply never used in the spoken data and is therefore not included in the table. The main reason for this is probably the fact that *móðir* has a formal ring to it and is usually replaced by the more informal *mamma* (= ‘mum’) in everyday spoken language. This was the case in the data on which these results are based. This in turn makes it interesting that the direct male counterpart of *móðir*, i.e. *faðir*, is used on six occasions despite normally being replaced by *pabbi* (= ‘dad’) in informal spoken language, as it is just as formal a term as *móðir*. In terms of the results themselves, however, it is more interesting to note that the standard oblique case forms – or at least the accusative and genitive ones – of *faðir* appear to be more stable than the corresponding standard forms for the three other kinship terms that occur in the data. Thus, *faðir* is used on a total of 6 occasions in the oblique cases, always in the standard form *föður*. With the remaining kinship terms, however, the speakers show quite a high level of non-standard usage; *systir* is used on 21 occasions in the three oblique cases, and on 12, or 57.14%, of these occasions the nominative form is maintained instead of the standard oblique case form *systur*. The relative frequency of non-standard usage of *dóttir* is almost exactly the same, i.e. 56.25%, but here the total number of occurrences is slightly lower, i.e. 16, on nine of which the non-standard form *dóttir* is used rather than the standard *dóttur*. Finally, *bróðir* is used on a total of 13 occasions in the oblique cases and here there are five instances of the non-standard nominative form rather than the standard *bróður*. This means that the relative frequency of non-standard usage with *bróðir* is somewhat lower than with *systir* and *dóttir* as here it reaches 38.46%. This is, of course, still a relatively high figure and what may be of greatest interest here is that if *systir*, *dóttir*, and *bróðir* are combined the overall relative frequency of non-standard usage is 52%. Even if *faðir* is included this figure only drops to 46.43%.

One possible reason for the difference in terms of non-standard usage between *faðir* and the three other kinship terms used might be the fact mentioned above that in *faðir* the root vowel *a* changes to *ö* when the word is inflected for any of the oblique cases. In the other three terms only the ending is

changed which might make the inflection less marked than that of *faðir*. One can also speculate whether the formality indicated by *faðir* has some effect here, i.e. whether the formal nature of the word in some way raises the speakers' awareness of them using it and thereby increases the attention paid to the form used in an oblique case. The three other terms, i.e. *dóttir*, *systir*, and *bróðir*, are used in equal terms in formal and informal language and do not have any less formal counterparts comparable to *pabbi* and *mamma*.

At first sight it might seem that speakers are more prone to using non-standard forms of the kinship terms in dative case than in either accusative or genitive case. Thus, the overall relative frequency of non-standard usage in dative case is 56.52%, while it is 41.67% for accusative and 33.33% for genitive. It should be noted, however, that *faðir* is never used in dative case while it is used on five occasions in accusative case and on one occasion in genitive case. If *faðir* is excluded, the figures for the three oblique cases are more even as the relative frequency of non-standard usage in accusative case rises to 52.63% while the corresponding figure for genitive case becomes 37.5%. Here it is also noteworthy that regardless of whether *faðir* is included or not, the level of non-standard usage is somewhat lower with genitive case than accusative and dative. This is interesting in light of e.g. the identification of 'genitive avoidance' which can be said to indicate genitive case as problematic. What might make it less problematic in the context of these kinship terms is that here the same ending is used for all the oblique cases, and that the syntactic contexts in which genitive case is used can in many ways be said to be more marked than those in which accusative and dative case are used, which might in turn alert speakers to use a case inflected form. At the same time, however, the difference here between accusative and dative case, on the one hand, and genitive, on the other, as regards standard versus non-standard usage can hardly be said to be striking and it is quite possible that it would be levelled out in a larger amount of data.

Let us now turn to the speakers who use the kinship terms discussed above. A total of 37 speakers (again out of a total sample of 108 speakers) are responsible for the 56 overall occurrences of these terms. 14 of these 37 speakers produce one or more tokens each of non-standard usage. This means that 37.84% of the speakers who use the kinship terms show some tendency to use them in a non-standard oblique case form. Based on the total sample, the proportion of speakers who show signs of instability is 12.96%.

Of the 14 speakers who produce non-standard forms, five show signs of variation in their usage in that they also produce one standard form each. Three of these speakers produce one standard form and one non-standard form each. Here it is particularly interesting that one of these speakers uses the same term, *bróðir*, in both the standard and the non-standard form in the same case, i.e. dative. A similar pattern is produced by the fourth speaker who shows signs of variation in his usage. This speaker also uses *bróðir* in both a standard and a

non-standard form, but this time the case is accusative. He also produces one further example of non-standard usage, this time with *systir* in accusative. The fifth, and last, speaker who displays varied usage produces three non-standard forms, all with *dóttir*, apart from the one standard form of *bróðir*.

The remaining nine speakers who show examples of non-standard usage do not produce any examples of standard usage. Four of these speakers produce a non-standard form on the only occasion they use kinship terms, while the remaining five can be said to show consistency in their non-standard usage in that they produce two to five such examples each. All in all, the speakers who produce one or more non-standard form each use kinship terms on 31 occasions and on 26, or 83.87%, of these a non-standard form is used.

It is also interesting to note here that 21 of the 23 speakers who only use standard forms use kinship terms on only one occasion each, while the remaining two speakers produce two examples each. In light of the fact that some of the speakers who produce examples of non-standard usage also use standard forms, this raises the question as to whether some of the apparent standard-only users would show signs of variation in a more extensive usage of kinship terms.

If the kinship terms are treated as a group, at the same time as the three oblique cases used are generally taken as a single entity, the figures discussed above are high enough to allow us to break them down further and make at least some tentative correlations between the various social groupings and the examples of standard versus non-standard usage. The order followed in this discussion is the same as that in the presentation of the results for ‘dative sickness’ above. This means that first we look at the communities included in the study, to then move on to gender, age, class and social networks.

6.1.3.2.1 *The communities*

Table 6.10 below shows how the non-standard oblique case forms of the kinship terms are distributed between the different communities included in the study.

What probably catches the eye first here is that, just as was the case with ‘dative sickness’, the speakers in central Reykjavík and Flúðir do not use any non-standard forms. This might indicate that in general the speakers there adhere more closely to the linguistic norm than speakers in the remaining communities do. Here again, however, some modification might be necessary. In central Reykjavík, kinship terms are used on only two occasions by two different speakers, which means that we have no clear indication of the consistency with which speakers here use standard forms. Furthermore, one of these instances involves the terms *faðir*, which, as we saw above, appears to be more stable than the other kinship terms. In Flúðir, one of the three speakers who use kinship terms does so on two occasions, on both of which he uses the standard form, thereby indicating at least some level of stability. The remaining two speakers

from Flúðir, however, only use kinship terms on one occasion each and even though they both use standard forms we still have little information about how stable they are in their overall usage, especially as both these speakers use the term *faðir*. Interestingly, the speakers in Patreksfjörður here join those in central Reykjavík and Flúðir in not using any non-standard form. Here, however, the situation is exactly the same as in central Reykjavík, i.e. two different speakers produce one example each of standard usage, and further information is needed before any strong claims can be made about whether or not the standard form is the generally used one in Patreksfjörður.

Table 6.10 Distribution by communities of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms

Community	No. of inf. who use kinship terms	Tokens of kinship terms	No. of inf. who use non-standard forms	Tokens of non-standard forms	Relative frequency of non-standard forms	% of inf. who use non-standard forms ⁵¹
Central R.vík	2	2	0	0	0%	0%
Sub. R.vík + neighb. mun.	7	8	1	1	12.5%	14.29%
Reykjanesbær	4	5	2	3	60%	50%
Akranes	6	12	3	6	50%	50%
Patreksfjörður	2	2	0	0	0%	0%
Siglufjörður	7	13	5	10	76.92%	71.43%
Akureyri	2	3	1	2	66.67%	50%
Neskaupstaður	4	7	2	4	57.14%	50%
Flúðir	3	4	0	0	0%	0%
Total	37	56	14	26	46.43%	37.84%

Having just said that the absence of non-standard forms in the data produced by speakers from central Reykjavík, Flúðir and Patreksfjörður might be partly explained by the low overall frequency with which kinship terms are used there, it should be noted that these terms occur no more frequently in Akureyri, but nonetheless two of the three instances found there appear with a non-standard form and that the one standard form is used for the term *faðir*. In Akureyri, however, the same speaker is responsible for both non-standard examples, and although this speaker thus shows some signs of consistency in his usage of non-standard forms, we have less information about the overall pattern in Akureyri. A general picture of this kind seems to be clearer for Akranes and Siglufjörður, where the highest numbers of both occurrences of kinship terms and of speakers

⁵¹ If all the informants are included, i.e. 12 from each community, this figure decreases to 8.33% in suburban Reykjavík and Akureyri, to 16.67% in Reykjanesbær and Neskaupstaður, to 25% in Akranes and to 41.67% in Siglufjörður. Of course, the figure remains unchanged in central Reykjavík, Patreksfjörður and Flúðir.

using them can be found. The relative frequency of non-standard usage is quite high in both these communities, with Siglufjörður showing the highest figure of all the communities, 76.92%, while Akranes stays at 50%, which, however, rises to 60% if the two standard occurrences of *faðir* are excluded. It should be kept in mind, though, that in Siglufjörður and Akranes two of the seemingly most consistent users of non-standard forms can be found. Thus one speaker in Siglufjörður is responsible for five of the ten non-standard examples found there and in Akranes one speaker is responsible for three of the six non-standard examples produced in that community. At the same time, four different speakers are responsible for the remaining five instances of non-standard usage in Siglufjörður, and in Akranes two speakers produce the three remaining non-standard examples, which indicates that these non-standard forms have found some general footing in these communities. To complicate things even further, the speaker in Akranes who is responsible for three instances of non-standard usage also produces one example of standard usage and one other speaker from Akranes shows signs of variation in his usage of standard versus non-standard forms. Similarly, in Siglufjörður one of the speakers there produces one instance of standard usage and another of non-standard usage. Thus, three of the five speakers in the sample who use both standard and non-standard forms come from Akranes and Siglufjörður.

Perhaps the only thing that can be said with certainty when the communities are examined individually is that the results are unclear. However, if the communities are grouped together in a similar way to what was done with respect to ‘dative sickness’, some clearer patterns emerge. Thus, if the Reykjavík area is regarded as a whole and Flúðir is added to it, on the assumption that speakers in this community display a similar adherence to linguistic norms as do speakers in Reykjavík, the relative frequency of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms there is only 7.14%. Similarly, only one, or 8.33%, of the 12 speakers from these three communities who use kinship terms produces a non-standard form. As for the fishing villages of Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður, 14 of the total of 22 kinship terms used in these three communities are in the non-standard form, which makes for a relative frequency of 63.64%. Also, seven, or 53.85%, of the 13 speakers in these communities who use kinship terms produce at least one non-standard form each. Finally, if the remaining three communities of Akureyri, Akranes and Reykjanesbær are combined, the relative frequency of non-standard forms is 55% and 6, or 50%, of the 12 speakers who use kinship terms use a non-standard form on one or more occasions. It should be noted that excluding *faðir* from this analysis only has a marginal effect on the figures just presented.

A regression analysis in SPSS, where the groupings of communities discussed above are used shows them to be a significant factor ($p = 0.025$) as regards the usage of non-standard versus standard forms of kinship terms. Speakers outside the Reykjavík area and Flúðir are, in other words, significantly

more likely to use non-standard forms than are speakers in these three communities. However, it should be kept in mind that this grouping of communities is in many ways debatable. Thus, to give some examples, Flúðir can here be said to be grouped with the Reykjavík area in linguistic terms, on the basis of this community seemingly sharing an adherence to linguistic norms with speakers in the capital. In terms of its socio-economic structure, however, Flúðir probably has more in common with the fishing villages than with Reykjavík. At the same time, Patreksfjörður is grouped with the other two fishing villages of Siglufjörður and Neskaupstaður primarily on the basis of the similarities of the socio-economic structures found in these communities. However, both as regards the kinship terms discussed here and ‘dative sickness’, Patreksfjörður shows a lower degree of non-standard usage than either of the other two fishing villages and should thus perhaps be separated from them in an analysis of the linguistic patterns these communities display.

This also means that even if the groupings used above may allow us to make the generalization that non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms are significantly more often used by speakers outside the Reykjavík area and Flúðir than by speakers from these communities, not all the individual communities belonging to the former group show clear tendencies for non-standard usage. It should also be kept in mind that, even if the groupings are accepted, we are here, just as regards ‘dative sickness’, dealing with a relatively low number of tokens which means that all strong claims about the patterns found should probably await further investigation.

6.1.3.2.2 Gender

We now turn to a discussion of what differences there may be between men and women in terms of their usage of standard versus non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms. Table 6.11 below gives an overview of the overall figures in this respect.

Table 6.11 Distribution by gender of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms

Gender	No. of inf. who use kinship terms	Tokens of kinship terms	No. of inf. who use non-standard forms	Tokens of non-standard forms	Relative frequency of non-standard forms	% of inf. who use non-standard forms ⁵²
Female	18	22	6	8	36.36%	33.33%
Male	19	34	8	18	52.94%	42.11%
Total	37	56	14	26	46.43%	37.84%

⁵² If all informants are included this figure decreases to 10.91% for women and 15.09% for men.

The table shows that men seem to be somewhat more prone than women to using non-standard forms of kinship terms and according to a regression analysis in SPSS this difference is significant ($p = 0.039$). At the same time, it should be emphasized that this does not mean that women do not produce any non-standard forms at all. It should also be noted that this difference is not explainable by women using the seemingly stable term *faḍir* more than men. Rather, both genders use this term in equal measures and thus excluding it has no greater effect on the figures in the table, apart from of course slightly raising the level of non-standard usage for both genders.

As can be seen there is a small gap between the relative frequency of non-standard forms used by men and the percentage of male speakers who produce these non-standard examples. This is primarily explainable by the fact that of the total of seven speakers who produce two or more examples of non-standard forms six are men. Conversely, three of the four speakers who produce one non-standard form each but no examples of standard forms are women. The picture can thus be said to be somewhat clearer as regards the men, as six of the eight male speakers who use non-standard forms show some level of consistency in their non-standard usage. It should be mentioned, though, that not all of these six men are completely consistent since two of them use a standard form on one occasion each. Nonetheless, this picture is clearer than that for the women. Only one woman uses non-standard forms on more than one occasion (and this speaker does not produce any standard examples), while two women use one non-standard form and one standard form each, and a further three women produce one non-standard form each without producing any standard examples. These figures are more mixed than the corresponding ones for men.

All in all, therefore, the generalization can be made here that there seems to be some tendency for men to be more likely than women to use non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms. At the same time, there are some signs to indicate that men who use non-standard forms in the first place do so with a high degree of consistency. As regards women, the evidence in this respect is less conclusive.

6.1.3.2.3 Age

In table 6.12 below an overview is given of how non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms are distributed amongst the three age groups.

Table 6.12 Distribution by age groups of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms

Age group	No. of inf. who use kinship terms	Tokens of kinship terms	No. of inf. who use non-standard forms	Tokens of non-standard forms	Relative frequency of non-standard forms	% of inf. who use non-standard forms ⁵³
Teenagers	12	20	5	11	55%	41.67%
Adults	11	19	5	10	52.63%	45.45%
Seniors	14	17	4	5	29.41%	28.57%
Total	37	56	14	26	46.43%	37.84%

The most noticeable aspect here is the difference which emerges between teenagers and adults, on the one hand, and senior citizens, on the other. While this difference does not appear to be statistically significant, the relative frequency of non-standard forms is nonetheless nearly twice as high amongst teenagers and adults as amongst senior citizens. Note also that as speakers from the three age groups use kinship terms to a similar extent, this difference can in all probability not be explained by the senior citizens' using these terms more rarely than the other groups and thereby possibly avoiding non-standard usage. Furthermore, just as was the case with the difference between the genders discussed in the previous section, this difference does in no way seem to be traceable to varying levels of usage in the three age groups of the relatively stable term *faḍir*. The occurrences there are of this term are evenly spread across the age groups. Thus, excluding it affects all groups to a similar extent. Another pattern that emerges here and resembles that found for the genders is that if teenagers and adults are taken as a single group, it contains six of the seven speakers who produce two or more examples of non-standard usage. Thus, just as for male speakers, we here have some signs of speakers in these two age groups being relatively consistent in their non-standard usage. Again, it should not be forgotten, however, that two of these six speakers who use non-standard forms on two or more occasions also use a standard form on one occasion each, and there are another two adult and teenage speakers who produce one standard and one non-standard form each. The picture is thus by no means perfectly clear, although it may be clearer than that for the senior citizens where one speaker uses two non-standard forms and no standard forms, one speaker uses one standard and one non-standard form and two speakers use one non-standard form each on the one occasion they use kinship terms.

Having said that the difference between senior citizens, on the one hand, and teenagers and adults, on the other, is the most noticeable aspect here, it is of course of little less interest that all the figures for teenagers and adults in the

⁵³ If all informants are included this figure decreases to 13.89% for both teenagers and adults, and to 11.11% for senior citizens.

table above are nearly exactly the same. The high level of non-standard usage amongst teenagers might of course be seen as an indication that such usage is gaining ground, but the fact that the adult groups show just as high a level of non-standard usage rather suggests that the use of the non-standard is in the process of levelling out. This might even be supported by the fact that even though the level of non-standard usage is considerably lower amongst senior citizens than the two younger age groups, it still reaches a relative frequency of nearly 30% which would indicate that using *-ir* rather than *-ur* as an oblique case ending for the kinship terms discussed here is not a new phenomenon.

In sum, therefore, the results here indicate that teenagers and adults are somewhat more prone than senior citizens to using non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms. Furthermore, we have clearer indications for the two younger age groups than for the oldest that the speakers in them who use non-standard forms in the first place do so relatively consistently. At the same time, the equal degree of non-standard usage amongst teenagers and adults might indicate that non-standard usage has reached a level where it is now stabilizing itself, i.e. the variation involved is becoming stable.

6.1.3.2.4 Class

The distribution of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms amongst the three educational/occupational groups that the informants in this study were divided into is shown in table 6.13 below.

Table 6.13 Distribution by educational/occupational groups of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms

Ed./occ. group	No. of informants	No. Of inf. who use kinship terms	Tokens of kinship terms	No. of inf. who use non-standard forms	Tokens of non-standard forms	Relative frequency of non-standard forms	% of inf. who use non-standard forms ⁵⁴
1	26	9	14	4	8	57.14%	44.44%
2	39	14	25	8	15	60%	57.14%
3	43	14	17	2	3	17.65%	14.29%
Total	108	37	56	14	26	46.43%	37.84%

Judging from the table, there is a clear gap between the highest educational/occupational group, on the one hand, and the lower two groups, on the other, in terms of the tendency speakers show for using non-standard forms. Thus, while the relative frequency of non-standard forms is 17.65% amongst speakers in the highest educational/occupational group, it reaches 57.14% for

⁵⁴ If all informants are included, this figure decreases to 15.38% for educational/occupational group 1, to 20.51% for group 2, and to 4.65% for group 3.

the lowest group and 60% for the intermediate one. A high educational/occupational level does, in other words, appear to be connected with a low level of non-standard usage of the features in question. This relationship is statistically significant ($p = 0.026$). Here it should be noted, however, that three of the five speakers who use *faðir* are in educational/occupational group 3 which means that if this term is excluded the difference between the groups decreases slightly.

Another interesting aspect with respect to class is that there are some signs that speakers in the intermediate educational/occupational group are somewhat more likely than speakers in the lowest group to use non-standard forms and to be relatively consistent in that usage. Thus, while the relative frequency of non-standard forms amongst speakers from these two educational/occupational groups is essentially the same, the proportion of speakers using non-standard forms is somewhat lower in the lowest group than in the intermediate one. This seeming mismatch can be explained by the fact that the most consistent non-standard user is found in the lowest group and this speaker alone is responsible for five of the eight non-standard tokens found amongst speakers in this group. Three different speakers are responsible for the three remaining instances of non-standard usage. Two of these speakers use their non-standard forms on the one occasion they use kinship terms, while the third speaker uses one non-standard and one standard form. In the intermediate group however, eight different speakers are responsible for the 15 non-standard forms used and five of those speakers use these forms two to three times each, thereby indicating some level of consistency of non-standard usage in this educational/occupational group. As for the highest educational/occupational group, only two speakers in this group use non-standard forms and thus no particular pattern is discernible. Therefore it will have to suffice to mention that one of these two speakers uses two non-standard forms and no standard one, whilst the other uses one non-standard and one standard form.

The general picture is thus that there appears to be some relationship between which educational/occupational group the speakers are in and their level of non-standard usage of oblique case forms of kinship terms. However, given that this relationship exists, it does not emerge in such a regular or linear way as one would expect. Thus, rather than peaking in the lowest educational/occupational group to then decrease with each of the two higher groups, the tendency to use non-standard forms, while certainly relatively high in the lowest educational/occupational group, reaches an even slightly higher level in the intermediate group and then decreases markedly amongst speakers in the group with the highest educational/occupational level.

6.1.3.2.5 Social networks

We will now look at the possible correlation between, on the one hand, the speakers' network types and, on the other, the speakers' usage of oblique case forms of kinship terms. Table 6.14 below gives an overview of how the non-standard forms are distributed amongst the five different types of local networks.⁵⁵ As mentioned in section 6.1.1.6 above, using networks as a theoretical tool in what I have called a local context appears to be more suitable for analytical purposes in Icelandic circumstances than using networks in a national context. Therefore only the former approach will be used here.

Table 6.14 Distribution by local network types of non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms

Network type	No. of informants	No. Of inf. who use kinship terms	Tokens of kinship terms	No. of inf. who use non-standard forms	Tokens of non-standard forms	Relative frequency of non-standard forms	% of inf. who use non-standard forms ⁵⁶
1	3	0	0	0	0	0%	0%
2	20	3	3	0	0	0%	0%
3	42	20	27	6	11	40.74%	30%
4	39	13	25	8	15	60%	61.54%
5	4	1	1	0	0	0%	0%
Total	108	37	56	14	26	46.43%	37.84%

What immediately strikes the eye in the table above is that non-standard usage of oblique case forms of kinship terms seems to be restricted to speakers in networks of types 3 and 4, i.e. to speakers who have networks that are of average or relatively high strength and density. However, this observation should be modified somewhat. First of all, 75% of the 108 informants are members of local networks of types 3 or 4 and therefore it is not so surprising that the overall number of kinship terms used by speakers in networks of types 1, 2 and 5 is quite low. At the same time, though, it is noteworthy that the formerly mentioned 75% of the informants who have networks of types 3 and 4 are responsible for nearly 90% of all the kinship terms used. Speakers within these two network types appear, in other words, to use kinship terms more often than speakers from the three other network types do, which can in itself be part of the explanation for the higher level of non-standard usage amongst the former. To this it can be added that out of the four total occurrences of kinship

⁵⁵ As a reminder: See sections 5.3.3.2 and 5.4.2.2 for a discussion of how the index of social networks was constructed.

⁵⁶ If all the informants in network types 3 and 4 are included, this figure decreases to 14.29% for type 3 and to 20.51% for type 4.

terms in networks of types 1, 2 and 5, two involve *faðir*, which, as has been pointed out repeatedly, appears to be more stable in the standard form than are the other kinship terms. Finally, four different speakers are responsible for these four kinship terms in networks of types 1, 2 and 5 which means that none of these speakers use kinship terms on more than one occasion and therefore, even if these speakers do not produce any non-standard examples, we cannot say with any certainty that they are consistent in their usage of standard forms.

Another partial explanation for non-standard usage only appearing amongst speakers who are members of networks of types 3 and 4 can possibly be found indirectly via a quick look back at some of the previous results. There we have seen that speakers in the highest educational/occupational group and speakers from the Reykjavík area show a relatively low level of non-standard usage, whereas this level generally rises outside the capital and amongst those who are in the lowest or intermediate educational/occupational groups. Amongst this latter group of speakers, networks of types 3 and 4 are more common than amongst speakers in the Reykjavík area and in the highest educational/occupational group. This might in turn go some way towards explaining why non-standard usage is exclusively found in these network types. It might also explain why the frequency of non-standard usage is somewhat higher in networks of type 4 than in networks of type 3; relatively or very strong local networks are primarily found outside the Reykjavík area and in these communities the educational/occupational level is also generally somewhat lower than in the capital.

As for the patterns of usage amongst speakers with networks of types 3 and 4, they are quite similar; speakers who appear to be consistent in their non-standard usage and speakers who show signs of varied usage are found in equal measures in both network types.

Thus, the generalization that can be made here is that speakers in networks of types 3 and 4 show greater signs than speakers from networks of other types of a tendency to use non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms. It should be kept in mind, though, that the majority of the informants have networks of these two types, and the low number of speakers in the networks of other types may be part of the reason for the absence of non-standard usage within these networks types in the present data. Similarly, it may not be the networks themselves that are the main explanation of non-standard usage, but rather the fact that the network types in which non-standard usage is found are characteristic of communities and educational/occupational groups which show a greater tendency than others of such usage.

6.1.3.3 Summary: Other case inflections in spoken language

If we now try to briefly summarize the results of this section on case inflections in spoken language, it should first be noted that the general picture is one of high

stability. Thus, the overall relative frequency of non-standard forms used in contexts requiring accusative or dative case to be used is 0.33% for accusative and 1.01% for dative case. Within this figure, a slight tendency can be discerned for teenagers being more likely to use non-standard forms than the two adult groups. Otherwise, no clear pattern emerges as regards the social groupings in relation to the overall results.

In the proportionally few non-standard tokens there are few signs of patterns or systematicity and a large part of these occurrences appear to be either simply slips of the tongue or primarily the result of the syntactic or conversational context, rather than a systematic tendency to use the case inflected item in question in a non-standard way. However, three types or groups of words show signs of systematic variation. The first of these was included primarily as a kind of byproduct not included in the overall figures as it does not seem to fall within those aspects of case inflections that have been pointed out as problematic. This group consists of masculine nouns that in singular dative case can take either an *-i* ending or a zero-ending. The variation between these two endings is a well attested phenomenon in Icelandic, although it has not been examined in any detail from a sociolinguistic point of view, and has been in existence since the 12th century. The very cursory analysis carried out here on nouns of this kind mainly confirms that this variation, which is within the standard rather than between standard forms, on the one hand, and non-standard forms, on the other, still exists. As it is, the *-i* ending dominates and is used on 74.53% of the occasions words from this inflectional group are used. There are signs, however, that the zero-ending is gaining ground as the teenagers in the study use it proportionally more frequently than the adults who, in turn, use it more frequently than the senior citizens. Another interesting aspect as regards this usage of *-i* or zero-endings is that some individual speakers show signs of variation between them, even in their repeated usage of the same word.

As regards the two remaining groups of words, the question of standard vs. non-standard usage is more relevant. The former of these groups consists of women's names which in nominative end in *-ný* or *-ey* and add a *-ju* ending to this in both accusative and dative case in standard language. However, the data points at a clear tendency for the nominative form to be used in both accusative and dative with 81.25% of the names used in these cases appearing without the standard *-ju* ending. The number of tokens this result is based on is quite low, which decreases its reliability and renders it impossible to make any meaningful correlations between non-standard usage and the social groupings. At the same time, however, this high a relative frequency of non-standard forms can probably be seen as at least a strong indicator of what the greater picture looks like. As for the origins of this tendency, it may be traceable to a group of relatively newly emerging women's nicknames which in nominative end in *-ý*. This same ending, rather than *-ju*, is in the standard language maintained for

both accusative and dative case and this pattern appears to have been transferred by analogy to the older *-ný/-ey* names.

The other group of nouns where considerable variation is apparent consists of the kinship terms *dóttir*, *systir*, *móðir*, *bróðir* and *faðir*, in their singular form. In these terms the *-ir* ending from the nominative case is in standard language replaced by *-ur* in all the three oblique cases; accusative, dative and genitive. However, the data suggests a tendency for the nominative form to be used for all cases, as the overall relative frequency of this form when the kinship terms are used in accusative, dative or genitive case is 46.43%. In this context, it should be mentioned, though, that *móðir* is not used at all in the data and that the term *faðir* is used in its standard form on all the 6 occasions it occurs. As for the social groupings, it appears that speakers in the Reykjavík area, and possibly Flúðir and Patreksfjörður as well, are less likely to use non-standard forms than speakers in the other communities included. Men show a slightly higher degree of non-standard usage than women, while senior citizens are clearly more likely to use standard forms than speakers in the two younger age groups. Interestingly, speakers in the adult age group show almost the same level of non-standard usage as do teenagers, which might indicate that non-standard usage has reached a level where it is in the process of stabilizing itself. As for the educational/occupational groups, speakers in the group with highest social standing show a much lower level of non-standard usage than speakers in the other two groups. Another interesting aspect here is that speakers from the intermediate educational/occupational group show a slightly higher level of non-standard usage than speakers in the lowest group. Finally, non-standard usage is only found amongst speakers who have networks of types 3 and 4, i.e. those of average to relatively high strength and density. However, this may not be a result of the networks as such, but more an effect of the low number of informants in the other types of networks, i.e. the two weakest ones and the strongest one, and of the fact that networks of types 3 and 4 are mainly characteristic of those communities and the educational/occupational groups where non-standard usage is relatively high.

6.1.4 ‘New passive’

As was discussed in chapter 4, there exists some work of sociolinguistic relevance on ‘new passive’. This work shows that the 15-16 year old teenagers who functioned as informants have a strong tendency to judge ‘new passive’ constructions to be acceptable while this same tendency is quite weak amongst the adult informants (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002). Furthermore, the acceptancy rate was markedly lower amongst teenagers in central Reykjavík than in other parts of the country, and education also appeared to be a relevant factor as teenagers who had highly educated parents show lower acceptancy

rates than teenagers whose parents were less educated. Gender, however, did not seem to be relevant.

All in all, these results have been interpreted as a sign of ‘new passive’ being in general usage amongst teenagers, and the overall expectation for the results now to be presented was that they would show that this feature has become relatively firmly rooted in modern spoken Icelandic. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s study (2001, 2002) focuses on acceptancy levels rather than usage as such, whereas this study is based on the latter and, as acceptancy and usage are clearly not the same thing, the results here were not necessarily expected to directly reflect these earlier ones.

The expectation that ‘new passive’ has become firmly rooted in spoken Icelandic is by no means borne out by the overall results. Thus, the two types of passive constructions, i.e. nominative passive and oblique passive⁵⁷, from which ‘new passive’ can be formed are used on a total of 494 occasions and on only 13 of these a ‘new passive’ construction is used. This means that the overall relative frequency of ‘new passive’ is 2.63%. If nominative and oblique passives are kept apart, it emerges that the former are used much more frequently than the latter; nominative passives are used on 446 occasions while oblique passives are used on 48 occasions. However, the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ appears to be quite similar for both these types, as it is 2.69% (12 instances) in the case of nominative passive and 2.08% (one instance) as regards oblique passive. Admittedly, there is only one non-standard example of oblique passive which may make this relative frequency figure seemingly unreliable, but at the same time the overall number of oblique passive constructions is 48 which should be enough to indicate that this is the pattern to be expected in a larger body of data. All in all, these figures clearly indicate that the step from accepting ‘new passive’ constructions to using them is quite a long one and that, at least as regards this feature, few conclusions, if any, can be drawn about the levels of usage on the basis of data which measures acceptancy levels.

Apart from the division into nominative and oblique passives no clear linguistic pattern emerges as regards the ‘new passive’ constructions. Thus, 13 different verbs are used on the 13 instances of ‘new passive’ and no particular syntactic or conversational context appears to be more productive than others in this respect. Therefore, it is probably more interesting to turn to the speakers in order to examine the relationship between the different social groupings and ‘new passive’. This can be preceded by the general remark that all in all 94 speakers use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions and 11 of these speakers produce the 13 examples of ‘new passive’. This means that 11.7% of the speakers who use the relevant passive constructions show some signs of a tendency for using ‘new passive’. At the same time, it should be pointed out that

⁵⁷ See section 4.4 for further details on nominative passive and oblique passive.

there is very limited evidence that speakers are consistent in their usage of ‘new passive’. Thus, nine of the 11 speakers who produce ‘new passive’ constructions do so on only one occasion each and seven of them use between three and nine standard passive constructions, apart from the single non-standard one. The remaining two speakers in this group only use one standard passive construction each, apart from the single non-standard one. This might of course indicate that these two speakers use ‘new passive’ constructions proportionally more than the other speakers in the study who produce examples of ‘new passive’ constructions, but the evidence is too scant to support any strong claims of this nature.

As for the two speakers not accounted for yet, they produce two examples each of ‘new passive’ but in the case of at least one of these speakers it seems doubtful that this indicates a high level of consistency, as this speaker also produces nine examples of standard passive constructions. The other speaker, however, appears to use ‘new passive’ constructions proportionally as much as the two speakers mentioned above who produce one example each of standard passive constructions and one of non-standard constructions. This last speaker simply doubles these figures as he uses two standard passive constructions apart from the two non-standard ones. Again, however, the evidence is probably too scant to make any strong claims as to what this is indicative of.

Having given this general overview we can now turn to an examination of how the instances of ‘new passive’ constructions are distributed amongst the various social groupings. The order followed in the presentation of the results for ‘dative sickness’ and kinship terms is repeated yet again here. Thus we start with the communities included in the study to then turn to gender, age, class and social networks. It should also be noted that as the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions appears to be much the same for nominative and oblique passive constructions no distinction is made between the two in the following discussion.

6.1.4.1 The communities

As mentioned above, previous research indicates that ‘new passive’ is less prominent amongst speakers in central Reykjavík than amongst speakers in other parts of the country (Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002). This pattern was expected to be mirrored in this study, especially since my informants in central Reykjavík appear to be less prone than informants elsewhere in the country to non-standard usage of most of the variables discussed this far.

Table 6.15 below shows how ‘new passive’ constructions are distributed in the communities included in the study. On the basis of the expectations mentioned above, what first strikes the eye here is that central Reykjavík does not stand out by speakers from there showing a lower degree of usage of ‘new passive’ constructions than speakers elsewhere in the country. Rather, the levels

of usage of ‘new passive’ appears to be almost equally low amongst speakers in nearly all the communities. Reykjanesbær is a possible exception in this regard as there four instances of ‘new passive’ were found. At the same time, however, it should be kept in mind that the four ‘new passive’ examples from Reykjanesbær come from the two speakers who use such constructions on two occasions each. This means that in terms of the number and percentage of speakers who show signs of a tendency for ‘new passive’ constructions, Reykjanesbær does not stand out. Of course, however, the fact that it is only in Reykjanesbær that speakers who use ‘new passive’ on more than one occasion are found could possibly be regarded as a sign of this feature having become more firmly established there than in the other communities studied.

Table 6.15 Distribution of ‘new passive’ constructions in the communities studied

Community	No. of inf. who use passive constr.	Tokens of passive constr.	No. of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr.	Tokens of ‘new passive’ constr.	Relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constr.	% of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr. ⁵⁸
Central R.vík	12	68	1	1	1.47%	8.33%
Sub. R.vík + neighb. mun.	10	42	1	1	2.38%	10%
Reykjanesbær	11	40	2	4	10%	18.18%
Akranes	11	68	0	0	0%	0%
Patreksfjörður	11	68	2	2	2.94%	18.18%
Siglufjörður	10	72	2	2	2.78%	20%
Akureyri	9	24	0	0	0%	0%
Neskaupstaður	9	51	1	1	1.96%	11.11%
Flúðir	11	61	2	2	3.28%	18.18%
Total	94	494	11	13	2.63%	11.7%

At the other end of the scale, Akranes and Akureyri stand out in that speakers from these communities do not produce any examples of ‘new passive’ at all. However, we are here, just as was the case with ‘dative sickness’, dealing with very low figures as regards the occurrences of ‘new passive’ and, with the exception of Reykjanesbær, no community is the source of more than two instances of this feature. Thus, just as it is uncertain whether or not speakers in central Reykjavík and Flúðir stand out through not showing any signs of ‘dative sickness’, it is questionable whether the speakers in Akranes and Akureyri really stand out by showing no signs of usage of ‘new passive’. This especially goes

⁵⁸ If all 12 informants from each community are included, this figure decreases to 8.33% in suburban Reykjavík and Neskaupstaður and to 16.67% in Reykjanesbær, Patreksfjörður, Siglufjörður and Flúðir. In central Reykjavík, Akranes and Akureyri the figure remains unchanged.

for the speakers in Akureyri who produce by far the fewest passive constructions of all the informants, whereas the speakers in Akranes are amongst the most prolific users of such constructions.

All in all, therefore, the picture that emerges here is that the level of usage of ‘new passive’ is almost equally low in all communities with the possible exception of Reykjanesbær. This is interesting, both as it contradicts to some extent the earlier findings of Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001, 2002), which indicated that speakers in central Reykjavík are less prone to ‘new passive’ usage than speakers elsewhere in the country, and as it breaks the hint of a pattern as regards ‘dative sickness’ and kinship terms where speakers from the greater Reykjavík area and Flúðir appear to adhere more closely to the standard forms than do speakers elsewhere.

6.1.4.2 Gender

In Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s study (2001, 2002) gender did not appear to be a relevant factor as regards the acceptancy rates of ‘new passive’ constructions. This was expected to be mirrored in the results from the present study as, even though the overall levels of usage were anticipated to be somewhat lower than the overall levels of acceptance, this was not expected to affect the distribution of usage of ‘new passive’ between the genders. Table 6.16 below gives an overview of this distribution in the present data.

Table 6.16 Distribution by gender of ‘new passive’ constructions

Gender	No. of inf. who use passive constr.	Tokens of passive constr.	No. of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr.	Tokens of ‘new passive’ constr.	Relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constr.	% of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr. ⁵⁹
Female	46	206	3	4	1.94%	6.52%
Male	48	288	8	9	3.13%	16.67%
Total	94	494	11	13	2.63%	11.7%

Here again, the results do not quite meet the expectations as there are some signs to be found in the table that men are more likely than women to use ‘new passive’ constructions. Thus, eight different male speakers produce a total of nine ‘new passive’ constructions, while the corresponding figures for female speakers are three and four. This means that the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions is 3.13% amongst men, while it is 1.94% amongst women, and that 16.67% of the male speakers who use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions show some signs of ‘new passive’ usage while

⁵⁹ If all informants are included, this figure decreases to 5.45% for women and to 15.09% for men.

only 6.52% of the corresponding female speakers do so. However, this difference between the genders does not appear to be statistically significant which means that it can be seen as no more than a vague indication that ‘new passives’ are more likely to be found amongst male speakers than female speakers. It should also be mentioned that one of the two speakers who use ‘new passive’ constructions on two occasions is a woman. Also, one of the two speakers who produce one example of ‘new passive’ and only one of standard passive constructions is a woman. This might mean that those women who use ‘new passive’ constructions in the first place are likely to use them to an extent similar to that of their male counterparts. However, further evidence is needed before any such claims can be taken seriously.

One possible explanation behind the higher levels of ‘new passive’ amongst male speakers than female speakers might lie in the fact that men appear to use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions more often than women. Thus, even though the number of men and women who use these constructions is nearly the same, or 48 and 46 respectively, the male speakers use a total of 288 of them while the female speakers use 206. This means that each male speaker uses on average 6 nominative and/or oblique passive constructions, while each female speaker uses on average 4.48 such constructions. Here there might therefore be some connection between the frequency with which nominative and/or oblique passives are used and the relative frequency of usage of ‘new passive’. All in all, therefore, any generalizations can hardly be made. All we have are weak signs that men are somewhat more prone to use ‘new passive’ than women, and an equally weak indication that those women who use ‘new passive’ in the first place do so to a similar extent as their male counterparts do.

6.1.4.3 Age

As mentioned earlier, a clear difference emerged in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001, 2002) study between teenagers and adults as regards their rates of acceptance of ‘new passive’ constructions. A similar difference was expected to emerge in the results discussed here even though, as has been pointed out already, the overall level of usage was expected to be lower than the overall level of acceptance.

Table 6.17 below shows the distribution of ‘new passive’ constructions between the three age groups that the subjects in the study were divided into.

Table 6.17 Distribution by age groups of ‘new passive’ constructions

Age group	No. of inf. who use passive constr.	Tokens of passive constr.	No. of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr.	Tokens of ‘new passive’ constr.	Relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constr.	% of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr. ⁶⁰
Teenagers	30	144	8	9	6.25%	26.67%
Adults	30	140	3	4	2.86%	10%
Seniors	34	210	0	0	0%	0%
Total	94	494	11	13	2.63%	11.7%

As can be seen, the expectations are in this case largely borne out as the teenage speakers are responsible for nine of the 13 instances of ‘new passive’ found and show a relative frequency of 6.25% of constructions of this kind. The remaining four examples were produced by adult speakers and here the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ usage is 2.86%. As for the senior citizens no signs of ‘new passive’ were found amongst them. This translates into a significant relationship between age and the usage of ‘new passive’ constructions ($p = 0.004$). What may be even more striking, however, is the proportion of speakers in each age group who show signs of ‘new passive’ usage. Eight, or 26.67%, of the 30 teenage speakers show these signs while the corresponding figures for the adult age group are three out of 30, or 10%. That the percentage of senior citizens showing signs of ‘new passive’ usage is 0% follows naturally from the fact that no examples of these constructions were found in this age group.

It was hinted at above that the higher level of ‘new passive’ occurrence amongst male speakers than amongst female speakers might be related to men using nominative and/or oblique passive constructions more frequently than women. An explanation of this kind does not seem to be applicable as regards the age groups, as the senior citizens use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions considerably more frequently than both adults and teenagers do, but still show no signs of a tendency for ‘new passive’. However, a few other factors should probably be kept in mind when the differences between the age groups are examined. First, even though it has just been stated that the teenage speakers in this study are significantly more likely to use ‘new passive’ constructions than speakers in the other age groups, it is not clear whether teenagers are more consistent in their non-standard usage than the adults are. Thus, while both speakers who produce one standard and one non-standard passive construction are admittedly teenagers, one of the two speakers who produce two examples of ‘new passive’ is an adult. Furthermore, while the two remaining adult speakers use, on the one hand, six and, on the other, nine standard passive constructions apart from the one ‘new passive’ example each of

⁶⁰ If all informants are included, this figure decreases to 22.22% for teenagers and to 8.33% for adults. It does, of course, not change for senior citizens.

them produces, similar figures can be seen for five of the teenage speakers. In this context, it may also be interesting to note that two of the three adult speakers who produce examples of ‘new passive’ are female, while eight of the nine teenage speakers who use ‘new passive’ are male. This might indicate that ‘new passive’ is primarily used by teenage boys.

Secondly, even though the teenagers show significantly higher levels of usage of ‘new passive’ than speakers in the other two age groups, a relative frequency of 6.25% can hardly be said to be particularly high and the usage level is at least a far cry from the general level of acceptance of ‘new passive’ found in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001, 2002) study. This in turn poses the question how these figures should be interpreted. One reading would be that ‘new passive’ is an emerging change in progress, as it mainly appears amongst the youngest speakers in this study and may gain further footing as these speakers grow older and the following generations pick up on their usage. Another reading, however, would be that this age-grading is simply a result of a growing linguistic maturity of the speakers. Passive constructions are syntactically relatively complex and may thus not be fully mastered until at a late stage in a given speaker’s development, and the higher levels of non-standard usage amongst teenagers could be a reflection of this. In this context it is also noteworthy that the 15-16 year-olds who took part in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001, 2002) study will have been close to 20 years of age when data was collected for my study and, given the size of Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s sample, some of their informants may well have been included in my sample as well. Possibly, the sharp drop from the high figures for acceptance of ‘new passive’ amongst 15-16 year-olds to the much lower figures for usage of such constructions by speakers approaching 20 years of age is primarily indicative of ‘new passive’ being mastered when speakers are between 15 and 20 years of age. This, however, is of course highly speculative at the moment and further research, focusing primarily on these age groups is needed to provide any confirmation.

For the time being, it will therefore have to suffice to sum up this section by saying that it appears that teenagers are significantly more likely than both adults and senior citizens to use ‘new passive’ constructions. At the same time, however, even the teenagers’ relative frequency of usage of ‘new passive’ is very low and there is little indication that teenage speakers who show signs of ‘new passive’ do so more consistently than adult speakers who show the same signs.

6.1.4.4 Class

It was mentioned above that the results from Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001, 2002) research show that teenagers whose parents are highly educated are less likely to accept ‘new passive’ constructions than are teenagers whose

parents are less educated. Again, this pattern was expected to emerge in the present results as well. Table 6.18 shows the distribution of ‘new passive’ constructions amongst the three educational/occupational groups constructed for the purpose of this study.

Table 6.18 Distribution by educational/occupational group of ‘new passive’ constructions

Ed./occ. Group	No. of informants	No. of inf. who use passive constr.	Tokens of passive constr.	No. of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr.	Tokens of ‘new passive’ constr.	Relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constr.	% of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr. ⁶¹
1	26	23	133	4	6	4.51%	17.39%
2	39	32	171	3	3	1.75%	9.38%
3	43	39	190	4	4	2.11%	10.26%
Total	108	94	494	11	13	2.63%	11.7%

Just as regards age, the results here to some extent resemble the earlier results of Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001, 2002). The main difference between the studies is that here the grading from one educational/occupational level to the other is not continuous as there rather appears to be a gap between the lowest educational/occupational group, on the one hand, and the two higher groups, on the other. Thus the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions amongst speakers in the lowest group is 4.51% while it is around 2% for speakers in both the higher groups. Similarly, 17.39% of the speakers in the lowest group who use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions show some sign of ‘new passive’ usage while the corresponding figure for the two higher groups is close to 10%. This is not a statistically significant difference, and thus it can not be said to be anything more than a weak indication that speakers in the lowest educational/occupational group use ‘new passive’ more frequently than speakers in the two higher groups. However, that possible pattern may be strengthened by the fact that both the speakers who produce two examples of ‘new passive’ are to be found in the lowest group. Furthermore, the same can be said about one of the two speakers who use one ‘new passive’ construction and one standard passive construction. Note also that all three educational/occupational groups use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions to a similar extent, and thus the higher level of ‘new passive’ usage amongst speakers in the lowest group cannot be explained by them generally using passive constructions more frequently than the speakers in the other two groups.

The conclusion in this section is thus that speakers in the lowest educational/occupational group may be slightly more likely than the speakers in

⁶¹ If all informants are included, this figure decreases to 15.38 for educational/occupational group 1, to 7.69% for group 2, and to 9.3% for group 3.

the two higher groups to use ‘new passive constructions. Furthermore, we may here have a weak indication that the former speakers are more consistent in their non-standard usage. As for the two higher educational/occupational groups, the speakers there show essentially the same figures which is of course interesting in itself.

6.1.4.5 Social networks

As is the case with the other linguistic variables examined in this study, no information exists on the potential relationship between ‘new passive’ and the social network structures found amongst the speakers studied. Therefore, no particular hypotheses or expectations were formed in this respect.

Table 6.19 below shows how ‘new passive’ constructions in my material are distributed amongst the local network types of the speakers. Note that, here again, only what I have called local networks will be examined.

Table 6.19 Distribution by local network types of ‘new passive’ constructions

Network type	No. of informants	No. of inf. who use passive constr.	Tokens of passive constr.	No. of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr.	Tokens of ‘new passive’ constr.	Relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constr.	% of inf. who use ‘new passive’ constr. ⁶²
1	3	3	19	0	0	0%	0%
2	20	18	82	3	4	4.88%	16.67%
3	42	33	158	4	5	3.16%	12.12%
4	39	36	205	3	3	1.46%	8.33%
5	4	4	30	1	1	3.33%	25%
Total	108	94	494	11	13	2.63%	11.7%

At first sight, the results in the table may seem somewhat confusing. Thus, as regards both the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ usage and the percentage of speakers who use it, the figures start at 0% for speakers in networks of type 1, to then rise rather sharply in networks of type 2. Then, in networks of type 3 the figures decrease, and they continue to do so when speakers in networks of type 4 are examined. Finally, however, the figures rise again for speakers in networks of type 5. This seemingly unclear picture can be explained by the low number of speakers who are placed in network types 1 and 5. Thus, there are only three speakers in networks of type 1 who use nominative and/or oblique passives, and therefore it is not particularly surprising that no signs of ‘new passive’ are found amongst them. At the same time, there are only four speakers in networks of

⁶² If all informants are included, this figure decreases to 15% for network type 2, to 9.52% for type 3, and to 7.69% for type 4. The figure for network types 1 and 5 remains unchanged.

type 5 and they produce 30 nominative and/or oblique passive constructions. These low numbers of speakers and passive constructions mean that the single instance of ‘new passive’ found results in comparatively high relative frequencies in this network type.

The picture becomes clearer if speakers with networks of types 1 and 2, i.e. weak or relatively weak networks, are grouped together and the same is done for speakers with networks of types 4 and 5, i.e. strong or relatively strong networks. When this has been done, it emerges that the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ amongst speakers with the weakest networks is 3.96% while it is 3.16% amongst speakers with networks of intermediate strength and 1.7% amongst speakers with the strongest networks. A similar pattern emerges as regards the percentage of speakers who use ‘new passive’ constructions. 14.29% of the speakers in the weakest networks who use nominative and/or oblique passives show signs of ‘new passive’ usage and the corresponding figures for speakers in the intermediate and strongest network types are 12.12% and 10% respectively. There are thus some signs that speakers with strong social networks are slightly less likely than speakers with weaker networks to use ‘new passive’ constructions. This tendency is possibly further strengthened by the fact that the two speakers who use ‘new passive’ constructions on two occasions each have weak or intermediate social networks rather than strong ones. Apart from this, no particular pattern emerges and thus the only conclusion to be drawn here regards the above mentioned hints of speakers with strong social networks using ‘new passive’ constructions to a slightly lesser extent than speakers with weaker networks.

6.1.4.6 Summary: ‘New passive’ in spoken language

The main conclusion to be drawn from the discussion above is that the overall picture as regards ‘new passive’ is one of stability. Thus, the overall relative frequency of ‘new passive’ usage is only 2.63% which indicates that even if this may be an emerging change, it has yet to become firmly rooted in modern spoken Icelandic. Admittedly, 11.7% of the speakers who use nominative and/or oblique passive constructions show some signs of ‘new passive’ usage, but most of these speakers also produce a number of standard forms, which indicates that they are not particularly consistent in their non-standard usage. Furthermore, even 11.7% is well below the figures regarding the acceptancy of ‘new passive’ found in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s (2001, 2002) study on this feature. This last point in turn indicates that, at least as regards ‘new passive’, a clear distinction should be made between acceptancy rates and the level of usage; judging a certain construction to be acceptable for use does not have to mean that the speaker in question is likely to use this particular construction.

As regards the relationship between ‘new passive’ and the social groupings, there is a significant difference between teenage speakers, on the one

hand, and adult and senior speakers, on the other, with the teenage speakers producing ‘new passive’ constructions more frequently than speakers from the other two age groups. This might be indicative of ‘new passive’ being an emerging change in progress, but the possibility that this age-grading is a result of the speakers’ growing linguistic maturity should probably not be dismissed. Another interesting difference is found in the geographical aspects of the results, as the speakers in Reykjanesbær use ‘new passive’ constructions significantly more than speakers elsewhere in the country. In these remaining eight communities, however, speakers show very similar levels of ‘new passive’ usage.

There are also some signs that both gender and class in terms of educational/occupational level are relevant factors. Thus, men seem to use ‘new passive’ constructions somewhat more frequently than women, and speakers with a low educational/occupational level use these constructions more than speakers in the two higher educational/occupational groups. In these cases, however, the difference is not significant. Finally, there appears a weak tendency for speakers with strong local networks to be less prone to using ‘new passive’ constructions than are speakers with intermediate or weaker types of networks.

6.1.5 ‘Am-to-frenzy’

We now come to the last linguistic variable which is also arguably the newest of the features discussed in this thesis. This is the *er-að-æðið* (= ‘am-to-frenzy’), where the continuous aspect construction *vera að* + infinitive (= ‘be to’ + infinitive) is used in contexts where it is not used in standard language. As mentioned in section 4.5 above, this feature has yet to be thoroughly defined and described, and even though it is here referred to as ‘er-að-æðið’, a few other terms have been used for it without any one of them having become firmly established. Furthermore, no sociolinguistic work on this feature exists.⁶³ Consequently, it is unclear just which contexts this feature might possibly occur in, and this in turn means that here only a general overview of the occurrences of non-standard forms can be given, whereas no figures regarding relative frequencies can be presented. In much the same way, no real statistical comparisons can be made between the different social groupings as regards the usage of this feature. Rather, a general look at the distribution of non-standard usage amongst the speakers will have to suffice.

Another consequence of the novelty of this feature and the lack of scientific work dealing with it is that no concrete expectations or hypotheses could be formed regarding its spread. However, the frequency with which this feature is encountered in e.g. various kinds of live television broadcasting, such

⁶³ See section 4.5 for a closer description of this feature.

as sports commentaries and debate programmes, has led to the informal expectation that it would be relatively commonly used in the less formal everyday spoken language from which the following results are drawn.

The extent to which this relatively unspecified expectation is born out is somewhat unclear, which is, again, due to the lack of a clear definition of this feature. Thus, a total of 37 examples were found of *vera að* + infinitive being used in contexts where standard language normally requires the usage of simple present or past tense. This means that, unless non-standard examples of case inflections are taken as a single group, this feature is, in terms of sheer frequency, the most common of all the non-standard forms examined here. However, this does not have to mean that its relative frequency is any higher than that of the other non-standard forms. It even seems likely that in this respect we would here have figures similar to those seen for the other features. This tentative suggestion is primarily based on the information found in table 6.20 below, which gives an overview of the verbs produced when *vera að* + infinitive constructions are used outside their standard contexts.

Table 6.20 Overview of verbs used in ‘be to + infinitive’ constructions outside their standard contexts.

Number of constructions in which each verb is used	Verb
4	<i>Fatta</i> (= ‘get’/ ‘understand’)
2	<i>aðlagast</i> (= ‘adapt’); <i>fá</i> (= ‘get’/‘receive’); <i>hafa</i> (<i>á móti</i>) (= ‘have (against)’); <i>lifa</i> (= ‘live’); <i>taka</i> (= ‘take’)
1	<i>Borga sig</i> (= ‘pay off’); <i>dansa</i> (= ‘dance’); <i>detta</i> (<i>í það</i>) (= ‘get drunk’); <i>fara</i> (= ‘go’); <i>fá</i> (<i>borgað</i>) (= ‘get (paid)’); <i>fá</i> (<i>að vera</i>) (= ‘get (to be/stay)’); <i>ganga</i> (= ‘do’ (well/badly/fine/etc.)); <i>gera</i> (= ‘do’); <i>græða</i> (= ‘earn’/‘make money’); <i>halda í</i> (= ‘hold on to’); <i>hringja</i> (= ‘call’ (on telephone)); <i>lúffa</i> (= ‘give in’); <i>meika</i> (= ‘make’/‘handle’); <i>míga</i> (= ‘piss’); <i>ná</i> (<i>saman</i>) (= ‘get along’); <i>nota</i> (= ‘use’); <i>selja</i> (= ‘sell’); <i>sitja</i> (= ‘sit’); <i>skilja</i> (= ‘understand’); <i>standa sig</i> (= ‘do well’); <i>taka</i> (<i>alvarlega</i>) (= ‘take (seriously)’); <i>tengjast</i> (= ‘connect’); <i>þora</i> (= ‘dare’)

All in all, 29 different verbs are used on the 37 occasions *vera að* + infinitive is used outside its normal context. Amongst these verbs we find the types mentioned in section 4.5 above and thus we have here perception verbs, such as *fatta* and *skilja*, verbs referring to state, such as *lifa* and *sitja*, and verbs, such as *fá* and *lúffa* which refer to momentive actions. As mentioned before these verbs are normally not used in a continuous sense and therefore using them in *vera að* + infinitive constructions violates the standard, except when such constructions

are used in a future tense context.⁶⁴ However, some of the verbs in table 6.20 above can be used in a continuous sense in a *vera að* + infinitive construction without referring to the future as they then relate to an action which is ongoing but limited in time. Thus, to use two of the verbs from the table, the constructed examples (6.10) and (6.11) below are perfectly acceptable in Icelandic, although the verb used in (6.11) is generally regarded as somewhat offensive:

(6.10) Þau eru að dansa
They are to dance
They are dancing

(6.11) Hann er að míga
He is to piss
He is pissing

The acts in (6.10) and (6.11) are single, ongoing and limited in time and this makes the continuous aspect construction *vera að* + infinitive appropriate. However, when referring to the actions in question in a general, repetitive or habitual sense a simple present (or past) tense is required in standard language, as shown by the constructed examples (6.12) and (6.13):

(6.12) Þau dansa oft saman
They dance often together
They often dance with each other

(6.13) Hann mígur aldrei á sig
He pisses never on himself
He never pisses in his pants

The examples found in the data suggest that the *vera að* + infinitive construction may now be used in this latter context as well. This is shown by the authentic examples (6.14) and (6.15).

(6.14) og þau eru ekkert að dansa saman
and they are nothing to dance together
and they don't dance with each other

(6.15) hún er ekki að míga hérna inni
she is not to piss here inside
she doesn't piss in here⁶⁵

⁶⁴ See examples (4.23)-(4.25) and (4.27) in section 4.5.

⁶⁵ To ensure that no-one is offended, it should probably be mentioned that the speaker in question is here talking about her cat!

When this expansion of the field of usage of *vera að* + infinitive constructions is added to the earlier mentioned perception verbs, verbs referring to state and momentive verbs, it becomes clear that the majority of Icelandic verbs can potentially be used in such constructions outside the standard context. This in turn means that even though the 37 instances of this kind found here indicate that this feature has found some footing in modern spoken Icelandic, its frequency in relation to possible occurrences is still quite low. At the same time, this feature appears to have emerged only a few years ago, and this means that it will be interesting to follow its possible further expansion.

In this context, it should also be pointed out that as table 6.20 shows, only *fatta* shows any signs of having become relatively well-established in *vera að* + infinitive constructions in non-standard contexts. This is further strengthened by the fact that the four examples of non-standard usage are produced by four different speakers. As for the five verbs which are used twice each in a *vera að* + infinitive construction outside its standard context, only *fá* is used by two different speakers. This might be a further confirmation that this feature is still in its initial stages of potential change.

It was mentioned in section 4.5 that perception verbs seem always to be used with a negation when they appear in a *vera að* + infinitive construction outside a standard context. The findings in the data used for this study appear to confirm this pattern, as on all the 12 occasions a perception verb is used in these circumstances, it is accompanied by a negation. The other types of verbs mentioned above do not seem to be restricted in the same way, as of the remaining 25 examples ten appear with a negation. Here it should also be mentioned that on nine of the 37 occasions that a *vera að* + infinitive construction appears outside its standard context a past continuous construction is used whereas a present continuous construction is used on the remaining 28 occasions. Even though present continuous constructions thus appear to be more common than past continuous constructions, this nonetheless adds weight to the claims made in section 4.5 about *samsett nútíð* (= ‘compound present tense’), which has sometimes been used for this feature, being an inappropriate term. In section 4.5 it was suggested that *vera að* + infinitive could appear in past tense as well as present tense and the results from this study support this suggestion.

Let us then, finally, take a closer look at the speakers to discover how these *vera að* + infinitive constructions are distributed amongst them. All in all, 24 different speakers produce one or more examples of using these constructions outside their standard contexts. This means that 22.22% of the entire sample show some signs of usage of this kind. A great majority, or 17, of the speakers only produce one example each, but there are also five speakers who produce two examples each, one speaker who produces three examples and one who produces as many as seven examples.

A quick look at the geographical aspect reveals that the 24 speakers discussed here are relatively evenly spread amongst the nine communities, and

none of them seems to be entirely free of this feature. Thus one speaker in each of Akureyri, Neskaupstaður and central Reykjavík produces examples of non-standard usage, while two speakers in Akranes and three speakers in Flúðir do so. Finally, four speakers in each of Patreksfjörður, Reykjanesbær, suburban Reykjavík and Siglufjörður use *vera að* + infinitive constructions in non-standard contexts. It is of course uncertain just which pattern these figures are indicative of, as we do not have any results regarding relative frequencies. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that while in two of the fishing villages, i.e. Siglufjörður and Patreksfjörður, the number of speakers showing signs of non-standard usage is comparatively high, it is at the lower end of the scale in the third fishing village, i.e. Neskaupstaður. Similarly, while the low number of examples of *vera að* + infinitive found amongst informants in central Reykjavík may be a further indication of the general adherence to linguistic norms amongst speakers there, there are comparatively many informants in both suburban Reykjavík and Flúðir who produce examples of non-standard usage. This is interesting since as far as most of the other linguistic variables studied here are concerned, speakers in these communities have shown figures quite close to those of speakers in central Reykjavík. Here, it is especially noteworthy that the two most frequent users of *vera að* + infinitive constructions in non-standard contexts both come from suburban Reykjavík. All in all, therefore, the geographical pattern as regards this feature is relatively unclear even though there are signs that it may be somewhat different from that found for most of the other features.

As regards the gender dimension, 11 men and 13 women use *vera að* + infinitive constructions outside their standard context. Thus, there does at first sight not seem to be any marked difference between the genders. It should be noted, however, that the 11 men produce 14 non-standard examples, while the 13 women produce 23 such examples. Furthermore, both the one speaker who produces seven non-standard examples and four of the five speakers who produce two non-standard examples each are women. This might indicate that women are more prone to non-standard usage than men. This is interesting in light of the claims, mentioned in section 4.5 above, that sports commentators lead the way in using and spreading this feature, but an overwhelming majority of sports commentators in Iceland are male.

The distribution of non-standard usage amongst the three age groups indicates that teenagers are more prone to it than both adults and senior citizens. Thus 15 of the 24 speakers who produce non-standard examples are teenagers, and 21 of the overall 37 non-standard examples come from them. At the same time, five adult speakers produce 11 non-standard examples and four senior speakers produce five non-standard examples. It is interesting to note, however, that the speaker who on seven occasions uses *vera að* + infinitive constructions outside a standard context is an adult. Still, it may be more indicative of a

pattern that of the remaining five speakers who produce more than one non-standard example each, four are teenagers.

In the case of most of the linguistic variables discussed thus far, there has been some relationship between educational/occupational class and non-standard usage in the sense that non-standard usage increases as the educational/occupational level of the speakers gets lower. It is therefore interesting to note that as regards this ‘am-to-frenzy’ this pattern may possibly be reversed. Thus five speakers from educational/occupational group 1 produce a total of 6 non-standard examples, while the corresponding figures are eight speakers and ten non-standard examples in group 2 and 11 speakers and 21 non-standard examples in group 3. Here it should be kept in mind that group 3 has the highest overall number of speakers, while group 1 has the lowest, and the figures just presented may partially be a result of this. At the same time it is noteworthy that both the speaker who produces seven non-standard examples and the speaker who produces three such examples are in group 3, along with two of the five speakers who produce two non-standard examples each. It may thus be the case that speakers with a high educational/occupational level are more likely to use *vera ađ* + infinitive constructions than are other speakers.

Finally, as regards the social networks much, the same pattern emerges here as in relation to the other linguistic features studied. Thus, to once again look only at the networks in a local context, the bulk of the non-standard examples are found amongst speakers with networks of types 2, 3 and 4, which is the simple result of the fact that very few speakers have networks of types 1 and 5.⁶⁶ Nine speakers with networks of type 3 produce a total of 17 non-standard examples, including seven made by one and the same speaker. Six speakers with networks of type 2 produce non-standard examples, and this figure is repeated amongst speakers with networks of type 4. However, in the former case the total number of non-standard examples produced is nine while in the latter it is seven. When the number of speakers in each of these three intermediate types of networks is taken into account, and the one speaker who produces seven non-standard examples is excluded, it appears that the level of usage of non-standard *vera ađ* + infinitive constructions is highly similar in all three network types. As for networks of types 1 and 5, two speakers with networks of type 1 produce a total of two non-standard examples, while one speaker with a network of type 5 produces two non-standard examples. This does not form any clear break from the pattern in the other three types of networks. All in all, therefore, these figures indicate that – at least if the speaker producing seven non-standard examples is excluded – the extent of usage of

⁶⁶ As a reminder: The total number of informants with each type of networks is as follows: Type 1: 3 informants; type 2: 20 informants; type 3: 42 informants; type 4: 39 informants; type 5: 4 informants. See sections 5.3.3.2 and 5.4.2.2 for a discussion of how the strength and density of the informants’ social networks was ranked.

vera ađ + infinitive constructions in non-standard constructions is quite similar in all the network types.

In sum, in terms of sheer frequency, examples of ‘am-to-frenzy’ occur more frequently than other non-standard forms examined in this thesis. It is unclear, however, whether this also means that its relative frequency is higher than that of the other types of non-standard forms. As for the type of verb affected, we here have some confirmation that the types previously identified in this context, i.e. perception verbs, verbs referring to state and momentive verbs, can indeed be affected by the ‘am-to-frenzy’. However, this feature can also emerge in a general, repetitive or habitual context with verbs which in standard language are inflected in simple present or past tense in such contexts. At the same time, this last type of verb can in standard language occur in *vera ađ* + infinitive constructions when referring to a single ongoing act that is limited in time. Thus, the possible contexts of this construction appears to be expanding. As regards the above mentioned perception verbs, the results here seem to confirm that when they are used in an ‘am-to-frenzy’ context, they are accompanied by a negation.

The ‘am-to-frenzy’ seems to be relatively evenly spread amongst the nine communities included in this study, and there also appears to be little difference between the genders as regards this feature, even though women may proportionally use it to a slightly greater extent than men. Similarly, which type of social networks the speakers have does not seem to be a relevant factor. However, there are signs that teenagers are likelier than the members of the two older age groups to use *vera ađ* + infinitive constructions outside their standard contexts. In the same way, speakers with a high educational/occupational level appear to be more frequent users of these constructions than are speakers with a low educational/occupational level. It should be emphasized once again, however, that all the possible patterns mentioned here should be taken with a great deal of caution as they are based on sheer frequency figures rather than proportional figures which could not be obtained due to the lack of a clear definition and description of the ‘am-to-frenzy’.

6.2 Written language

Having now presented the results emerging from the spoken data, it is time to turn to their written counterpart and look at how the linguistic variables appeared there. The order of presentation is the same as for spoken language, which means that we start with examining ‘dative sickness’ and other signs of similar ‘verb sicknesses’. Then the results for ‘genitive avoidance’, other case inflections, ‘new passive’, and ‘am-to-frenzy’ are presented.

Before this presentation is started, it should be recalled that only 52 of the informants, or less than half of the total sample, submitted written material. This, along with the generally low frequency of deviant usage, means that it was

unfeasible to correlate most of the linguistic variables in any meaningful way with the social background factors. Therefore, the presentation here will be in more general terms than when the results from the spoken data were presented and analyzed, and it will mainly be used as a foundation for a general comparison between spoken and written language as regards the linguistic variables studied.

6.2.1 ‘Dative sickness’ and other’ verb sicknesses’

This presentation starts with ‘dative sickness’ and an overview of how this feature appeared in the written data. This is then followed by a similar presentation of the results as regards other ‘verb sicknesses’ i.e. ‘nominative sickness’, ‘oblique case sickness’, and ‘reverse dative sickness’.

6.2.1.1 ‘Dative sickness’

As we saw in chapter 4, previous research on ‘dative sickness’ is primarily based on written data produced under what can be described as test circumstances as the informants were supposed to fill in blanks with a subject in what they believed to be the correct case for given verbs. The results from this research indicate that the general level of ‘dative sickness’ is relatively high, at least amongst the 11-year-old children who were studied (Gíslason, 2003; Jónsson & Eypórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984). The written data used for this thesis consists of the informants’ own writing, in the form of e.g. school papers and letters, which was carried out prior to and in no direct connection with my research. At first sight, it may seem likely that this free form of writing would result in higher figures for ‘dative sickness’ than the test circumstances did, as in the latter context the informants are likely to have become aware of what linguistic features were being studied and may thus have concentrated specifically on producing “correct” forms. At the same time, though, my informants were older than the informants in this previous research and therefore likely to be more aware of the formality of written language and the stigmatization attached to ‘dative sickness’. Therefore, at the outset of my research, the level of ‘dative sickness’ was not necessarily expected to be higher in my written data than in the data used in previous research. As my research progressed, however, and the figures just discussed for ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language emerged, I had to modify my expectations even further. As became clear in section 6.1.1 above, the general level of ‘dative sickness’ is lower in my spoken data than in the written data used in previous research. This caused me to lower my original expectations of the level of ‘dative sickness’ in written language. Due to the formal nature of written language in comparison to spoken language, the level of ‘dative sickness’ in my written language data was now expected to be somewhat lower than in my spoken data.

If we now turn to the results, it is probably right to come straight back to the previous comments about the limited amount of data on which they are based. This applies not the least as regards ‘dative sickness’, as only 21 of the 52 informants who submitted written data use accusative verbs. If, however, we disregard these limitations for a moment, the results appear to bear out my expectations regarding the level of ‘dative sickness’ in written language as ‘dative sickness’ occurred on only two, or 5.13%, of the 39 occasions on which accusative verbs were used. Furthermore, the same speaker is responsible for both those instances. As a result of these low figures any division of this discussion of ‘dative sickness’ in written language according to the social factors examined is unfeasible. All that can be ascertained is that the speaker in question is a teenage girl from the Reykjavík area who is in the intermediate educational/occupational group and has relatively low scores on the network strength scales. This, however, gives few clues to the social rooting of ‘dative sickness’ in written language as several of the remaining 20 informants, all of whom only use standard subjects with accusative verbs, share one or more of the social characteristics of this one informant who uses a non-standard subject.

It may be more interesting to note that the two instances of ‘dative sickness’ in written language point to a pattern similar to that in spoken language as regards the subjects involved. Thus the subject used in both cases of ‘dative sickness’ in written language is the 3rd person singular feminine which falls into the “other” subject category discussed earlier, i.e. subjects that are neither 1st nor 2nd person singular pronouns. All in all, subjects of this type are used on 21 occasions with verbs demanding accusative case for the subject, which in turn means that the relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in connection to them is 9.52%. At the same time, 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects are used on 18 occasions with such verbs, always with a standard accusative subject.

The verb used on both occasions of ‘dative sickness’ in written language is *langa* (= ‘want’/‘long’). However, just as in spoken language, this is the most commonly used accusative verb in the written data and, apart from the two instances of non-standard usage, it is used on three occasions with a standard case subject from the “other” category and on 12 occasions with a standard accusative form of the 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun. The overall relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ with *langa* in written language is thus 11.76%, which is slightly lower than in spoken language.

In sum, therefore, ‘dative sickness’ appears only to be a very marginal feature in written language. On the few occasions it nonetheless occurs, there are signs that, just as in spoken language, it is more likely to appear with subjects that are not either 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns.

6.2.1.2 Other ‘verb sicknesses’

In the written data there is one further instance of deviant usage of case for the subject of an accusative verb. Here, in a similar fashion to its appearance in spoken language, *dreyma* (= ‘dream’) is used with a nominative case subject and may thus be showing a small sign of ‘nominative sickness’ rather than the more expected ‘dative sickness’. It should be pointed out, though, that *dreyma* is used with a standard accusative subject on another five occasions and thus shows a relative ‘nominative sickness’ frequency of 16.67%. This figure, which of course is based on a very low number of tokens, can only be applied to *dreyma* when it is used with subjects from the “other” category as no examples were found in the written data of this verb being used with a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the subject used on the one instance of ‘nominative sickness’ with *dreyma* is *móðir* (= ‘mother’) which here appears in this nominative form rather than its accusative (as well as dative and genitive) form *móður*. Although it did not occur in the data discussed in section 6.1.3 above, *móðir* belongs to the group of kinship terms described there which speakers appear to find somewhat problematic and tend to use the nominative form of them in all inflectional cases. The one instance found here of nominative case being used for *móðir* with *dreyma* may, in other words, be a result of this tendency rather than an example of ‘nominative sickness’ as such.

Just as was the case in spoken language, there are also some hints of ‘nominative sickness’ in the informants’ usage of dative verbs. Six instances of this kind were found amongst the total of 246 dative verbs in the written data. Again, however, it is doubtful in some cases whether these instances should be interpreted as indicative of a slight tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ or as the result of e.g. “slips of the pen” or the syntactic context in which the verbs and their subjects appear.

Two of these instances appear clearly to be relatable to the writer in question not being aware of which subject case to use for the impersonal verb written. These two instances involve the same speaker and the same verb, which is *svipa (til)* (= ‘resemble’). In both cases a single nominative subject immediately precedes the dative verb, which means that the syntactic context is as straightforward as possible, and the two occurrences seem to rule out the possibility of a “slip of the pen”. What may provide some explanation for these signs of instability is, however, that *svipa til* is a relatively rare verb, as witnessed e.g. by the fact that these were the only two instances of it in my written or spoken data. Also, one of the subjects used is a common noun, *sköpunarsögur* (= ‘stories of creation’), while the other is a female pronoun, *þessi* (= ‘this’). In other words, neither of the two subjects are 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns, which, at least as far as ‘dative sickness’ is concerned, appear to be more stable than other subjects. This combination of a rare impersonal

verb and subjects other than 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun may be the source of the ‘nominative sickness’ on these occasions.

There is one further example of ‘nominative sickness’ amongst the dative verbs which can not be traced to syntactic complexities. The verb used here is *detta (í hug)* (= ‘think of’/‘come to mind’) and the subject is a personal name. As seen in section 6.1.1.8 above, there was another example of this kind found in spoken language, but there the subject was the 1st person singular pronoun. I also argued there that this spoken example should be seen as a slip of the tongue, rather than as a clear indication of a tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ for this verb. This argument was largely based on the 22 instances of standard usage found in spoken language, one of which came from the speaker who produced the one instance of non-standard usage. This argument is of course somewhat undermined by this apparent example of ‘nominative sickness’ in written language, not the least as there is only one example in the written data of standard case being used with this verb. Nonetheless, I am very hesitant to regard these two overall instances of non-standard usage as signs of instability in the general usage of *detta (í hug)*. Admittedly, I now lean mainly on my native speaker intuition which tells me that the step between dative and accusative subject case for *detta (í hug)* is far larger than that between accusative and dative subject case for the accusative verbs which show signs of ‘dative sickness’, but until further evidence proves me wrong, I will maintain that the two non-standard instances of subject case with *detta (í hug)* are simply slips of the tongue or the pen.

In my view, the remaining three potential examples of ‘nominative sickness’ with dative verbs are, in a similar fashion to the corresponding examples in spoken language, the result of the syntactic context in which they appear rather than signs of instability. Thus, to start with an example which occurs with the verb *finnst* (= ‘think’/‘feel’), the verb and its subject are separated by a relative clause, as shown in the example below:

- (6.16) Einstaklingar, sem finna sig ekki í neinu, finnst þeir...
Individuals(NOM), who find themselves not in anything, feel
they...
Individuals, who do not feel at home anywhere, feel they...

Here it is probable that the subordinate clause that emerges between the verb and its subject, *einstaklingar*, is the source of the nominative case used for the subject. This is supported by the fact that *finna* is used with a standard dative subject on 36 occasions in the written data, and on all these occasions the subject stands either directly before or directly after the verb. Also, just as is the case in spoken language, even though this one instance of nominative subject

case being used with *finna* were to be interpreted as an example of ‘nominative sickness’, it would signal a very weak tendency.

The two possible instances of ‘nominative sicknesses’ that still remain occur with the verbs *þykja* (= ‘think’/‘feel’) and *ljúka* (= ‘finish’). Besides these instances, *þykja* is used with a standard dative subject on two occasions and *ljúka* on four occasions. Therefore the simple numerical argument just presented for the absence of ‘nominative sickness’ with *finnast* cannot be used with the same effect here. However, the syntactic context does, again, seem to be a likelier explanation than a possible ‘nominative sickness’ tendency for the non-standard usage. This can be shown by the example of nominative subject being used with *þykja*:

- (6.17) *Ég vona að þér lesandi góður hafi þótt þessi ritgerð...*
I hope that you(DAT) reader(NOM)good(NOM) have felt this
essay...
 I hope that you dear reader have felt this essay...

Note here that the initial part of the subject, *þér*, appears in its standard dative case whereas the apposition, *lesandi góður*, that separates it from the verb appears in nominative case even though its placement between *þér* and the verb calls for it to also take on dative case. However, had this string not been placed between *þér* and the verb, but rather been used as a more direct address to the reader, as in ‘*Lesandi góður, ég vona að þér hafi þótt...*’ (= ‘Dear reader, I hope that you have felt...’) or ‘*Ég vona, lesandi góður, að þér hafi þótt...*’ (= ‘I hope, dear reader, that you have felt...’), both of which are perfectly acceptable in Icelandic, nominative would have been the standard case to use. This, alongside of course the standard dative case on *þér* indicates that a tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ is probably not the source of this instance of non-standard usage. The same can be said for the example of non-standard subject case with *ljúka*, which is syntactically very similar to the example just discussed. Furthermore, the informant who produces this example also uses dative verbs on 17 occasions in her spoken language without any trace of ‘nominative sickness’. Admittedly, she does not use *ljúka* in spoken language, but amongst the verbs she uses are *detta (í hug)*, *finnast*, and *þykja* which have all been discussed above in the context of ‘nominative sickness’. She even produces one standard example of the accusative verb *dreyma*. It seems unlikely that a person this stable in spoken language would show signs of instability in written language.

Turning then to the remaining two ‘verb sicknesses’, i.e. ‘oblique case sickness’ and ‘reverse dative sickness’ the first thing to notice is that the written data shows no signs of the former simply because the verbs it seems to affect, i.e. *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) and *kviða* (= ‘be anxious’), do not occur in that part of the data. There is, however, one possible instance of ‘reverse dative sickness’ as the verb *líða* (= ‘feel’) is on one occasion used with an accusative

subject rather than the standard dative. Once again, though, it seems doubtful that this example should be interpreted as indicative of any ‘sickness’ at all. This can be explained by comparing the actual example (6.18) with another one constructed by me (6.19):

(6.18) *sem lét mig líða illa*
 who made me(ACC) feel bad
 who made me feel bad.

(6.19) *sem lét mig fara*
 who made me(ACC) go

In (6.19) *mig* functions as an object of the verb *lét* (infinitive: *láta*) which governs for accusative object case. Accusative is thus the standard case for *mig* in (6.19). In (6.18), however, *mig* functions as a subject for *líða* and should therefore in standard language take on dative case. I would suggest that this is a case of contamination, in that the informant here mixes these two types of constructions which results in the non-standard form *mig*. This is further supported by the fact that the same informant also produces one example of standard dative case being used for the subject of *líða*. On that occasion, as well as in the further ten standard examples of this kind produced by other informants, the verb *láta* is not present to cause confusion.

The conclusion of this presentation of the results for ‘other verb sicknesses’ in written language is that both ‘nominative sickness’ and ‘reverse dative sickness’ are only minimally present, if at all. Nothing can be said on ‘oblique case sickness’, however, as the verbs associated with it did not occur in the written data. Also, it should be said, once again, that the limited amount of written data does not allow for any strong claims to be made as regards the presence or absence of ‘verb sicknesses’ in general in written language.

6.2.2 ‘Genitive avoidance’

We now turn to the results regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ in written language. As was stated at the beginning of section 6.1.2 above, the limited previous research that exists on this feature has not really dealt with its spread but rather with identifying and defining it (Kjartansson, 1979, 1999; Svavarsdóttir, 1994). Therefore, just as was the case as regards spoken language, no particular hypothesis was formed regarding the expectations in relation to the spread of ‘genitive avoidance’ in written language. At the same time, however, the above mentioned previous work on ‘genitive avoidance’ seems primarily to be based on written rather than spoken material, and the fact that this written material produced enough examples of the feature to enable a first definition of it, suggests that it has established itself to some extent in written language.

This last suggestion, however, cannot be said to be borne out by the results. Rather, the overall figures regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ in spoken language are more or less mirrored by the corresponding figures for written language. Thus, the written data produced a total of 3,241 tokens/words used in a context which requires genitive case to be used, and examples of non-standard usage were found on only 21, or 0.65% of these instances. Therefore, ‘genitive avoidance’ appears, in general, not to have become established in written language. This, however, is the strongest claim that can be made on the basis of these overall figures as here, just as regards spoken language, it should be mentioned that they include all items which are, by the context they appear in, required to take genitive case. The majority of these items have not been identified by Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994) as affected by ‘genitive avoidance’.

The results on ‘genitive avoidance’ that emanate from the written data also resemble their counterpart from the spoken data in that not all the examples of non-standard usage in genitive case contexts can be classified as instances of ‘genitive avoidance’, as it has been identified by Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994). In fact, this can be said about the majority of the non-standard examples, since only seven of them are clear examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ in Kjartansson’s and Svavarsdóttir’s terms.

As we have seen earlier (see sections 4.2 and 6.1.2), complex sentences which contain a number of case-inflected words and clauses, where the case governing item and the case-inflected word are well distanced from each other, have been identified as contexts which are likely to lead to ‘genitive avoidance’ (Kjartansson, 1979). This seems to be confirmed to some extent by the fact that six of the seven clear written examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ found in the present data appear in either one of these contexts or in situations where both contexts can be said to occur. An example of the latter, containing two tokens or words used in a non-standard form, is the following:

- (6.20) auðvelda flutning(ACC) hráefnis(GEN) til(PREP-GEN)
 framleiðslusvæða(GEN) og síðan fullunnar(NOM/ACC)
 vörur(NOM/ACC) á(PREP-ACC) markað(ACC)
*facilitate transportation(ACC) raw material(GEN) to(PREP-
 GEN) production areas(GEN) and then fully-
 worked(NOM/ACC) products(NOM/ACC) to(PREP-ACC)
 market(ACC)*
 facilitate the transportation of raw materials to production areas
 and then final products to the market

Here we have a string in which there is both a number of case inflected words and a gap between one of the case governing words and some of the words it governs for case. If we go through this step by step *hráefnis* is a genitive

attribute of *flutning* and accordingly appears in genitive case. The phrase *fullunnar vörur* is, despite not being adjacent to it, also a genitive attribute of *flutning* and therefore both words in the phrase should appear in genitive case as well, but this is not observed by the writer in question who uses the nominative/accusative form of both words. This is an interesting point, as even though the immediate link between *flutning* and *fullunnar vörur* is broken by the prepositional phrase *til framleiðslusvæða*, the preposition *til* governs for genitive case and should therefore not necessarily interrupt the genitive case frame set up by *flutning*.

When examples of this kind are added to their spoken counterparts, they may at first sight be regarded as further confirmation of ‘genitive avoidance’ having established itself in contexts of this kind (i.e. complex sentences with many case inflected words and/or sentences where there is a gap between the case governing word and the case inflected word). Here, however, a difference between spoken and written language emerges as non-standard usage of case in these contexts is proportionally much more common in spoken than in written language. Thus, as can be seen in section 6.1.2, ‘genitive avoidance’ appears twice in 12 spoken clauses containing a number of case-inflected words, and once on the three occasions there is a gap between the case governing word and the case inflected word. These contexts are, in other words, quite rare in spoken language. The six examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ that appear in these contexts in written language, on the other hand, come from a total of 133 clauses containing three or more case inflected words and a further 43 in which there is a gap between the case governing word and the case inflected word. Thus, while contexts of this kind are more common in written than in spoken language, they seem more likely to result in ‘genitive avoidance’ in spoken language. This, in turn, is probably a simple result of the difference in nature between spoken and written language, where written language allows for more planning and correction, and thereby closer control of case inflections, than spoken language does. At the same time, the fact that non-standard usage *does* nonetheless occur in these contexts in written language may add further weight to the reservations made in section 6.1.2 above about the appropriateness of the term ‘genitive avoidance’ for these examples. As we have seen in section 6.1.3 and will see again shortly (in section 6.2.3 below), difficulties with case governing in the contexts discussed above are by no means limited to genitive case and seem to affect accusative and dative case also. Thus, in these cases, it is not genitive case as such which is problematic but rather the context. Furthermore, it is of course questionable whether six instances of non-standard usage in a total of 176 potentially problematic contexts really justifies my use of the term ‘problematic’ in relation to these contexts.

The final clear example of ‘genitive avoidance’ as it is described by Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994) involves the preposition *sökum*:

- (6.21) köfnun sökum(PREP-GEN) frjókornum(DAT)
suffocation because(PREP-GEN) pollen(DAT)
suffocation due to pollen

Here the writer does not seem to be aware of which case *sökum* governs, i.e. which case it requires on the following word. Both Kjartansson (1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994) mention in their discussion of ‘genitive avoidance’ that prepositions which govern genitive case are relatively few in Icelandic and furthermore quite rarely used, not the least as many of them appear to be frequently replaced by prepositions which govern accusative or dative without changing the meaning of the entire phrase. This more common pattern of preposition + accusative or dative case might in itself be an explanation of the above hint of a tendency to use accusative or dative case, even on the few occasions when a preposition governing for genitive case is used. Care should be taken, though, not to read too much into this one example, especially since *sökum* is used with a noun in the standard genitive case by five other speakers on a total of 11 occasions.

Having now discussed the seemingly clear instances of ‘genitive avoidance’ found in the written data, it is interesting to note that, just as was the case in spoken language, one particular type of this feature does not occur at all. This is the tendency, described by Svavarsdóttir (1994), for feminine nouns which in nominative singular end in *-ing* and a group of women’s names, to take an *-u* ending in genitive singular, rather than the standard *-ar* ending (see section 6.1.2). Eight different informants produced 15 written examples of genitive usage of words from these groups, and on all occasions the standard *-ar* ending was used. While Svavarsdóttir’s work establishes that this tendency may be in existence the present data strongly suggests that it is not particularly prevalent.

In section 6.1.2 it was found that in spoken language other groups of feminine nouns which in standard language take an *-ar* ending in genitive singular may have a slight tendency to appear without any ending, thereby seemingly following the standard pattern of accusative and dative case. In the written data, however, no traces of this tendency were found, as words from these groups were used in genitive contexts by 35 different speakers on a total of 138 occasions, always with the standard *-ar* ending.

As for the remaining 14 instances of usage of non-standard genitive forms, or some case other than genitive where genitive is required by the context, they show few signs of systematicity and many of them seem more likely to be the result of a typographical error than of a tendency on the writer’s behalf to deviate from the standard genitive form in question. Admittedly, there are four examples of a genitive *-s* ending missing, but it is nonetheless very doubtful that this can be interpreted as a sign of instability in the usage of it. This ending is probably the most common genitive ending in Icelandic and is

used on a total of 553 occasions in the written data discussed here. Four instances, or 0.72%, of non-standard usage within this larger figure does not suggest this to be a strong tendency. Furthermore, three of these four examples occur in contexts which strongly suggest that the writer in question is fully aware of which case to use and how to inflect for it: The non-standard usage is simply the result of occasional spelling errors or “typos”. This is exemplified by (6.22) below:

- (6.22) og hófst stríð milli(PREP-GEN) Prússlands(GEN) og
 Austurríki(NOM/ACC/DAT) árið 1866
*and began war between(PREP-GEN) Prussia(GEN) and
 Austria(NOM/ACC/DAT) year 1866*
 and war began between Prussia and Austria in 1866

Here the preposition *milli* governs genitive on both *Prússlands* and *Austurríki*, and both words should take an *-s* ending, even though only *Prússlands* does so on this occasion. However, the usage of the standard *-s* ending on *Prússlands* suggests that this writer is aware both of which case *milli* governs for and of *-s* endings. Thus, even though the lack of the *-s* ending in *Austurríki* leads to this word appearing in the standard form for nominative, accusative and dative case it seems unlikely that this is due to the writer’s tendency to “avoid” genitive in this context. Note, however, that the lack of the *-s* ending on *Austurríki* might be a result of the distance between this word and the case governing item, i.e. *milli*, being greater than the distance between *milli* and *Prússlands*. On this reading this example should be seen as a rather typical case of ‘genitive avoidance’. That would, in turn, further strengthen the argument about contexts rather than case inflections or case endings being problematic. The extremely low overall relative frequency of non-standard usage where an *-s* ending is required does at least indicate that this ending is not particularly problematic, but certain contexts may cause occasional appearances of non-standard forms.

The only other of these remaining genitive endings which the informants deviate from on more than one occasion in the written data is *-rar*. This is the genitive singular feminine ending for a number of adjectives and it is used on a total of 28 occasions by 13 different writers. On two, or 7.14%, of these occasions, this ending takes the form *-ar*. When compared to other proportional figures regarding non-standard usage in genitive contexts, this one is of course relatively high. It should be kept in mind, though, that it is based on only two instances of non-standard usage, and more data is probably needed before any strong claims can be made about whether or not it is indicative of any instability. It also seems likely that, here again, it is not genitive case or even the genitive case ending as such which is problematic. Thus, on both instances where an adjective is used with an *-ar* rather than the standard *-rar* ending, the noun it modifies appears in its standard genitive form which indicates that the writer is aware of

which case is required by the context. Also, as only the first *-r-* from the *-rar* ending is omitted, it maintains an essentially genitive character which is distinct from other singular case endings. It therefore seems more likely that the omission of this *-r-* is can be traced e.g. to the fact that in spoken language it is often omitted, or not fully pronounced, which may cause some uncertainty amongst speakers regarding the spelling of the singular feminine genitive adjectives in question. In other words, this seems likely to be a spelling “error” rather than a grammatical one. It should be noted, though, that no corresponding examples were found in the spoken data.

There are now eight examples of non-standard genitive forms unaccounted for. Seven of them will remain so as they involve seven different apparently non-standard genitive forms which occur once each in commonly used genitive constructions which otherwise appear according to the standard. Therefore, these seven examples hardly call for any closer examination, especially as in all instances simple spelling errors appear to be the underlying reason for the non-standard appearance. As for the last remaining example it consists of a non-standard form of the kinship term *faðir* (=‘father’). As was seen in sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3 above, deviant usage of kinship terms is not restricted to genitive case in spoken language, and we will see shortly that this is also true as regards written language. A closer examination of this example will, therefore, have to wait until the next section (6.2.3), where it is connected to a discussion of a seemingly more general tendency for using non-standard forms in oblique case.

As a final note in this section, it should be mentioned that, as could probably be expected due to the unbalanced nature of the sample of speakers who submitted written material, hardly any clear patterns can be discerned with regard to the relationship between the different social groupings and the usage of non-standard forms in genitive contexts. This is regardless of whether only the clear instances of ‘genitive avoidance’ are examined or the other examples of non-standard usage are included. The only sign of patterning regards the age groups, as teenagers appear to be slightly more prone to using non-standard forms in genitive contexts than are adults and senior citizens. Thus, 14 of the 21 overall examples of this kind in written language appear in material provided by teenagers, and when the seven clear examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ are examined specifically it emerges that five of them are found in the writing produced by the teenage group. It may well be the case, however, that this is simply a reflection of the fact that the teenagers produced by far the greatest number of genitive forms, and the proportion they show of non-standard usage is only marginally higher than that of adults and senior citizens. Furthermore, the majority of the written material submitted by teenagers consists of school papers, while much of the material provided by the other age groups is of a more personal and less formal nature, but, as Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994) point out, the use of genitive forms increases as the level of

formality is raised. Similarly, long strings of case inflected words are mainly found in more formal texts and when this is pieced together it may be only natural that the teenagers in this sample produce non-standard forms slightly more frequently than informants from the two adult groups do. Thus, this higher number of non-standard examples amongst the teenagers should not be interpreted as a possible initial stage of change in progress.

From the discussion in this section it should be clear that its end result is essentially the same as regards its counterpart in spoken language. This is to say that overall genitive case appears to be quite stable in written language as only 21 instances of deviant usage were found amongst 3241 words used in a context which requires genitive case to be used. Of these 21 examples, only seven appear to be clearly classifiable as cases of ‘genitive avoidance’ as defined in earlier studies, which means that this feature can hardly be said to have become established in written language. Also, the questions regarding the appropriateness of the term ‘genitive avoidance’ to describe some of the instances of non-standard usage are raised again here, as more often than not it appears that the context in which a genitive form is required is more problematic than the genitive case or the genitive case ending as such.

6.2.3 Other case inflections

Having now discussed the results regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ in written language, it is time to complete the picture for case inflections and present the results for accusative and dative case. As regards the expectations held here, they are more or less a repetition of what was said in the beginning of the section above (6.1.3.) dealing with accusative and dative in spoken language; the claims made about a general instability in the case inflectional system of Icelandic are quite unspecific and this feature has not been examined scientifically. Therefore, again, no particular hypothesis was formed, other than a vague expectation that some signs of instability would emerge.

Just as was the case in spoken language, this general expectation appears to be refuted by the overall results as, amongst a total of 8,572 tokens/words that are used in accusative context, only 30, or 0.35% appear in a non-standard form, while, out of the total of 8,459 tokens/words used in dative contexts, 45, or 0.53%, are used in a non-standard form. As before, it should be kept in mind that these figures include all items inflected for accusative or dative, apart from set phrases and idioms, and these items could therefore include a number of features which really fall outside the frame of the alleged instability of the case inflectional system. Yet again, however, it seems clear that the overall picture regarding accusative and dative case inflections is one of stability, and when the results regarding genitive case are added to this there seem to be few signs of instability in the case inflectional system as a whole, regardless of whether we are talking about written or spoken language.

In the figures above, the same trace of a pattern emerges as in spoken language. This is to say that the lowest relative frequency of non-standard usage is found in accusative contexts, while it is slightly higher in dative contexts to then rise a little further in genitive contexts. Some possible reasons behind this pattern were discussed in section 6.1.3 above. At the same time, it is interesting to note that while the relative frequency of non-standard usage is, as one would expect, given the higher degree of formality of writing, slightly lower in written language than in spoken as regards both dative and genitive case, it stays at nearly exactly the same level in both spoken and written language as far as accusative case is concerned. It is difficult to find any reasonable explanation for this, and it might well be the case that this is simply coincidental as regards accusative case. The low number of non-standard tokens in accusative contexts in both spoken and written language means that only a handful of such tokens are needed in either type of data to affect the balance.

As before, the fact that less than half of the 108 informants submitted written material, and that this sub-sample was somewhat unbalanced, renders any correlations between the instances of non-standard usage in written language and the social groupings somewhat meaningless. Therefore, it will simply be mentioned here that the only sign of a pattern found in this regard in the results is that teenagers seem to be slightly more prone to non-standard usage of accusative case than adults who, in turn, show slightly higher figures than senior citizens in this respect. Interestingly, however, this pattern is not repeated in the results for dative case contexts, as there adults seem to use non-standard forms a little more frequently than teenagers and senior citizens.

Turning now to the instances of non-standard usage, we here once again see the pattern we have already seen as regards accusative and dative case in spoken language and genitive case in both spoken and written language. This is to say that a considerable portion of the non-standard forms seems to be traceable more to the context in which they appear than to difficulties with using the case inflection as such. The main difference between the spoken and the written data in this regard is that in the written part there are of course no examples of the conversational context affecting the case or form used in an accusative or dative context. Instead, there are in the written data proportionally more examples like (6.23) below which contain a long string of case inflected words where the writer at some points appears to lose track of which case the original case governing word requires:

- (6.23) maður getur misst heyrnina af(PREP-DAT) mörgum(DAT) ástæðum(DAT) t.d. í(PREP-DAT) slysum(DAT), sjúkdómum(DAT) svo sem hettusótt(DAT) og mislingum(DAT), mikill (NOM) hávaði(NOM) á vinnustað...
man can lose hearing-the of (PREP-DAT) many(DAT) reasons(DAT) e.g. in(PREP-DAT) accidents(DAT), illnesses(DAT) such as mumps(DAT) and measles(DAT), great(NOM) noise(NOM) in workplace...
 one can lose one's hearing for many reasons, e.g. in accidents, illnesses such as smallpox and measles, great noise in the workplace...

In this example, the writer in question shows clearly enough both that she is aware that the prepositions *af* and *í* govern for dative case and that she generally has no problem with inflecting for dative. The sudden occurrence of nominative case towards the end of a string of words in dative case does therefore not seem to originate in difficulties with the case inflection itself.

All in all, ten of the 30 non-standard occurrences in accusative contexts and 19 of the 45 non-standard forms in dative contexts appear to be relatable to syntactic contexts similar to the one shown above, or e.g. where the word to be inflected for case appears either well after the case governing item or even before it. These examples are further evidence that non-standard usage does not only occur when genitive is the case required in these syntactic contexts, and thereby further weight is added to the doubts about the term 'genitive avoidance' in these circumstances.

In the remaining instances of non-standard usage, there are, just as in spoken language, very few patterns to be discerned. Thus, these cases are primarily made up of single non-standard occurrences of a given word, which makes it impossible to determine whether or not these occurrences are signs of an emerging instability. Again, however, the few words that appear in non-standard accusative or dative forms on more than one occasion each are either the women's names that in nominative end in *-ný* or *-ey* or some of the kinship terms discussed in sections 6.1.3.1 and 6.1.3.2 above. This means that a closer look should be taken at the usage of these words in written language as well.

Before we come to that, however, a brief mention should also be made of the masculine nouns discussed in 6.1.3 which in singular dative take either an *-i* ending or a zero-ending, neither of which appears to have obtained a clear status of standard usage. As mentioned before, this case inflectional group does not seem to fall within the scope of this thesis. Therefore the figures about to be presented for it were not included in the overall figures regarding dative case. For comparative purposes, it may nonetheless be interesting to note that the general picture for this group in written language resembles that of spoken language. Thus 190 of the 236 words from this group found in the written data

were used with an *-i* ending, which makes for a relative frequency of 80.51%. In the spoken data, the corresponding figure was 74.53%. However, even if these overall figures are similar, one interesting difference emerges if they are broken down a little. In the results for this case inflectional group in spoken language, some signs could be seen that the zero-ending is gaining ground as it is more used by teenagers than by adults who, in turn, use it more than senior citizens. Nearly the opposite pattern emerges in the written data. Here, the teenagers show the lowest level of usage of the zero-ending, the relative frequency of which is 12.7%, while the corresponding figures for adults and senior citizens are 40.74% and 21.95% respectively. Here, it should be noted that the high figure for adults might to some extent be explained by them using by far the lowest overall number of nouns in question, which means that only a few instances of zero-endings raise their relative frequency considerably.

The other main point of interest as regards this particular group of words is that, just as in spoken language, there are signs of individual speakers showing variation in their usage of the two endings. Thus, of the 42 informants who use nouns of this kind in the written material they submitted, 19 use an *-i* ending and a zero-ending on at least one occasion each, and two of these informants produce examples where the same word is used with an *-i* ending on one occasion and a zero-ending on another. Also, and again similarly to the results for spoken language, nine of the 19 speakers who only use the *-i* ending do so on the one occasion they use a noun from the category in question. It seems likely that with more extensive usage of the relevant nouns some of these speakers would show signs of variation. As for the speakers who exclusively use zero-endings, there are only four of them and three of those produce more than one example each.

6.2.3.1 Compound women's names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix

In the written data, compound women's names that in nominative end with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix are only used on a total of five occasions in accusative or dative case by three different informants. Therefore, the results here are less reliable than those regarding spoken language, but it is nonetheless interesting to note that on two of those five occasions the non-standard *-ju*-less form is used. Speaking of relative frequencies is of course somewhat futile here, but perhaps the fact that non-standard forms are here used on 40% of the occasions *-ný/-ey* names are used, while the corresponding figure in spoken language is 80%, is some indication that non-standard usage is not as common in written language as in spoken. At the same time, though, these 40% do of course indicate that written language is not entirely free from non-standard usage in this respect.

It should also be mentioned that one of the non-standard examples occurs in an accusative context, while the other occurs in a dative context. Both are produced by the same informant who thus shows some signs of consistency in

her non-standard usage, not the least as this is the informant who was responsible for four examples of non-standard usage in spoken language without producing any standard forms. As for the three standard examples, one informant is responsible for two of those, thus showing some degree of consistency of standard usage. This informant does, however, not use *-ny'/-ey* names in spoken language, and thus no further confirmation of this consistency is to be found there. The same can be said about the last informant whose one example of standard usage in written language occurs on the only occasion she uses the names in question. As can be gleaned from the above, all the examples, both standard and non-standard, discussed here were found in women's writing. However, the low number of tokens does not allow for any further analysis in terms of the social background factors.

It should be added to this discussion that genitive case of *-ny'/-ey* names appears to be just as unproblematic in written language as in spoken language. Thus, one informant uses these names on four occasions, always in the standard form and another informant produces one further standard example. What is particularly noteworthy here is that this last informant is the same as the one mentioned above who uses four non-standard accusative or dative case forms in spoken language and a further two in written language, without ever using the standard form for these cases.

In sum, the results here can be seen as further confirmation of the existence of a tendency to use compound women's names, which in nominative end with a *-ny'* or *-ey* suffix, with the non-standard *-ju-*less form in both accusative and dative case. At the same time, these results indicate that this tendency has not reached the same level in written as in spoken language. It should be kept in mind, however, that the number of tokens these results are based on is very low, and without further evidence, generalizations of the kind just made here cannot be regarded as particularly reliable.

6.2.3.2 Kinship terms

As seen in section 6.1.3.2 above, there appears to be a relatively strong tendency in spoken language to use the non-standard nominative case ending *-ir*, rather than the standard accusative, dative and genitive case ending *-ur*, when inflecting a group of kinship terms for the three oblique cases. One exception to this is the term *faðir* (= 'father') which, on the 6 occasions it is used, appears in its standard oblique case form. This tendency seems to be much weaker in written language as can be seen in table 6.21 below:

Table 6.21 Occurrences of standard vs. non-standard forms of kinship terms in accusative, dative and genitive case

Term	Accusative		Dative		Genitive		Total S/N-s.
	Standard	Non-stand.	Standard	Non-stand.	Standard	Non-stand.	
Systir	2	0	4	0	1	0	7/0
Dóttir	8	0	12	1	14	0	34/1
Móðir	6	0	11	0	2	0	19/0
Bróðir	3	0	3	0	3	0	9/0
Faðir	6	2	6	0	4	1	16/3
Total	25	2	36	1	24	1	85/4

Here, there are only four occurrences of non-standard usage amongst a total of 89 tokens. The relative frequency of non-standard forms is thus 4.49% which is a sharp decrease from the 46.43% which emerged in the results for spoken language. Another noteworthy feature is that here three of the four instances of non-standard usage involve the term *faðir*, the standard form of which appeared to be quite stable in spoken language. However, a closer look at these instances of non-standard usage in written language reveals that they may not be particularly clear signs of instability as regards *faðir*. Thus, to start with the two non-standard occurrences of this term in accusative contexts, it should first be pointed out that the same informant is responsible for both of them. Interestingly, he also uses the standard accusative form of *faðir* on one occasion. On this instance *faðir* is used, so to speak, on its own, while on the two non-standard occurrences it is the latter part of the compound *fjölskyldufaðir* (= ‘family father’). This raises the question whether using *faðir* in this way somehow takes the writer’s focus away from the case inflection of the term.

The third non-standard example of *faðir*, i.e. the one which appears in a genitive context matches the two examples discussed above in that here *faðir* is again part of the compound *fjölskyldufaðir*. In this case, however, the non-standard status of the form used does not originate in an *-ir* ending being used rather than an *-ur* ending. Indeed, the *-ur* ending is used here but a genitive *-s* is added to it. The result of this is *fjölskylduföðurs*, i.e. in a sense a double marking of the genitive, where the use of the *-s* ending can possibly be traced to the fact that this genitive ending is the most common one for masculine nouns in Icelandic. To this it should be added that the informant producing this example uses a further four kinship terms, one of which is the masculine *bróðir* (= ‘brother’), and all these appear in their standard form. All in all, therefore, it can be doubted that these three overall non-standard examples of *faðir* should be interpreted as indicative of this term showing signs of instability.

The fourth and last example of non-standard usage occurs with *dóttir* (= ‘daughter’). As seen in section 6.1.3.2, this term is in spoken language used with a relative frequency of 56.25% in a non-standard form, which in itself indicates

that this single example in written language is part of the same tendency for non-standard usage. However, in this written example, *dóttir* is used in quite a complex syntactic context of the kind seen e.g. in example (6.13) where it is the last in a string of words that should be inflected for dative case. This informant also uses another five kinship terms, all in the standard form. Therefore, it is again questionable whether the single instance of non-standard usage of *dóttir* is really traceable to a tendency to use *-ir* endings rather than the standard *-ur* ending in oblique cases of kinship terms. Furthermore, the fact that none of the four overall instances of non-standard usage of kinship terms in the written data are indisputable signs of the tendency witnessed in spoken language for these terms, may suggest that the relative frequency of non-standard forms in written language is in reality even lower than the 4.49% presented above.

As can be seen above, three informants are responsible for the four non-standard oblique case forms of kinship terms that appear in the written data. All in all, 27 informants use the relevant kinship terms which means that 11.11% of them show some signs of non-standard usage. However, the reservations made above should be kept in mind here as well, not the least as 17 of the 24 informants who do not use any non-standard forms, use kinship terms on two or more occasions, thereby indicating some level of consistency of standard usage. Apart from this, very little can be said about the informants as the low number of non-standard forms do not allow for any correlations being made between them and the social groupings. It may nonetheless be interesting to note that all the three informants who produced non-standard examples are teenage boys.

In sum, the results here indicate that the tendency for usage of the non-standard *-ir* ending in accusative, dative and genitive case of the kinship terms mentioned above is much weaker in written than in spoken language. Furthermore, one of the four instances of non-standard usage found in the data is clearly not traceable to this tendency, and its role in the remaining three instances is questionable. Due to this low number of non-standard tokens, little can be said about their social distribution other than that they all happen to be produced by teenage boys.

6.2.4 ‘New passive’

In section 6.1.4 we saw that ‘new passive’ seems hardly to have become firmly established in modern spoken Icelandic as e.g. the overall relative frequency of its usage is only 2.63%. On the basis of these results and the more formal nature of written language, it was expected that ‘new passive’ would appear only to a negligible extent in the written data examined for this study. This expectation can be said to have been borne out, as overall only four ‘new passive’ constructions were found amongst a total of 908 nominative and oblique passives. This means that the overall relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions in the written material is 0.44%. Three of the ‘new passive’ forms

were used amongst a total of 770 nominative passives, while the remaining ‘new passive’ construction was found amongst a total of 148 oblique passives. From this it follows that the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions is 0.39% in the former case and 0.68% in the latter.

No particular linguistic systematicity can be discerned amongst the four ‘new passive’ constructions found. Thus, four different verbs are used in these four constructions and a look at their wider syntactic context does not reveal any particular pattern. A larger bulk of data is likely to be needed for patterns of this kind to emerge, if they exist.

The scarcity of ‘new passive’ constructions in the written data also means that no meaningful examination can be made of the potential relationship between this linguistic feature and the social groupings of the informants. Here it will have to suffice to note that four different informants are responsible for the four examples of ‘new passive’ constructions. All in all, 49 of the 52 informants who submitted written data used nominative and/or oblique passive constructions in their writing, which means that 8.16% of those who use these constructions show some sign of ‘new passive’ usage. There is thus a gap between the relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions and the proportion of speakers who show signs of using them. This is probably mainly explained by the fact that passive constructions appear to be relatively frequently used in the written language of most of the informants who submitted such material, and even the four informants who produce one example each of ‘new passive’ usage show little or no signs of being persistent users of this feature. Thus, the first of the informants in question here uses a total of 17 nominative and/or oblique passives, the second 35, the third 45, and the fourth as many as 128 which makes him the most prolific user of passive constructions in all the sample.

Other points that may be of interest regarding the informants who produce examples of ‘new passive’ constructions are, first, that two of them are senior citizens. This is somewhat surprising as no ‘new passive’ constructions were found in the spoken language data for this age group. The remaining two informants, however, are teenagers which means that no ‘new passive’ constructions were found in the written language of the adult age group. Perhaps, however, this can be explained by the fact that informants in this intermediate age group use nominative and/or oblique passives on a total of 143 occasions, while this figure is nearly tripled for informants in both the other age groups. The second point to be made here is that one of the written ‘new passive’ constructions was found in the data produced by informants in Akranes, which was one of the two communities where no examples of ‘new passive’ were found in spoken language. This single example of this feature found in the written data from informants from Akranes might add some weight to the suggestions made in section 6.1.4.1 above, about the lack of spoken ‘new passive’ constructions amongst speakers in Akranes not necessarily having to mean that this community stands out from the communities where one to two

‘new passive’ examples were found. Finally, it can be mentioned that two of the four informants under discussion here are from Patreksfjörður. However, care should be taken not to read too much into this as the sample is very unbalanced as regards written material, and considerably more informants in Patreksfjörður submitted written data than was the case in some of the other communities.

The end result of this brief discussion is thus that ‘new passive’ has hardly at all found its way into written language and the few informants who show signs of using this feature show no signs of using it to a proportionally great extent. It is interesting to note, however, that this small group of speakers is not as predominantly made up of teenagers as was the case as regards spoken language.

6.2.5 ‘Am-to-frenzy’

This section, which deals with the results regarding the ‘am-to-frenzy’ in written language will be quite a short one. The reason for this is simply that no examples of this feature were found in the written data. This was somewhat surprising, given both the number of examples found in spoken language and the fact that this feature is frequently encountered on e.g. the sports pages in Icelandic newspapers. It seems, however, that in written language the ‘am-to-frenzy’ has yet to spread outside this rather limited context, which is, in turn, probably primarily a result of how new the feature appears to be even in spoken language. Admittedly, 11 of the 24 informants who produced spoken examples of non-standard usage of the *er að* + infinitive construction did not submit any written material and this may play its part in the lack of non-standard examples in the written data. At the same time, however, it should not be forgotten that none of the informants who produced non-standard spoken examples and submitted written material showed any signs of non-standard usage in their written language, not even the informant who produced seven spoken examples of non-standard usage. This lack of written examples of non-standard usage also means that, as regards this feature, we may in the near future have quite an interesting opportunity to observe if and how a possible change takes the step from spoken to written language.

6.3 Initiators of change

One of the questions which arose when the data was analyzed was whether there was any connection between the different types of non-standard forms studied in this thesis. This question led to an examination of whether certain informants used more than one type of non-standard forms and, if so, whether there was any patterning regarding which non-standard features appeared in the data produced by the same speaker. In this section, the results from this examination will be presented. Before we turn to this discussion, however, it should be noted that

due to the limited amount of written data and the general scarcity of non-standard examples found therein it was decided not to include this data in this part of the study. It should also be mentioned that while all examples of ‘dative sickness’, ‘new passive’ and the ‘am-to-frenzy’ were included here, only the seemingly clear examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ and the examples of non-standard usage of the kinship terms and the women’s names discussed in sections 6.1.3.1 and 6.1.3.2 above were taken into consideration. Other examples of non-standard usage in relation to case inflections were excluded as these were not regarded as examples of change in progress (cf. sections 6.1.2 and 6.1.3).

As the previous work that exists on the features discussed in this thesis deals with only one particular feature at a time, rather than examining the possible connection between them, there was hardly any prior information available on which any hypotheses could be formed. Therefore, only one general expectation can be named here, which is that it was thought to be likely that usage of non-standard forms of kinship terms, women’s names and genitive case was connected, as all these features originate in case inflections. This is to say that speakers who produced non-standard examples in their usage of any one of these features were expected also to produce non-standard examples in their usage of one or both of the other features involved.

The results from the examination show, however, that this expected pattern does not emerge. Thus, no speaker produces examples of usage of non-standard forms of all three features and only four produce non-standard forms of any two of the features. Two of these speakers use non-standard forms of both the relevant women’s names and kinship terms, while the third speaker produces one non-standard genitive form and one non-standard form of a kinship term, and the fourth speaker combines a non-standard genitive form with a non-standard form of one of the women’s names. The only real sign of the non-standard forms of any of these features being connected is that one of the speakers who produces non-standard examples of both women’s names and kinship terms appears to be consistent in his usage of both, as he produces three examples of the former kind and two of the latter, without producing any other non-standard forms. It would probably be unwise to dismiss the possibility of this pattern emerging on a larger scale in a larger amount of data.

This lack of any clear combination between any two or more of the features involved is in fact a general characteristic of the results in this part of the study, and cross-tabulations, carried out in SPSS, reveal no significant relationships between the different linguistic variables. Thus, 51 different speakers, out of the total sample of 108, are responsible for all the non-standard forms produced of the relevant features, and only 20 of them use non-standard forms of more than one feature. Furthermore, of these 20 speakers only five use non-standard forms of more than two features; four of them produce non-standard examples of three of the features while the last speaker produces non-

standard examples of four different features. These low figures alone limit the possibilities for any patterning. In this context, it should also be added that all the five speakers who use non-standard forms of more than two features display their own separate combination of features. Furthermore, the 15 speakers who each produce non-standard forms of two features display seven different combinations of features.

Having now stated that there does not appear to be any strong connection between the non-standard usage of any two or more of the relevant features, a quick look should perhaps be taken at whether some traces of patterns can nonetheless be found in the data. The only real result of this is that ‘dative sickness’ rarely seems to appear, so to speak, in isolation, as 11 of the 13 speakers who produce examples of ‘dative sickness’ also produce one or more other examples of non-standard usage of the other features. The corresponding proportions for the other features are much lower than this. On the other hand, there are no clear signs that ‘dative sickness’ is linked to any particular one of the other features. This is based on the fact that in the data from the 11 speakers who produce examples of ‘dative sickness’ and some other non-standard form examined here, each of these other non-standard forms occurs at least once in combination with ‘dative sickness’. Admittedly, five speakers produce examples of both ‘dative sickness’ and the ‘am-to-frenzy’ and a further two add a non-standard example of a third feature to this combination. This might of course mean that ‘dative sickness’ is in some way linked to the ‘am-to-frenzy’, but it might just as likely be the simple result of the fact that in terms of sheer frequency the ‘am-to-frenzy’ is the most common feature included in this study, and it also occurs on at least one occasion in combination with each of the remaining features. Furthermore, the possible relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and the ‘am-to-frenzy’ appears to be a one-way street as, even though seven informants produce examples of both these features, there are a further 17 speakers who produce examples of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ without showing any signs of ‘dative sickness’.

As a final note it can be added that, apart from what was said above about the speaker who appears to be consistent in his usage of non-standard forms of both kinship terms and the relevant women’s names, the informants’ level of consistency in their non-standard usage does not appear to be a relevant factor as regards whether or not they are likely to produce non-standard examples of more than one feature. Thus, to give an example, one speaker produces four examples of non-standard case inflectional forms of compound women’s names with a *-ny’* or *-ey* suffix, but seems otherwise to be a standard speaker. Another speaker uses not only five non-standard case inflectional forms of kinship terms, but also produces one example of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ and one of ‘dative sickness’. It is, in other words, unclear whether or not speakers who appear to be consistent in their usage of non-standard forms of one particular feature are likelier than other speakers to combine this with the usage of non-standard forms of other features.

In sum, the main result from this section is that there is no clear connection between non-standard usage of any two or more of the features studied in this thesis. There are some hints that ‘dative sickness’ is likely to appear in the speech of people who also use the ‘am-to-frenzy’ and that the usage of non-standard case inflectional forms of, on the one hand, kinship terms and, on the other, compound women’s names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix is connected. However, these are as yet only vague traces that need to be further confirmed on the basis of more data before any strong claims can be made.

6.4 Attitudes and awareness

We now leave the purely linguistic part of this chapter behind to instead present the results from the interviews with the informants on their language attitudes and awareness. As was mentioned in the introductory words to this chapter, the outline of the discussion is here mainly determined by the order of the questions posed in the interviews. Therefore, the starting point will be an examination of the informants’ general views on language change. This is then followed by a presentation of their answers to the questions dealing with their views on the linguistic variables examined in this thesis. The order here is the same as in the previous sections, i.e. ‘dative sickness’ is dealt with first, to be followed by ‘genitive avoidance’ and other case inflections, ‘new passive’ and, finally, the ‘am-to-frenzy’.

It has also been previously mentioned that space limitations prevent a full breakdown of the results in this section. Therefore, the main emphasis is placed on presenting the overall results for each of the interview questions, while a detailed account of how the attitudes and awareness emerge on each occasion in the various social groupings included will have to wait, even though the most important and interesting patterns are of course mentioned. However, attention will be paid, where applicable, to how the results in this section align with those from the section dealing with the spoken data in order to see whether there is any relationship between attitudes and usage of the linguistic variables. The results emerging from the written data, i.e. those presented in section 6.2, are not included in this examination for reasons which have been mentioned on a number of previous occasions; less than half of the informants submitted written data and this sample was quite unbalanced in terms of the informants’ social background. Furthermore, the number of non-standard forms in the written data is generally too low to be correlated in any meaningful way with the results presented here regarding attitudes and awareness.

Before we turn to the results themselves, it should be mentioned that attitudes have not been included in any principled way in the previous work which exists on the linguistic features discussed here. Therefore, it is unclear what can be expected from the results which will now be presented. However, given the linguistic atmosphere in Iceland, the main aspects of which are

discussed at some length in chapter 3 above, it seems safe to construct a working hypothesis which assumes a high level of negativity towards change and non-standard forms of the variables treated here. At the same time, a high level of awareness of the non-standard forms can probably be predicted. As for the relationship between attitudes and the results from the spoken data, the most straightforward expectation would be that speakers who produce example of non-standard forms are generally less negative towards these forms than the speakers who do not use them.

6.4.1 Language change in general

We start this presentation of the results regarding the informants' attitudes and awareness by looking at how they responded to interview questions relating to their views on language change in general. The overall results here seem not to conform particularly well to the expectation mentioned above of a generally high degree of negativity towards language change. Thus, 50, or 46.3% of the 108 informants, express themselves in negative terms about change, whereas the remaining 58, or 53.7%, are either neutral or positive in this respect. It should be noted though that in this latter group the neutral informants are more numerous than the positive ones as there are 39 of the former and 19 of the latter. Nonetheless the directly positive group is surprisingly large. We will see in the following sections whether this result is reflected by the corresponding results for usage of each of the linguistic features studied.

As for the informants' awareness of language change in general, the results here show a closer conformity to my expectations. 44 informants claimed to notice change to a great extent, while a further 50 noticed it to some extent. Only 14 informants claimed to notice little or no change. Here it should be mentioned, however, that in general the informants were quite vague in their answers and frequently fenced their responses with comments about their uncertainty about the extent to which they noticed change. Furthermore, the categories are of course by no means clear-cut, which means e.g. that what one informant perceives as a high level of change may be regarded by another informant as only a low level. Therefore, care should be taken not to read too much into these figures, and here they will be allowed to stand only as a general indicator of the awareness level of the informants. No further analysis will be attempted.

Returning then to the attitudes, a quick look at how they are distributed according to the various social groupings reveals a few interesting aspects. Let us first look at the pattern in relation to the communities included. An overview of these results is given in table 6.22 below.

Table 6.22 Attitudes by communities to language change in general

Community	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Central Reykjavík	5 (41.67%)	3 (25%)	4 (33.33%)	12 (100%)
Suburban R.vík + neighb. municipal.	5 (41.67%)	6 (50%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Reykjanesbær	3 (25%)	5 (41.67%)	4 (33.33%)	12 (100%)
Akranes	5 (41.67%)	6 (50%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Patreksfjörður	5 (41.67%)	4 (33.33%)	3 (25%)	12 (100%)
Siglufjörður	5 (41.67%)	7 (58.33%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Akureyri	7 (58.33%)	3 (25%)	2 (16.67%)	12 (100%)
Neskaupstaður	4 (33.33%)	5 (41.67%)	3 (25%)	12 (100%)
Flúðir	11 (91.67%)	0 (0%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Total	50 (46.3%)	39 (36.11%)	19 (17.59%)	108 (100%)

As can be seen, the communities generally display essentially the same pattern which reflects the overall results presented above. However, there is one noticeable exception to this general picture. Flúðir emerges as the community in which informants are clearly most negative towards language change in general. 11 of the 12 informants here claim to disfavour change, while the corresponding figure in Akureyri, which shows the second highest level of negative attitudes in this respect, is seven. In five of the remaining seven communities, five speakers express negative views on change, while four do so in Neskaupstaður and three in Reykjanesbær. Reykjanesbær thus shows the lowest level of negativity and at the same time the number of informants positive towards change is, together with central Reykjavík, the highest here, or four.

Another interesting pattern which emerges is that the oldest age group clearly shows a higher degree of negativity towards change than either of the two younger groups. This is shown by table 6.23.

Table 6.23 Attitudes by age groups to language change in general

Age group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Teenagers	14 (38.89%)	12 (33.33%)	10 (27.78%)	36 (100%)
Adults	10 (27.78%)	20 (55.56%)	6 (16.67%)	36 (100%)
Seniors	26 (72.22%)	7 (19.44%)	3 (8.33%)	36 (100%)
Total	50 (46.3%)	39 (36.11%)	19 (17.59%)	108 (100%)

Here it can be seen that 72.22% of the senior citizens appear to dislike change, while the combined corresponding figure for the other two age groups is 33.33%. While it does not come as a surprise that the oldest age group is the most negative one towards change, it is interesting to note that the level of

negativity is higher in the teenage group (38.89%) than in the adult group (27.78%). At the same time, 27.78% of the teenagers express positive attitudes towards change while only 16.67% of the adult group and 8.33% of the senior citizens do so. However, the adult group appears to be the least decisive one as more than half of its members, i.e. 20 of 36 (55.56%), claim to be neutral towards change.

When attitudes are examined by the educational/occupational groups of the informants, the level of negativity seems, as shown by table 6.24 below, at first sight to rise as we move upwards in the groups.

Table 6.24 Attitudes by educational/occupational groups to language change in general

Ed./occ. group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
1	9 (34.62%)	15 (57.69%)	2 (7.69%)	26 (100%)
2	17 (43.59%)	15 (38.46%)	7 (17.95%)	39 (100%)
3	24 (55.81%)	9 (20.93%)	10 (23.26%)	43 (100%)
Total	50 (46.3%)	39 (36.11%)	19 (17.59%)	108 (100%)

Here, informants from the lowest educational/occupational group display a negativity rate of 34.62%, while 43.59% of the informants in the intermediate group and 55.81% of the informants in the highest group air negative views on language change. This, however, should not necessarily be taken as clear indication of a socio-economically based trend as, interestingly, the level of positive views also rises as we go from the lowest educational/occupational group to the highest one. 7.69% of the informants in the lowest group express themselves in positive terms on language change, 17.95% in the intermediate group and 23.26% in the highest group. At the same time, the proportion of neutral informants decreases markedly from the lowest educational/occupational group to the highest. Thus, 57.69% of the informants in educational/occupational group 1 claim to be neutral towards language change, while the corresponding figures for groups 2 and 3 are 38.46% and 20.93% respectively. In other words, it seems that having a relatively high educational/occupational status may be more connected to having a clear and decisive view on language change than to whether this view is negative or positive.

Having now seen that some interesting differences appear between the communities, age groups and educational/occupational groups included here, it may come as a surprise that there is hardly any discernible difference between the genders regarding their views on language change in general. This is shown by table 6.25.

Table 6.25 Attitudes by gender to language change in general

Gender	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Female	26 (47.27%)	19 (34.55%)	10 (18.18%)	55 (100%)
Male	24 (45.28%)	20 (37.74%)	9 (16.98%)	53 (100%)
Total	50 (46.3%)	39 (36.11%)	19 (17.59%)	108 (100%)

Here we see that 47.27% of the female informants claim to be negative, 34.55% announced their neutrality, and 18.18% expressed positive views. If these three groups are examined in the same order amongst the male informants the figures are 45.28%, 37.74%, and 16.98%. These results are of course also interesting in light of the common sociolinguistic assumption that women are more conservative than men in linguistic terms and could therefore have been expected to show a higher degree of negativity towards change.

As a final point in this part of the discussion, it should be mentioned that the general pattern which appeared when the informants were grouped according to their social networks by and large follows the pattern evident in the overall results presented above. There appears to be only a slight tendency for the level of negativity to rise as the networks grow stronger and more closely knit. Given the norm-enforcing nature of social networks (cf. section 2.2.2), a trend of this kind was probably to be expected.

Before this presentation of the results regarding attitudes towards language change in general is concluded, a more qualitative dimension should be added to it. Once the informants had expressed their attitudes towards change and indicated the extent to which they were aware of change, they were asked if they cared to elaborate on their views and whether they noticed any specific types of change more than others. As can be expected some chose not to take this opportunity, especially those who claimed not to notice much linguistic change in general. However, most of the informants added some comments and the content of these was surprisingly similar from one informant to the other. Thus, no less than 54 informants mentioned various examples of English influences as the most noticeable signs of change in modern Icelandic, especially in its vocabulary. Moreover, most, or 44 of these 54 informants, spoke of these English influences in negative terms and the arguments presented here can generally be said to follow the nationalistic lines described in sections 3.1.4 and 3.1.5 above and/or the standard Icelandic language policy outlined in section 3.3.2. To this it should be added that this group of 44 even includes eight of those 19 who had previously claimed to be positive towards language change in general.

An interesting point in light of the above is that six of the ten informants who mention English influences as noticeable signs of change in Icelandic without putting this in a negative and/or nationalistic context come from Reykjanesbær. This, as can be seen above, is the community showing the lowest

degree of negativity towards change, and no informant here appears to regard these English influences as particularly negative. Conversely, in Flúðir, which displays the highest level of negativity towards change of all the communities, ten informants mention English examples as noticeable and all of them view them negatively. This of course opens the door for speculation about this difference between the two communities being traceable to a potential general difference between them in the set of dominating values. Thus, Keflavík may, through its proximity to and close contact with the American army base, have become relatively open to English influences which may have gone hand in hand with a decreasingly strict stance as regards the stability of the Icelandic language. At the same time, Flúðir, through being a rural and agricultural community, may have better preserved the traditional values – including those regarding the language – inherent in such communities which were previously commonplace in Iceland. At this point, however, this is no more than just speculation which needs to be further investigated before any serious claims can be made.

One more point of a qualitative nature should be made. Even though English influences were most frequently mentioned as examples of noticeable change in modern Icelandic, there were also 37 informants who singled out features not directly traceable to foreign influences. Included in this group are 13 informants who also mentioned English examples. However, most of the features mentioned here can hardly be categorized as indicative of potential change, as they tended to be phrases, words or pronunciations characteristic for certain individuals, such as television personalities. Thus, only three informants mentioned ‘dative sickness’ even though it had at this point in the interviews been revealed that I was looking at this feature in particular. This, together with the informants’ vagueness regarding their awareness of language change in general, may suggest that the average speaker generally has a rather vague understanding of what linguists consider language change to be.

These qualitative points have of course very little, if any, direct statistical value. This, however, does not mean that they should be disregarded. Rather, they should be viewed as an indication of the role played by nationalistic sentiments and the semi-official Icelandic language policy in forming language attitudes among the population, which may in turn be instrumental in maintaining its relative linguistic stability. In this context, it should not be forgotten that the informants were not specifically prompted to include nationalistic and/or language policy aspects in their argumentation for their views on language change. That nearly half the sample nonetheless followed these lines whilst elaborating on their views is quite telling.

It may be equally lacking in statistical significance to measure these overall results on the informants’ general attitudes against the combined results for usage of the non-standard forms examined here. Nonetheless, it is interesting to compare along these lines the group of 51 informants, who, in their spoken

language, produce one or more examples of one or more of the non-standard forms in question, with the remaining 57 speakers who produce none of the relevant non-standard forms. An overview of the results of this comparison is given in table 6.26.

Table 6.26 Attitudes by non-standard vs. standard speakers to language change in general

Type of speaker	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Uses non-standard form at least once	21 (41.18%)	22 (43.14%)	8 (15.69%)	51 (100%)
Consistent user of standard forms	29 (50.88%)	17 (29.82%)	11 (19.3%)	57 (100%)
Total	50 (46.3%)	39 (36.11%)	19 (17.59%)	108 (100%)

What emerges here is that 21, or 41.18%, of the former group claim to be negative towards language change in general, whereas 29, or 50.88%, of the latter group make the same claim. Interestingly, however, the level of directly positive attitudes towards change is also higher in the latter group as 11, or 19.3%, of these informants express views of this nature while eight, or 15.69%, of the former group do so. The level of neutral attitudes is, on the other hand, somewhat higher amongst the group of speakers who produce examples of non-standard usage. There it is 43.14% (22 informants), while it is 29.82% (17 informants) in the other group. The most marked difference between the two groups appears, in other words, to be that the speakers who do not produce examples of non-standard usage have more decisive views on language change than do the speakers who produce examples of non-standard usage. Whether these results are reflected by the corresponding matching of attitudes towards, and usage of, each of the non-standard features discussed in this thesis will become clear shortly.

In sum, then, this section has revealed that, overall, the informants' attitudes towards language change in general is not overly negative as less than half the group take this stance, while the remainder of the sample is either neutral or positive. There are, however, some signs that a negative attitude towards change is connected with both age and class, since the level of negativity rises as we move upwards in the age and educational/occupational groups in this study. On the other hand, few differences appear between the different communities, with the exception of Flúðir which displays a markedly higher level of negativity towards change than do the other communities. Similarly, there appear only minute differences between the genders and different social networks. As for the informants' awareness of change, the

results here are somewhat diffuse due to the vagueness of the answers given. This may in turn be a result of the informants viewing language change primarily from a lexical perspective which means that their view of change is much narrower than that of linguists. At the same time, and as a possible result of this somewhat narrow view of language change, there seems to be a high level of awareness of and apprehensiveness towards possible foreign influences on Icelandic. These are frequently regarded in a negative light which appears to be traceable to traditional nationalistically and language policy inspired linguistic values.

6.4.2 ‘Dative sickness’

In this section the results regarding the informants’ attitudes towards and awareness of ‘dative sickness’ are presented.⁶⁷ The result that first catches the eye here is probably that all 108 informants were familiar with this feature. In fact, none of them needed anything more than the simple mentioning of the term before they were able to respond to the question posed on this. This in itself is of course a strong indication of how firmly embedded ‘dative sickness’ appears to be in the linguistic consciousness of Icelanders, even though it may in language use emerge less frequently than many believe it does (see sections 4.1, 6.1.1 and 6.2.1). To this it should be added that 49, or 45.37%, of the informants felt that ‘dative sickness’ appeared frequently or very frequently in their surroundings, while a further 27 (25%) claimed to encounter it to some extent. The remaining 32 (29.63%) claimed only to notice ‘dative sickness’ to a low extent. However, no-one claimed not to notice this feature at all. Thus, there appears to be a relatively high level of awareness of ‘dative sickness’, even though the same modification should be used here as in the last section; the informants were generally quite vague in their responses to the question about the extent to which they noticed ‘dative sickness’ and often claimed to be somewhat uncertain.⁶⁸ Therefore, care should be taken not to read too much into these last figures.

As for the informants’ attitudes towards ‘dative sickness’, the results here conform more closely to expectations than did the corresponding results

⁶⁷ Note that the so-called other ‘verb sicknesses’ discussed in sections 4.1, 6.1.1.8, and 6.2.1.2 above were not dealt with specifically in the interviews regarding the informants’ attitudes towards and awareness of the relevant non-standard forms. The main reason is that examples of non-standard usage of this nature were expected to be too few to allow any meaningful correlation of them with the views of the speakers who produced them.

⁶⁸ As is described in section 5.3.3.3 the informants were first presented simply with the term used for the feature in question at each time and were then asked if they were familiar with the feature. Then, if the response to this first question was positive the informants were asked about the extent to which they felt they encountered the feature. If the term itself was unfamiliar to the informants, they were given one or two typical examples of the relevant feature and then questions pertaining to the familiarity with and the awareness of the feature followed.

discussed in the last section regarding attitudes to language change in general. 74, or 68.52%, of the informants held a negative attitude towards this feature while 30, or 27.78% claimed to be neutral. Four informants, or 3.7%, were positive. The overall level of negativity is thus considerably higher here than in relation to informants' attitudes towards what they regarded as language change in general.⁶⁹

If this overall result is broken down according to the social groupings, some interesting patterns emerge which in many ways resemble those which appeared in the result regarding perceived examples of language change in general. Thus, there are generally small differences between the different communities with a noticeable exception or two. However, this time the fishing villages of Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður stand out through displaying a lower level of negativity than the other seven communities. In each of the latter, eight to ten speakers express a negative attitude towards 'dative sickness' and two to four claim to be neutral. In Siglufjörður, however, only five speakers are negative in this respect, whilst six are neutral and these figures are reversed in Patreksfjörður. Also, one speaker in each of these two communities is positive towards 'dative sickness'. Another point that should be made is that the remaining two speakers who claim to be positive both come from Reykjanesbær. These results are interesting in light of the fact that the three communities mentioned specifically here are the source of eight of the 13 examples of 'dative sickness' in spoken language. Table 6.27 below summarizes the results regarding attitudes towards 'dative sickness' in the different communities.

⁶⁹ It can be added, as an anecdote, that of all the features examined 'dative sickness' sparked by far the strongest responses by those who were negative towards it in the first place. Thus comments such as "I hate people who are infected by 'dative sickness'" and "I get green pimples on both buttocks whenever I hear 'dative sickness'" were heard in this part of the interviews, while the negative views expressed regarding the other features can be said to have been slightly more cultivated!

Table 6.27 Attitudes by communities to ‘dative sickness’

Community	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Central Reykjavík	10 (83.33%)	2 (16.67%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Suburban R.vík + neighb. municipal.	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Reykjanesbær	8 (66.67%)	2 (16.67%)	2 (16.67%)	12 (100%)
Akranes	8 (66.67%)	4 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Patreksfjörður	6 (50%)	5 (41.67%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Siglufjörður	5 (41.67%)	6 (50%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Akureyri	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Neskaupstaður	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Flúðir	10 (83.33%)	2 (16.67%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Total	74 (68.52%)	30 (27.78%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (100%)

While the attitudes towards ‘dative sickness’ may thus be reflected by how examples of this feature are distributed between the different communities, the same can not be said when it comes to gender. As seen in section 6.1.1 above, women appear to be more prone to show signs of ‘dative sickness’ than men, but at the same time women seem to be more negative towards this feature than men are. This is shown in table 6.28.

Table 6.28 Attitudes by gender to ‘dative sickness’

Gender	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Female	41 (74.55%)	13 (23.64%)	1 (1.82%)	55 (100%)
Male	33 (62.26%)	17 (32.08%)	3 (5.66%)	53 (100%)
Total	74 (68.52%)	30 (27.78%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (100%)

Here it can be seen that 41, or 74.55%, of the 55 women expressed themselves in negative terms about ‘dative sickness’ while 33, or 62.26%, of the 53 men did so. Furthermore, three of the four positive responses came from men while only one woman claimed to be positive towards ‘dative sickness’. This, of course, means that, in comparison with their attitudes on language change in general, women here conform more closely to the above mentioned expectation of them being more conservative than men. At the same time, and probably more interestingly, there appears to be a discrepancy here between women’s usage of ‘dative sickness’ and their attitudes towards the feature.

As was the case with attitudes towards perceived examples of language change in general, it appears that negativity towards ‘dative sickness’ increases with age. Here, however, the development from one age group to the other is more linear as the teenage group clearly shows the lowest level of negativity, or

50%, while it reaches 72.22% in the adult group, to then peak at 83.33% amongst the senior citizens. At the same time, the number of both neutral and positive responses decreases as we move upwards in age. Thus, 41.67% of the teenagers hold a neutral stance, while 25% of the adults and 16.67% of the senior citizens do so, and three of the four positive responses come from teenagers, with the last one coming from an adult. This increase of negativity with age is interesting in light of the linguistic results which fail to show any clear signs of such an age-grading. The attitudes of the various age groups towards ‘dative sickness’ are summed up in table 6.29 below.

Table 6.29 Attitudes by age groups to ‘dative sickness’

Age group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Teenagers	18 (50%)	15 (41.67%)	3 (8.33%)	36 (100%)
Adults	26 (72.22%)	9 (25%)	1 (2.78%)	36 (100%)
Seniors	30 (83.33%)	6 (16.67%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)
Total	74 (68.52%)	30 (27.78%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (100%)

Turning then to the educational/occupational groups, the main dividing line there appears to lie between the highest group, on the one hand, and the lower two, on the other. This is shown in table 6.30.

Table 6.30 Attitudes by educational/occupational groups to ‘dative sickness’

Ed./occ. group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
1	17 (65.38%)	8 (30.77%)	1 (3.85%)	26 (100%)
2	22 (56.41%)	14 (35.9%)	3 (7.69%)	39 (100%)
3	35 (81.4%)	8 (18.6%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
Total	74 (68.52%)	30 (27.78%)	4 (3.7%)	108 (100%)

Here we see that 81.4% of the informants in the highest group disapprove of ‘dative sickness’, but this figure lowers to 56.41% in the intermediate group, to then rise to 65.38% in the lowest group. Furthermore, no informant in the highest educational/occupational group expressed positive views, but this was done by three (7.69%) informants from the intermediate group and one (3.85%) informant from the lowest group. Finally, while the level of neutrality is at 30.77% and 35.9% in educational/occupational groups 1 and 2 respectively, it drops to 18.6% in the highest group. Note, however, that even though the clearest difference is thus between the highest group, on the one hand, and the lower two, on the other, there is also an interesting – albeit small – difference between these latter two groups. As can be seen in the above mentioned figures, the level of negativity is slightly higher and the level of positive attitudes

slightly lower in the lowest educational/occupational group than in the intermediate one. Given the relatively marked rise in negativity and decreased level of positive views as the highest group is reached, the direction of this difference is somewhat surprising.

Finally, as regards ‘dative sickness’ there are, again, only minute differences in attitudes between the different types of social networks, even though a slight tendency can be discerned for the level of negativity to rise when the networks are stronger.

Let us then match these results regarding the informants’ attitudes to ‘dative sickness’ with the results emanating from the linguistic data. As mentioned in section 6.1.1.1 above, 57 speakers use so-called accusative verbs (i.e. verbs with which ‘dative sickness’ can occur), and 13 of these produce examples of ‘dative sickness’, whilst the remaining 44 only use the standard accusative case for the subjects in question. If these two groups are compared, a clear difference emerges. Only four, or 30.77%, of the 13 speakers who produce examples of ‘dative sickness’ are negative towards this feature, while the remaining nine, or 69.23%, are neutral. However, in the group of 44 where no signs of ‘dative sickness’ were found, 33, or 75% are negative towards it, while nine, or 20.45% are neutral and two, or 4.55%, are positive. This means that there is a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 8.63, p = 0.05^{70}$) between, on the one hand, attitudes towards and, on the other, the usage of ‘dative sickness’ in such a way that the more negative speakers are towards this feature, the less likely they are to produce examples of it. These results are summarized in table 6.31 below.

Table 6.31 Attitudes by non-standard vs. standard users of accusative verbs to ‘dative sickness’

Type of speaker	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Uses non-standard form at least once	4 (30.77%)	9 (69.23%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Consistent user of standard forms	33 (75%)	9 (20.45%)	2 (4.55%)	44 (100%)
Total	37 (64.91%)	18 (31.58%)	2 (3.51%)	57 (100%)

The generalizations to be made from this section appear to be, first, that there is a high level of awareness of ‘dative sickness’ in the Icelandic language

⁷⁰ For this chi-square test neutral and positive speakers were grouped together. Chi-square tests are also used to examine the possible relationship between attitudes towards and the usage of non-standard case inflections (section 6.4.4) and ‘new passive’ (section 6.4.5) below. Statistical tests were not judged to be applicable in the same way as regards ‘genitive avoidance’ (section 6.4.3) and the ‘am-to-frenzy’ (section 6.4.6).

community, as witnessed e.g. by all informants being familiar with the term itself. Second, this awareness generally appears in a negative form which sharpens with age and a rise in the social ranks. Also, women appear to be more negative towards ‘dative sickness’ than men are, even though this pattern is not reflected in the genders’ usage of this feature. There may, on the other hand, be a closer correlation between the attitudes towards and the usage of ‘dative sickness’ in the various communities as there are signs here that the level of negativity towards these non-standard forms is lower in at least some of the fishing villages than elsewhere in the country. Third, there are clear signs that speakers who are not “infected” by ‘dative sickness’ are more negative towards the feature than are those speakers who show some symptoms of this linguistic ‘disease’.

6.4.3 ‘Genitive avoidance’

We now turn to ‘genitive avoidance’. A quick glance at the relevant figures reveals that this is the least known of the purported language changes treated here. 64, or 59.26% of the informants, were familiar with this feature, which, despite seemingly being relatively high at first sight, is considerably lower than the corresponding figures in relation to the other features. Furthermore, many of these 64 needed to have the term explained and exemplified before being able to show any reaction to it. This result is reflected by the fact that only 24 informants, or 22.22%, claim to notice ‘genitive avoidance’ to a large extent and 25, or 23.15%, notice it to some extent. The remaining 59 informants notice it only to a small extent, if at all. As is to be expected the majority of this last group is made up of the 44 informants who were not aware of the existence of non-standard language usage of this kind. As before, however, the informants were quite vague when it came to this particular question, i.e. many seemed to be quite uncertain about the extent to which they encountered this feature, and this should be remembered when these last figures are examined.

The figures above regarding whether or not the informants were familiar with ‘genitive avoidance’ should be kept closely in mind when the results regarding the informants’ attitudes are examined. The overall result here is that 62, or 57.41%, of the informants are negative towards ‘genitive avoidance’ whereas the remaining 46 informants, i.e. 42.59%, are neutral. However, the majority, or 33, of those who claim to be neutral are from the group which is altogether unfamiliar with this feature. If only the attitudes of 64 informants who are familiar with ‘genitive avoidance’ are examined, it emerges that 51, or 79.69%, of them are negative to non-standard usage of this kind, whereas the remaining 13 informants are neutral. There is thus quite a strong tendency for negative attitudes amongst those who know what ‘genitive avoidance’ is. In this respect, it may also be telling that even though 33 of the 44 informants who were unfamiliar with the feature claimed, quite understandably, to be neutral

towards it, the remaining 11 informants spoke in negative terms about it once it had been described to them. Finally, it is of course telling that not a single informant expressed a positive view towards ‘genitive avoidance’.

The figures just mentioned make any detailed examination of attitudes according to the various social background factors somewhat problematic. On the one hand, the relatively low level of familiarity with ‘genitive avoidance’ skews the overall results in such a way that they indicate a lower level of negative attitudes than is really the case. On the other hand, excluding informants not familiar with ‘genitive avoidance’ from a closer examination results in a sample too unbalanced to function as a basis for the desired analysis. Hence, only a quick overview of how the overall results break down will be presented here, as they should at least give an indication of the distribution of attitudes between the different social groupings, even though they probably also diminish the general level of negativity.

What this quick overview reveals is that there are few noticeable differences between how attitudes emerge according to the various social factors examined. Thus, negative attitudes emerge to almost the same extent in all types of social networks and educational/occupational groups included. Also, even though there appears to be some increase in negativity with age, this may partly be due to a higher level of awareness of ‘genitive avoidance’ in the older age groups. The same can be said when it comes to gender; 63.64% of the women were negative towards ‘genitive avoidance’ while 50.94% of the men expressed such views, but at the same time 69.09% of the women were familiar with this feature, whereas the same could be said about only 49.06% of the men. Finally, the different communities show quite similar levels of negativity with, yet again, an interesting exception or two. In this case, Flúðir and Siglufjörður stand out, as in the former community only three informants speak negatively of ‘genitive avoidance’ and four informants in the latter community do so, while the corresponding range elsewhere is from seven to ten. This result is especially noticeable as regards Flúðir, as this community generally displays both a low level of usage of non-standard forms and, as can be seen in the last two sections, a high level of negativity towards language change. It is also interesting that neither Flúðir nor Siglufjörður are the source of any of the clear examples found of ‘genitive avoidance’ in the data. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the results for these two communities appear not to be relevant to them showing a lower level of awareness of ‘genitive avoidance’ than the other communities.

It is mentioned in section 6.1.2 above that there are seven clear examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ in the spoken data, produced by seven different speakers. Two of these speakers are neutral in their views of ‘genitive avoidance’ and, in both cases, this is probably due to the speaker in question being unfamiliar with the feature. The remaining five speakers are, however, familiar with ‘genitive avoidance’ and express negative views towards it. The proportion of negative attitudes is thus higher in the group which produces

examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ than in the group which does not. There is, therefore, little here to suggest the same as regards ‘dative sickness’, i.e. that the use of the non-standard forms in question is in some way hampered by negative attitudes towards them. However, the low number of examples of ‘genitive avoidance’ prevents any strong claims to the contrary to be made either.

To briefly summarize this section, it has emerged here that there is a relatively low level of awareness of ‘genitive avoidance’ amongst the informants, at least when compared to ‘dative sickness’. However, amongst those who are familiar with this feature, negative attitudes dominate, seemingly relatively equally across the different social groupings. Finally, the evidence regarding the relationship between the informants’ attitudes and their use of ‘genitive avoidance’ is inconclusive but, at the same time, does not suggest that those who produce non-standard forms of this kind are less negative towards it than others.

6.4.4 Other case inflections

Having now examined the informants’ awareness of and attitudes towards ‘genitive avoidance’, it is time to look at other case inflections from the same perspective. The first thing to notice here is that while there was a relatively low level of awareness of non-standard forms of genitive case in particular, the same can not be said about non-standard forms of other cases. Thus, 104, or 96.3%, of the informants were familiar with this feature, while only four, or 3.7% did not recognize it. Having seen these figures, it is not surprising that the proportion of informants who claim to notice these somewhat more general non-standard case forms is a great deal higher than as regards ‘genitive avoidance’, although by now the standard modification regarding the informants’ general vagueness in responding to questions of this nature should still be kept in mind here. Nearly half the group of informants, i.e. 52 (48.15%), notice non-standard usage of case to large or very large extent while 32, or 29.63%, do so to some extent. The remaining 24 notice little or no use of the features in question here. This, combined with the corresponding results from the last section, might be seen as a sign of the informants being well aware of the possibility of the usage of non-standard case inflectional forms in general, without necessarily being able to pinpoint which case is problematic on each occasion.

As for the informants’ attitudes towards the use of non-standard forms of case inflection, the overall results indicate a generally high level of negativity. 85, or 78.7%, of the informants, express themselves negatively here, while the remaining 23, or 21.3%, claim to be neutral, which in turn means that again no informant appears to be positive in this respect. It should also be noted that all four of the informants who were not familiar with non-standard case forms at all took a neutral stance. If they are excluded, the proportion of informants with a negative attitude rises to 81.73%.

When this overall result is broken down according to the social background factors, the most noticeable aspect that emerges is the general lack of differences between the various groupings. Thus, there are no marked differences between the nine communities as regards the level of negative vs. neutral views in relation to non-standard use of case, and the same can be said concerning the different age groups, the educational/occupational groups and the various types of networks. In all of these groups and subgroups, the level of negativity is close to the overall figure mentioned above, i.e. 78.7%, whereas the neutrality level generally lies just above the 20% mark. The one social factor where this pattern is broken is that of gender. Women appear to be more negative towards non-standard use of case than men are as 87.27% of the female informants in this study responded in a negative fashion when asked about their attitudes in this regard, while 69.81% of the men did so. Here, however, it should be pointed out that all four informants who were not familiar with non-standard use of case were men. If they are excluded the level of negativity in the male group rises to 75%, thereby reducing the apparent difference between the genders.

As mentioned in section 6.1.3 (and 6.2.3 as regards written language), there were very few signs in the linguistic data of any systematic instability in the case inflectional system of Icelandic and the only types of words which appeared with any regularity in a non-standard form were, on the one hand, compound women's names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix and, on the other, a number of kinship terms. Therefore the distribution of usage of standard vs. non-standard forms of these words is the only aspect of these so-called other case inflections which can be correlated in any meaningful way with the informants' attitudes towards non-standard usage of case. Admittedly, the question posed in this particular part of the interviews concerned the usage of non-standard case inflectional forms in general, other than 'genitive avoidance', and did not include any mentioning of the relevant women's names or kinship terms in particular as I was at this point not aware that these were the main areas of variation. Therefore, the views of the informants naturally apply primarily to non-standard case inflections in general, rather than to the abovementioned women's names and kinship terms in particular, but, as the latter are part of the former, the general views expressed can probably be extended to this more specific part of the case inflectional system.

If we now run the results regarding the informants' attitudes towards non-standard usage of case against the results on the actual usage of standard vs. non-standard forms of the earlier mentioned women's names and kinship terms, some interesting figures appear, especially in relation to the kinship terms. As mentioned in section 6.1.3.2 above, 37 speakers used the kinship terms relevant to this discussion and 14 of those produced examples of non-standard usage of them. Of these 14 speakers five, or 35.71%, are neutral towards the use of non-standard case inflectional forms whereas nine, or 64.29%, are negative.

However, in the group of 23 informants who use the relevant kinship terms without producing non-standard forms, only two, or 8.7%, claim to be neutral regarding non-standard case inflectional forms while 21, or 91.3%, express negative views. The level of negativity is, in other words, considerably higher in the group which does not produce any non-standard forms and here again there is a significant relationship ($\chi^2 = 4.14, p = 0.05$) between attitudes and usage in such a way that negative attitudes are linked to a high level of standard usage, whereas a neutral stance appears to be linked to non-standard usage. These results are summarized in table 6.32 below.

Table 6.32 Attitudes by non-standard vs. standard users of kinship terms to non-standard case inflections

Type of speaker	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Uses non-standard form at least once	9 (64.29%)	5 (35.71%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
Consistent user of standard forms	21 (91.3%)	2 (8.7%)	0 (0%)	23 (100%)
Total	30 (81.08%)	7 (18.92%)	0 (%)	37 (100%)

A slight modification should be made as one of the five speakers mentioned above, who produced examples of non-standard forms of kinship terms and were neutral in their views, is also one of the four informants who claimed to be unfamiliar with non-standard usage of case inflections in general and could therefore be expected to express himself in neutral terms. However, even if this informant is excluded, the level of negativity amongst the 14 speakers who produce non-standard case inflections of kinship terms only rises to 69.23%, which is still well below the corresponding figure for the group which does not produce any non-standard forms of this kind.

The evidence regarding compound women's names with a *-ny'* or *-ey* suffix is less conclusive, mainly due to the low number of speakers using these names. A quick glance can nonetheless be taken at the results and then we see that, of the three speakers who use *-ny'/-ey* only in their standard case inflected forms, two are negative towards the usage of non-standard case inflections, while the remaining one is neutral. The proportions this results in, i.e. 66.67% negativity and 33.33% neutrality, are almost mirrored by the group of eight speakers who produce examples of non-standard case inflected forms of the names in question. three, or 37.5%, express neutral views while the remaining five, or 62.5%, are negative. All we can safely deduct from this is that this latter group shows a level of negativity which is well below the above mentioned overall negativity level of 78.7% towards non-standard forms of case inflection.

Less can be said about the former group as it consists of only three informants. However, if we combine the results here regarding kinship terms with those regarding women's names ending in *-ny'* or *-ey* we again have some suggestion that those informants who are negative towards the non-standard forms in question are less likely to use them than the informants who have a more neutral attitude in this respect.

The general picture which emerges in this section is that there is a high level of awareness of the usage of non-standard case inflectional forms. The attitude towards these forms is in general negative, regardless of the informants' age, social class and social network type, and there are no marked differences between the different communities. However, women appear to be somewhat more negative than men. As for the relationship between the informants' attitudes and their usage of the relevant non-standard forms, we here see signs of the same pattern as regards 'dative sickness', i.e. that a negative attitude reduces the likelihood of producing examples of non-standard forms.

6.4.5 'New passive'

We now leave case inflections behind altogether to instead examine 'new passive' from the present perspective of attitudes and awareness. To first look at how familiar this feature was to the informants 96, or 88.89%, of them recognized it, although on most occasions the term itself did not spark any reaction and needed to be explained and exemplified. This level of recognition is of course high, even though it does not reach quite the same figures as seen above (sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.4) regarding 'dative sickness' and non-standard case inflections other than 'genitive avoidance'. Nor does this seem to be quite as noticeable a feature as the other two just mentioned as 40, or 37.04%, of the informants claimed to come across it only to a small extent, if at all, while 39, or 36.11%, claimed to notice it to some extent and the remaining 29, or 26.85%, noticed it to a large extent. This, however, is probably a natural reflection of the slightly lower level of recognition of 'new passive' than of either 'dative sickness' or non-standard case inflections. It should also be remembered that the uncertainty in the informants' responses to questions of this nature was equally evident here as when they were asked about their awareness of the other linguistic features studied.

When it comes to attitudes, however, the level of negativity appears to be higher towards 'new passive' than any of the other features treated here. 87, or 80.56%, of the informants claim to view 'new passive' constructions in a negative light while the remaining 21, or 19.44%, are neutral. Note, also, that here again none of the informants are positive. Furthermore, if the 12 informants who were not familiar with 'new passive' at all are excluded the level of negativity rises to 85.42%. Perhaps a modification of a qualitative nature should be added here, as a number of informants mentioned that, even though they

disliked ‘new passive’ as a linguistic form, they were not overly worried about it spreading to any extent as they felt it was primarily a characteristic of the speech of children who would, with time and increased linguistic maturity, grow out of this usage. Still, this modification does not decrease to any extent the level of negativity with which ‘new passive’ is regarded and, just as was the case with ‘genitive avoidance’, it is probably telling that here there are examples of informants who claim not to be familiar with this feature but then go on to express negative views about it, once its nature has been explained to them.

The social patterning of attitudes regarding ‘new passive’ in many ways resembles the pattern seen in the last section, i.e. in relation to non-standard forms of case inflection. Thus, the distribution of negative and neutral attitudes is essentially the same in all age groups, educational/occupational groups, and types of social networks, although the rate of negative attitudes is slightly higher in the two adult groups than it is amongst the teenagers. Women also seem to be slightly more negative than men towards ‘new passive’ as the proportion of negative attitudes in the former group is 83.64% while it is 77.36% in the latter. This, however, is a smaller difference than the one seen above regarding attitudes towards the usage of non-standard case inflectional forms. Finally, the level of negativity is similar in all but one of the communities, and 9-11 informants in each of them display negative attitudes while 1-3 hold a neutral stance. The one exception here is Reykjanesbær, where seven informants are negative towards ‘new passive’ and five are neutral. This is interesting, e.g. in light of the results discussed in section 6.4.1 above, which indicate that the level of negativity towards language change in general is lower in Reykjanesbær than in the communities included in the study. It should be noted, though, that three of the 12 informants who are not familiar with ‘new passive’ come from Reykjanesbær and two of those express neutral views towards the feature. Therefore, if these 12 informants are excluded, Reykjanesbær approaches the other communities in terms of attitudes towards ‘new passive’. As for the other social groupings, excluding the 12 abovementioned informants does not affect the proportions of negative and neutral attitudes to any extent.

To then examine the possible relationship regarding the informants’ attitudes towards ‘new passive’ and their usage of this feature, we here once again see indications of negative attitudes being connected to a low level of use of non-standard constructions. Thus, while 68, or 81.93%, of the 83 speakers who used passive constructions without producing an example of ‘new passive’ are negative towards this feature, the corresponding proportion in the group of 11 speakers who produced examples of ‘new passive’ constructions is 63.64% (seven speakers). At the same time the level of neutrality is 18.07% in the former group and 36.36% in the latter. These results are summarized in table 6.33 below.

Table 6.33 Attitudes by non-standard vs. standard users of passive constructions to ‘new passive’ constructions

Type of speaker	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Uses non-standard form at least once	7 (63.64%)	4 (36.36%)	0 (0%)	11(100%)
Consistent user of standard forms	68 (81.93%)	15 (18.07%)	0 (0%)	83(100%)
Total	75 (79.79%)	19 (20.21%)	0 (0%)	94 (100%)

We may thus slowly be gathering evidence for attitudes playing a part in determining whether speakers use certain non-standard forms or not, although it should be noted that as regards ‘new passive’ the relationship is below the level of statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 2.03, p = 0.05$).

In sum, the results presented in this section largely resemble those in the sections above, especially those on ‘dative sickness’ and other case inflections. Thus, there appears to be quite a high level of awareness of ‘new passive’ and this awareness generally takes a negative shape which is largely shared by the communities, age groups, genders, educational/occupational groups and types of social networks included. Furthermore, there again appears to be some connection between attitudes and the use of non-standard forms in such a way that having a negative attitude towards ‘new passive’ decreases the likelihood of using such constructions.

6.4.6 ‘Am-to-frenzy’

We now come to the last linguistic feature, i.e. the ‘am-to-frenzy’. Among the noticeable aspects of the results here is that, despite probably being the most recent example of variation of all the features discussed here, the ‘am-to-frenzy’ reaches equally high or even higher levels than other features regarding the informants’ awareness. Thus 102, or 94.44%, of the informants are familiar with this feature while only six, or 5.56%, did not recognize it even after it had been explained and exemplified. At the same time, this seems to be the most noticeable of all the features as 61 informants, or 56.48%, claim to notice it to a large extent. This proportion is higher than the corresponding figure regarding any other feature. Furthermore 19 informants, or 17.59%, claim not to notice the ‘am-to-frenzy’ at all or only to a small extent, and this figure is lower than that seen for the other features. The remaining 28 informants, or 25.93%, notice this feature to some extent. As before, though, these figures regarding the extent to which informants notice the feature in question are based on quite vague responses.

I mentioned above that the levels of awareness of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ were high despite this being a relatively new feature. Perhaps, however, this should be turned around to argue that these high levels of awareness are the result of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ being a novelty, i.e. that through being new it becomes noticeable. Maybe the fact that this feature has relatively recently emerged also shines through as regards the attitudes towards it. It is at least noticeable that the ‘am-to-frenzy’ is clearly less negatively viewed than the other non-standard features as on this occasion only 54, or 50%, of the informants express negative views while 49, or 45.37%, claim to be neutral. Note here that excluding the six informants who were not familiar with this feature only results in a marginally higher level of negativity, i.e. 51.96%. It is also especially interesting to notice that five informants, or 4.63%, are positive towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, but as can be seen in the relevant sections above, no signs of direct positive attitudes were found as regards ‘genitive avoidance’, other case inflections or ‘new passive’. The only other feature towards which a few informants were positive is ‘dative sickness’ which is interesting in light of the fact that, of the features discussed here, this is probably the best established one, in terms of both usage and knowledge of it. In light of this, it is tempting to speculate that non-standard features can, despite being generally treated with suspicion, be regarded with at least some degree of positivity when, on the one hand, they have reached a certain level of embedding in the consciousness of the language community and, on the other, before they can be said to have become embedded at all in the sense that stigmatisation has not yet arisen, and they have yet to be dealt with to any extent by the available language cultivation instances.

There are also a few noticeable aspects regarding the distribution of attitudes according to the various social groupings. The most striking result is probably the clear age-grading which appears in table 6.34.

Table 6.34 Attitudes by age groups to the ‘am-to-frenzy’

Age group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Teenagers	7 (19.44%)	24 (66.67%)	5 (13.89%)	36 (100%)
Adults	20 (55.56%)	16 (44.44%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)
Seniors	27 (75%)	9 (25%)	0 (0%)	36 (100%)
Total	54 (50%)	49 (45.37%)	5 (4.63%)	108 (100%)

Here we see that only seven, or 19.44%, of the teenagers express negative views towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, while 20, or 55.56%, of the adult group and 27, or 75%, of the senior citizens group do so. Furthermore, all five informants who hold positive views are teenagers. When matched with the speculations above, this of course suggests that it is primarily the younger generation which is likely to view a potential change in a positive light in its initial stages.

Other patterns are not as clear-cut, but it is interesting to note that the level of negativity towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’ is highest, or 57.69%, in the lowest of the educational/occupational groups. It then declines to 43.59% in the intermediate group to rise again, or to 51.16%, in the highest group. Another interesting point is that three of the five positive informants are found in the highest educational/occupational group, while one positive informant is found in each of the other groups. No clear explanatory factors to these patterns, which are summarized in table 6.35 below, emerged in the interviews.

Table 6.35 Attitudes by educational/occupational groups to the ‘am-to-frenzy’

Ed./occ. group	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
1	15 (57.69%)	10 (38.46%)	1 (3.85%)	26 (100%)
2	17 (43.59%)	21 (53.85%)	1 (2.56%)	39 (100%)
3	22 (51.16%)	18 (41.86%)	3 (6.98%)	43 (100%)
Total	54 (50%)	49 (45.37%)	5 (4.63%)	108 (100%)

When it comes to the communities and the distribution of attitudes amongst them, few striking figures appear although it is noticeable that Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður show slightly lower levels of negativity than do the other communities. In both these communities only four informants hold negative views of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ while five to seven informants do so in the other communities, except central Reykjavík, where eight informants claim to be negative. These results reflect by and large the corresponding figures regarding ‘dative sickness’ discussed in section 6.4.2 above, but as was seen there informants from Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður showed the lowest degree of negativity. As for the five informants who held positive views of the ‘am-to-frenzy’, they come from five different communities, and thus no clear geographical dimension appears in this regard. These results are summarized in table 6.36.

Table 6.36 Attitudes by communities to the ‘am-to-frenzy’

Community	Negative (nr(%))	Neutral (nr(%))	Positive (nr(%))	Total
Central Reykjavík	8 (66.67%)	3 (25%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Suburban R.vík + neighb. municipal.	7 (58.33%)	5 (41.67%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Reykjanesbær	6 (50%)	5 (41.67%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Akranes	5 (41.67%)	7 (58.33%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Patreksfjörður	4 (33.33%)	7 (58.33)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Siglufjörður	4 (33.33%)	8 (66.67%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Akureyri	7 (58.33%)	4 (33.33%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Neskaupstaður	6 (50%)	5 (41.67%)	1 (8.33%)	12 (100%)
Flúðir	7 (58.33%)	5 (41.67%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
Total	54 (50%)	49 (45.37%)	5 (4.63%)	108 (100%)

In relation to the remaining social factors, i.e. gender and social networks, there are hardly any discernible differences between the various groups, with the possible exception of men being more positive than women as four of the five informants who claimed to be positive towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’ are men. However, if the negative end of the scale is examined, almost exactly the same figures appear as 50.91% of the women express negative views while 49.06% of the men do so. Similarly, there are only minor differences between the different types of social networks.

It is mentioned in sections 4.5 and 6.1.5 above that the ‘am-to-frenzy’ has yet to be properly defined and that it is therefore unclear in which contexts it can possibly occur. This in turn means that it is difficult to correlate in a meaningful way the results regarding the informants’ attitudes towards this feature with the results regarding their usage of it. This involves comparing the attitudes of the speakers who produce non-standard forms in the relevant contexts with the attitudes of those who do not produce non-standard forms in the same contexts. As mentioned above, however, it is unclear here which these contexts are. Therefore, all that can be done is to match the attitudes of the speakers who produce clear-cut examples of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ with the attitudes of all the remaining speakers, thereby assuming that they all use verbal constructions in which this feature could possibly appear. However inaccurate this may be, it nonetheless give some indication as to the connection between attitudes and usage of ‘am-to-frenzy’ forms.

When this comparison is made, it emerges that amongst the 24 speakers who produce one or more examples each of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ (see section 6.1.5), the level of negativity is 33.33% as eight of them express negative views. This can be compared with a negativity level of 54.76% amongst the remaining speakers. At the same time, the level of neutrality is 62.5% in the former group

while it is 40.48% in the latter. Finally, the level of positive attitudes is essentially the same in both groups as it is 4.17% in the former but 4.76% in the latter. Thus there are signs that, even though it does not necessarily translate into an increased level of positive attitudes, the usage of examples of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ may be related to a relatively lenient stance towards it. This is, then, essentially the same pattern as has emerged regarding the other features, with the possible exception of ‘genitive avoidance’.

In sum, it has emerged in this section that there is a high level of awareness of the ‘am-to-frenzy’, but in terms of attitudes this awareness takes on a less generally negative shape than is the case regarding the other linguistic features. As for how the attitudes are distributed amongst the various social groupings, there is a clear age-grading, with the level of negativity rising with age. Otherwise, the divergences between different groups are relatively small, although there are some signs of a relationship between class and attitudes and of the communities of Patreksfjörður and Siglufjörður being less negative than the other communities. Finally, while the matching of the informants’ attitudes towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’ with their usage of it is unavoidably inaccurate, it indicates the same pattern as regards most of the other features, i.e. that the use of non-standard forms decreases as the level of negativity to them rises.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has consisted of a presentation of the results of the present study. Three main types of results have been discussed. First, the focus was on the spoken data and the emergence therein of the linguistic variables, i.e. ‘dative sickness’ and other signs of instability in the usage of impersonal verbs; ‘genitive avoidance’ and potential signs of instability in the case inflectional system in general; ‘new passive’, and the ‘am-to-frenzy’. Second, the results emanating from the written data with respect to the same variables as above were presented and this was followed by a quick look at whether or not there was any relationship among the different linguistic variables, i.e. whether the informants used more than one type of non-standard form and, if so, this non-standard usage showed any certain patterning. The third main type of results emerged in an examination of the informants’ awareness of and attitudes towards the linguistic variables and language change in general.

Going by the results from the spoken language data, ‘dative sickness’ is the only one of the non-standard forms examined which appears to have found some footing in Icelandic, although this footing is less secure than previous research indicates (Gíslason, 2003; Jónsson & Eypórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984). The overall relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ in the present data is 13.13%, but if this figure is broken down according to the subjects used with the relevant verbs, it is somewhat lower for subjects which are a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun but rises sharply for other

subjects. However, there are no clear indications of any particular accusative verbs being more likely than others to appear with a dative subject, rather than the standard accusative one. As for the distribution of ‘dative sickness’ in the various social groupings, gender appears to be the only statistically significant factor, with women being more prone than men to using non-standard forms of this kind. Otherwise the differences are relatively small, although there are some indications that e.g. inhabitants in the fishing villages included in the study are more likely to show signs of ‘dative sickness’ than are inhabitants of the other communities, at the same time as speakers in the Reykjavík area appear to be less likely than other speakers to show these signs. The results also suggest that the level of usage of ‘dative sickness’ declines as the educational/occupational level rises. There seem, however, to be hardly any differences between the three age groups included as regards their usage of dative subjects with accusative verbs, which is intriguing in itself as it goes against the general assumption that ‘dative sickness’ primarily affects children and teenagers.

As regards the other linguistic variables, only traces of instability were found rather than any systematic pattern of usage of non-standard forms. Thus, with respect to other signs of instability in the use of impersonal verbs, the results here only vaguely indicate that there may be a tendency amongst speakers of Icelandic for ‘nominative sickness’ with certain accusative verbs. At the same time only traces of ‘genitive avoidance’ were found and some of these traces seem attributable to the context in which they appear no less than to a tendency to avoid, as it were, genitive case or genitive case endings. Much the same can be said as regards other case inflections; the overall relative frequency of non-standard forms is extremely low and the majority of the few non-standard forms found here appear to be slips of the tongue or to stem from the syntactic or conversational context they appear in. In fact, only two types of words show any signs of systematicity in terms of the occurrence of non-standard forms. These are, on the one hand, compound women’s names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix and, on the other, the kinship terms *dóttir*, *systir*, *móðir*, *bróðir* and *faðir*. In the former case, a strong tendency appears to use the relevant women’s names without the standard accusative and dative ending *-ju*, and in the latter a clear tendency emerges to use the nominative *-ir* ending in all oblique cases as well, instead of the standard *-ur*. Both these types of words, especially the compound women’s names with a *-ný* or *-ey* suffix, were used quite rarely in the data, which means that it was difficult to correlate the non-standard usage with the social background factors, but there are nonetheless signs that, as regards the kinship terms, men are slightly more likely than women to produce non-standard forms, while speakers from the Reykjavík area, senior citizens, and speakers from the highest educational/occupational group produce fewer examples of non-standard usage than others.

When it comes to ‘new passive’, the overall result is, once again, primarily indicative of stability, although it should not be forgotten that there is

a significant difference between teenage speakers, on the one hand, and adult and senior speakers, on the other, with the teenagers showing higher level of usage of this feature than the other age groups. This may of course be a sign of 'new passive' being an emerging change in progress. It should also be mentioned that here speakers from Reykjanesbær clearly show the highest levels of non-standard usage, and there are also signs that men use 'new passive' constructions more than women and that non-standard usage of this kind is more common amongst speakers in the lowest educational/occupational group than amongst speakers in the two higher educational/occupational groups.

Finally, the results regarding the 'am-to-frenzy' are in many ways inconclusive, mainly due to the lack of a proper definition of this feature. Thus, even though, out of the variables discussed here, this is the non-standard form which occurs most often in terms of sheer frequency, its relative frequency is unclear as it has not been established in which contexts these constructions can appear. The sheer frequency figures available suggest, however, that the use of these constructions is relatively evenly spread amongst the different communities, as well as between men and women and the different types of social networks. On the other hand, teenagers appear somewhat more likely to use these constructions than members of the other two age groups and speakers with a high educational/occupational level are more frequent users of them than speakers with a low educational/occupational level.

Turning then to the written data, it should first be reiterated that only 52 of the 108 informants submitted written material which means that the evidence in this part is, on the whole, less conclusive than in the part dealing with the spoken data. What the results emerging from the written data nonetheless suggest is that the relevant non-standard forms appear with even less frequency there than in the spoken data, although some of the patterns that emerged in the spoken data are repeated in the written data.

If we go through these results from the written data in the order as was done above regarding the spoken data, what emerges first is that 'dative sickness' hardly occurs at all in the informants' writing. However, judging by the few occasions on which it occurs, it seems, just as was the case in spoken language, to be more likely to appear with subjects which are not either 1st or 2nd person singular pronouns. As for other signs of instability in the usage of impersonal verbs, they hardly appear at all.

The results regarding 'genitive avoidance' are much the same in the written as in the spoken data; non-standard genitive forms are quite rare and often seem to be attributable to the context in which they appear, no less than to any particular tendency for non-standard usage of genitive case or case endings as such. This pattern of repetition from spoken to written language can then be said to continue when it comes to other case inflections as here again there are, with the exception of the above mentioned women's names and kinship terms, no signs of any systematic instability. Rather, the few non-standard examples

found seem traceable to the syntactic context in which they appear, or to the odd “slip of the pen”. As for women’s names ending in *-ný* or *-ey* and the set of kinship terms, the results from the written data can in both cases be seen as a confirmation of the existence of the tendency for the above mentioned non-standard usage, although it does not reach as high levels in written as in spoken language.

As for ‘new passive’, such constructions appear hardly to be used in written language at all, and the few informants who produce examples of them do not do so with any consistency. Finally, the ‘am-to-frenzy’ simply did not appear at all in the written data and thus seems yet to have to make the transfer from spoken to written language.

As was mentioned in the beginning of this section, an examination was made of whether there appeared to be any connection between the different types of non-standard forms studied in this thesis. This means that a look was taken at whether the informants produced more than one type of non-standard forms and, if so, whether any pattern emerged as regards the non-standard features produced by the same speaker. It should also be mentioned that only the spoken data was examined in this way.

In short, no clear pattern of relationship between the different variables emerged; all that could be found were vague indications of, on the one hand, ‘dative sickness’ being likely to appear in the speech of those who also used the ‘am-to-frenzy’ and, on the other, of non-standard case inflectional forms of both the above mentioned kinship terms and women’s names appearing in data from the same speaker.

We now come to the last type of results presented in this chapter, i.e. those relating to attitudes and awareness. Here an interesting contrast appears between, on the one hand, the informants’ attitudes to what they regarded as language change in general and, on the other, their attitudes towards each of the separate linguistic variables discussed in this thesis. In the former case, the informant’s attitudes are probably best described as generally neutral or only vaguely negative while, in the latter, they are generally quite negative, with the exception of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ which, in this respect, shows figures similar to those applying to change in general. With respect to perceived examples of language change in general, it is also interesting to note that while the informants were generally somewhat vague in their responses regarding their awareness of change, a large number singled out foreign influences as noticeable. These foreign influences were also generally seen in a negative light. In expressing these views the informants in question primarily reflected the traditional nationalistically and language cultivation inspired values found in the Icelandic language community.

It was mentioned above that the informants generally held negative views towards each of the separate linguistic variables, with the exception of the ‘am-to-frenzy’, which is viewed less negatively than the other non-standard features.

In a similar fashion, the level of awareness of the variables was generally quite high, with the possible exception of ‘genitive avoidance’ which just below 60% of the informants were familiar with, while the corresponding figures regarding the other features ranged between 88.89% and 100%. However, just as was the case with language change in general, the informants were relatively uncertain when it came to indicating the level to which they noticed the separate variables in their linguistic surroundings.

No clear overall pattern emerges as regards the distribution of attitudes according to the social background factors included. Thus the generally negative attitudes towards ‘new passive’ and ‘genitive avoidance’ seem to be largely shared by the different communities, age groups, educational/occupational groups, types of social networks and both genders. At the same time, there is e.g. a clear age-grading in the attitudes towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, with younger informants being more positive than older ones, and, as regards ‘dative sickness’, inhabitants in two of the fishing villages included held even less lenient views than informants elsewhere.

A clearer overall picture appears as regards the relationship between the informants’ attitudes and their usage of non-standard forms. This especially applies to ‘dative sickness’, use of non-standard case inflectional forms other than ‘genitive avoidance’, and ‘new passive’, but the results on each of these indicate that the use of non-standard forms decreases as the level of negativity rises. There are indications of the same pattern in the data on the ‘am-to-frenzy’, while the results regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ are inconclusive in this respect.

All in all, therefore, the above results indicate that, with the possible exception of ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language, the non-standard features discussed here have not become rooted in either spoken or written Icelandic. Nor does there appear to be any clear relationship between the usage of any two or more types of non-standard forms. Finally, the informants are generally well aware of the separate non-standard forms and tend to see them in a negative light, even though they are not overly suspicious of language change in general, which, however, seems to be partly the result of them having a less than clear view of what “language change in general” is. These negative views of the separate non-standard forms in turn appear to play their part in the low frequency of these forms as they tend to be produced mainly by less negative informants. This overall picture will be further discussed in the next – and final – chapter.

7. Concluding discussion

In the previous chapter the results from the research carried out for this thesis were presented. In this final chapter these results will be examined and discussed further in light of the basic research questions posed for the thesis and the theoretical background previously presented. First, I will briefly summarize the results in order to answer questions pertaining to whether Icelandic should be regarded as characterized by stability or by variation and change. Then I will look at which general picture seems to appear regarding the informants' views on language change and the variables treated in this thesis. This summary of the results will then be followed by an attempt to explain the patterns which emerge, both in an Icelandic and a more general context. In the latter, I will examine whether or not any sociolinguistic conclusions can be made on the basis of my overall results. Finally, some suggestions for further research will be presented, and the chapter is then rounded off with a brief summary.

7.1 Icelandic: Stable or in a state of flux?

On the basis of the results presented in the previous chapter, there seems to be only one answer to the question posed in the heading of this section, namely that Icelandic can still be characterized as a highly stable language, at least in terms of the morphological and syntactic features examined in this thesis. I will not go through the results as such in any detail again but, to start with 'genitive avoidance' and other case inflections, the extremely low frequency, in spoken as well as written language, of non-standard forms is hardly indicative of any emerging change. The only exceptions here are a group of women's names ending in *-ný* or *-ey* in nominative and a group of kinship terms, but for both these types of words a clear tendency for the use of non-standard oblique case forms emerged. However, these words appear to be rather isolated in this tendency and the general picture regarding case inflections is one of stability, not the least as a large part of the few examples of non-standard usage found are probably simply slips of the tongue or the pen, rather than signs of a systematically emerging change.

It is in many ways tempting to approach these results on the basis of actuation as it is discussed in section 2.1 above. There we saw how actuation has largely been side-stepped despite being defined as e.g. "any element of usage (or grammar) which differs from previous usage (or grammar)" (Andersen, 1989, p. 13) and "*an act of the speaker which is capable of influencing linguistic structure*" (Milroy, 1993, p. 221-222). Finding the very first element or act of this kind regarding a certain linguistic feature does not, however, seem to be regarded as being of interest; rather we should focus on the conditions under which actuation either expands into becoming systematic variation and, possibly, change or simply peters out without leaving any lasting marks on

linguistic structure. It may well be the case that e.g. some of the non-standard forms found in the present data with regard to case inflection, and are here treated as slips of the tongue due to the lack of systematic occurrence, are in fact actuation in its clearest sense, i.e. the very first instances of what is later to become a variant which catches on in the linguistic community and may ultimately result in a change. This in turn means that it might be fruitful to examine in a larger bulk of data whether these ‘slips of the tongue’ emerge with any regularity, to then try to monitor their development in terms of the social conditions which favour or disfavour them at this early stage and in terms of which speaker background factors (age, gender, class, etc.) seem to be of relevance. To follow a seemingly randomly occurring non-standard feature might bring us closer to understanding actuation and thereby the first phases of change. As has been hinted at earlier, however, we have no guarantee that any of the ‘slips of the tongue’ chosen for further examination turn out to be anything more than just that, and this is indeed the only way in which the examples found here can be treated on the basis of the present data; most of the non-standard forms that occur do so randomly, which, in turn, is first and foremost a sign of a high level of stability. This interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that there is hardly any difference between spoken and written language in this respect. If the case inflectional system had begun to show any systematic signs of instability or variation, these could be expected to emerge to a greater extent in spoken than in the more variation resistant written language

Having thus stated that the overall picture regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ and case inflections in general is one of stability, a closer look should probably be taken at the variables mentioned above, which regularly appear in non-standard oblique case forms. In both these variables, the non-standard variants seem to be quite well-established, especially in spoken language. There, the non-standard *-ju-less* form, rather than the standard *-ju* ending, is used on 81.25% of the occasions the relevant women’s names are used in accusative or dative case, and the overall relative frequency of the usage of the nominative *-ir* ending, rather than the standard *-ur* one, in accusative, dative and genitive case of the kinship terms in question is 46.43%. It should be noted that these figures are based on a relatively low number of tokens, especially as regards the women’s names, but the high relative frequency and number of different speakers who use them nonetheless indicates that the non-standard examples found are not coincidental. As regards the women’s names, this is further strengthened by the fact that in written language the relative frequency of the non-standard *-ju-less* form is 40%, which is of course a relatively high figure, even if it is considerable lower than that found for spoken language. On the other hand, the use of the non-standard *-ir* ending in oblique cases of the kinship terms seems to be more or less restricted to spoken language as, even though the relative frequency of non-standard case inflected forms of kinship terms found in written

language reaches 4.49%, none of the four tokens behind this figure are indisputable examples of a tendency to use *-ur* rather than *-ir* as a case ending.

It seems in many ways likely that the Icelandic educational system plays its part in creating the difference that emerges between spoken and written language as regards the usage of the non-standard *-ir* ending in oblique cases of the kinship terms. Case inflections are by tradition heavily emphasized in the teaching of Icelandic, and this includes the kinship terms treated here, not the least as the inflectional paradigm used for them is unique in Icelandic to this group of words and is a remnant from Old Icelandic (Kvaran, 2005). This emphasis is likely to primarily leave its impression on the formal written language. Further signs of the effects of the educational system can be found in the fact that the group of speakers in this study which has the highest level of education shows the lowest level of usage of the non-standard *-ir* ending in oblique cases. At the same time, speakers from the Reykjavík area, where the level of education is the highest, appear to show the lowest level of non-standard usage in this respect. The assumption here would then be that those speakers who have a high level of education are more likely than others to embrace the linguistic norm emphasized in the educational system.

With respect to whether or not the use of the non-standard *-ir* ending with kinship terms in oblique case is increasing, there are signs that it is stabilizing at a certain level. It has already been mentioned that the overall relative frequency of the non-standard ending was 46.43%, but if this is broken down according to the age groups the informants were divided into, the results in section 6.1.3.2.3 show that amongst the senior citizens this figure is 29.41% while it is 52.63% amongst the adult informants and 55% amongst the teenagers. The small difference there is between the adult group and the teenagers indicates that non-standard usage in this respect seems currently to be levelling out, in the process of which it may be aligned according to the patterning described in the last paragraph.

In light of what was said above about the emphasis placed in the Icelandic educational system on case inflections, it is interesting to note how high a level was found of usage of the non-standard *-ju*-less ending in accusative and dative case of women's names ending in *-ný* or *-ey*. Here we are of course still dealing with case inflections, and in this respect personal names in general are certainly not exempt from the emphasis placed in the teaching of Icelandic on 'proper' usage. However, despite this general emphasis on case inflections, it is difficult to treat each and every inflectional paradigm separately, and, as the group of women's names under discussion here has quite a limited number of members, it may well be by-passed in most classrooms. Furthermore, the nicknames, discussed in section 6.1.3.1 above, which end in *-ý* in nominative case and maintain this *-ju*-less ending in accusative and dative case in standard usage, may have become a model for a new inflectional pattern for the older Icelandic names ending in *-ný* or *-ey*. The high level of usage of the *-ju*-less accusative

and dative case forms of these names, even in written language, is probably a strong indicator of this apparent switch. Sadly, the low number of tokens of non-standard usage here prevented any meaningful correlations being made between this usage and the various social groupings, and therefore no further possible explanations to the pattern emerging can be sought there.

The picture regarding ‘new passive’ is in most ways similar to that regarding ‘genitive avoidance’ and other case inflections. Thus, the overall relative frequency of ‘new passive’ constructions is 2.63%, which is hardly indicative of this being a well-established feature. At the same time, however, there are some signs of this being a change in its initial stages. Thus, even though no clear linguistic pattern emerges regarding with which verbs, or in which syntactic or conversational contexts this feature appears, it does feature more prominently in spoken than in written language, where it hardly appears at all, and the teenage group is significantly more likely to use ‘new passive’ constructions in their spoken language than the two adult age groups are. Possibly, therefore, the ‘actuation approach’ mentioned above with respect to case inflections might be more fruitful here. I mentioned above (section 6.1.4.6) that the apparent tendency of teenagers being more prone to using ‘new passive’ constructions than adults might be the result of the former group not having reached full linguistic maturity, as passive constructions in general are rather syntactically complex. By further tracking the non-standard examples found here, it could be established whether they are simply random signs of this lack of linguistic maturity or the first steps in an emerging change in progress.

As regards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, the results are less conclusive than for the other features discussed here as the lack of a clear definition of this feature prevented a calculation of its relative frequency. However, the fact that, in terms of sheer frequency this is the most commonly occurring non-standard feature of those discussed in this thesis, might be taken as an indication of this being a change in its initial stages. This suggestion may be further enhanced by the total lack of this feature in written language; i.e. while it appears to have gained some footing in spoken language, it is still too new to have spread from there into written language. What we may arrive at is thus, yet again, that approaching this as actuation in a sense and trying to keep track of the clear non-standard examples which emerge might enable us to establish whether this feature is truly expanding in the way the results above hint at or is simply some sort of a passing fashion.

To then come to ‘dative sickness’, it is the only non-standard form examined here which appears to be relatively well established in Icelandic, at least in its spoken form. Thus, its overall relative frequency is 13.13% in spoken language, but this figure is considerably higher than the corresponding ones for ‘new passive’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and other case inflections in general. Of course, no direct comparison of this kind can be made with the ‘am-to-frenzy’ as there the relative frequency is unknown. ‘Dative sickness’ seems to be more

marginal in written language as in this case its relative frequency is 5.13%. Again, however, this figure is markedly higher than those regarding ‘new passive’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and other case inflections in written language. It should be noted, however, that this relative frequency of ‘dative sickness’ is based on a very low number of occurrences, i.e. two instances of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the 39 accusative verbs used in the written data, which means that this figure may not be a fully reliable foundation on which to base any strong conclusions. Nonetheless it is interesting to note that here, just as was the case with the ‘am-to-frenzy’, a seemingly clear difference emerges between the spoken and the written data, but this difference does by no means emerge as clearly regarding the other main variables. This is intriguing as we here have, on the one hand, the oldest and the best-established of the non-standard forms treated here, but, as has been mentioned earlier (see section 4.1), written examples of ‘dative sickness’ can be found as far back as the 12th century which indicates that this tendency has been present in spoken Icelandic from a very early stage. On the other hand, we have what is probably the newest of the non-standard forms discussed in this thesis, but, as is suggested in section 4.5 above, the ‘am-to-frenzy’ is probably no more than 10 years old. At the same time, and as shown by the results presented above (sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.6) regarding the informants’ attitudes to and awareness of the variables examined here, ‘dative sickness’ is currently one of the best-known and most stigmatized non-standard forms found in Icelandic, while the ‘am-to-frenzy’ has yet to become stigmatized, despite appearing to be well-known, primarily through its novelty. On this basis it is tempting to argue that, in the case of ‘dative sickness’, the difference between the results for spoken and written language is traceable to stigmatization which is more likely to affect the more formal written language as people are more aware of their use of language there than when speaking. As for the ‘am-to-frenzy’, however, its absence from written language can probably primarily be explained by how new the feature is, which can in turn be a result of the higher level of awareness of language use in writing than in speaking. The fact that hardly any differences emerge between the results for spoken and written language in terms of ‘new passive’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and other case inflections (apart from the above mentioned women’s names and kinship terms) then further underlines the above conclusion that these features do not as yet show any systematic signs of change. Rather, the few non-standard examples there emerge do so randomly in both spoken and written language, and this is probably only to be expected as most speakers are bound to make the occasional slip of the tongue or the pen.

‘Dative sickness’ thus seems to be the best established of the variables treated in this thesis. Nonetheless, the general level of usage of dative rather than accusative case for the subject of the relevant impersonal verbs is relatively low in both spoken and written language and the question remains whether or not we are here looking at a change in progress. The evidence provided by the

results does not suggest that this is the case. In section 6.1.1.4 above it can be seen that there are only small differences between the three different age groups. This, together with the earlier mentioned fact about ‘dative sickness’ having emerged possibly as early as in the 12th century, rather indicates that ‘dative sickness’ is an example of stable variation, i.e. it has gained some footing in the language but does not appear to be increasing. It should be reiterated, however, that here, yet again, the relative frequency of the relevant non-standard form is based on a very low number of tokens, which means that while the results point in the direction described above, it cannot be excluded that this is a coincidental result which would be rectified in a larger bulk of data.

One possible explanation for this seeming present stability is to be found in the high level of stigmatization attached to ‘dative sickness’ in the public debate and the resulting emphasis which is placed on fighting this ‘disease’ in schools. Thus, we saw in the results above (section 6.4.2) regarding the informants’ views towards ‘dative sickness’ that there is a high level of awareness of this feature and most elementary or secondary level teaching materials on Icelandic grammar contain a special mention and, as it were, ‘treatment’, of it. This may have had the desired effect on at least the two younger age groups included here, most members of which are likely to have undergone quite a strict scrutinization in school of their usage of impersonal verbs. Of course, however, this does not explain why ‘dative sickness’ appears not to have left any lasting marks in earlier centuries, despite the tendency for it having been existent for the majority of the period of settlement in Iceland. Here we can of course only speculate, but it seems likely that, with the addition of a strong literary tradition which indirectly promulgated the use of accusative subjects with the relevant impersonal verbs, we can refer back to the discussion in section 2.4 about the unchanging societal structures and the stable social networks in Iceland in the period from the first phases of settlement until around 1850. These conditions appear to have been a crucial contribution towards the failure of a potential language change to gain any real impetus.

It is mentioned in the previous paragraph that the teaching materials used in Icelandic schools for teaching Icelandic tend to contain a special mention of ‘dative sickness’ and that this has played its part in preventing this feature from ousting the relevant standard form. It is likely that these teaching materials also contain part of the explanation of the fact emerging in the results that 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects appear to be much less affected than other types of subjects by ‘dative sickness’, at the same time as no particular accusative verbs seem to be more affected than others. A quick glance at the parts in these teaching materials which discuss ‘dative sickness’ reveals that a majority of the examples provided for instruction purposes include a 1st person singular pronoun subject while there is more variety in terms of which verbs are used (see e.g. Árnason, 1990; Blöndal, 1996; Kristmundsson, Þorbjarnardóttir & Kristinsdóttir, 1998; Norland & Snævarr, 1997). School pupils are thus trained

quite extensively in the “correct” usage of the 1st person singular pronoun subject with accusative verbs and this training can be transferred directly to the 2nd person singular pronoun subject as it follows the same case inflectional pattern as the 1st person singular pronoun.⁷¹ This seems, in turn, to be reflected in speakers’ everyday usage where subjects of the kind just mentioned are generally unproblematic, while other subjects, in the usage of which most people have been drilled to a far lesser extent, show a relatively high tendency to appear in dative case. To this the anecdotal note can be added that in informal discussions with several teachers of Icelandic about this particular part of my results, their spontaneous reaction infallibly consists of pointing to the teaching materials used and the attention paid there to 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects at the expense of other types.

As a final note in this discussion on ‘dative sickness’ it should be noted again that only relatively vague signs were found of the so-called other ‘verb sicknesses’. Thus, some indication was found of a tendency for ‘nominative sickness’ with the theme/patient verbs *reka* (= ‘drift’) and *hvolfa* (= ‘capsize’), which is to say that these verbs are occasionally used with a nominative subject, rather than the standard accusative one. Similarly, examples were found of the personal verb *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) appearing as a case of ‘oblique case sickness’, i.e. being used with an oblique subject rather than the standard nominative one. However, the examples found of both these ‘sicknesses’ were too few to base any strong conclusions on them regarding how well-advanced these possible changes may be. Here, further data is needed. Finally it should be added that no signs were found in the data of ‘accusative sickness’ or ‘reverse dative sickness’, i.e. of dative verbs appearing with an accusative case subject.

Having now established that the picture emerging from the results of this thesis is one of general stability, a quick mention should be made of the fact that one result of this stability is that, with a few exceptions, the differences between the various social groupings are quite small.⁷² To this it can be added that the little patterning that emerges does not take the same shape for all the linguistic variables. All in all, therefore, it is difficult to make any generalizations regarding the social distribution of all the variables; even though a certain social background factor may seem to be related to an elevated level of usage of one or more of the non-standard features in question, this does never apply to all the variables discussed here. Thus, while women appear to be likelier than men to

⁷¹ The case inflectional pattern for the 1st person singular pronoun (= ‘I’) is: *ég* (NOM), *mig* (ACC), *mér* (DAT), *mín* (GEN). For the 2nd person singular pronoun (= ‘you’) it is: *þú* (NOM), *þig* (ACC), *þér* (DAT), *þín* (GEN).

⁷² To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be mentioned that in this paragraph I only refer to the spoken data examined in this thesis. As is mentioned in the introductory words in chapter 6, the general lack of written data and the unbalanced sample of informants submitting such data meant that hardly any correlations could be made between this material and the social factors included.

produce examples of ‘dative sickness’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and non-standard oblique case forms of women’s names ending in *-ný* or *-ey* in the nominative, this pattern is reversed for ‘new passive’ and the non-standard oblique case forms of the set of kinship terms discussed in section 6.1.3.2 above. Similarly, there are signs that speakers in the Reykjavík area and in Flúðir are less likely than speakers elsewhere in Iceland to be caught using forms displaying ‘dative sickness’, ‘genitive avoidance’ and non-standard oblique case forms of the relevant kinship terms. However, no clear geographical patterning is evident with regard to any of the other variables, with the exception that speakers in Reykjanesbær show a higher tendency than other speakers of using ‘new passive’ constructions. A final example can be found in the age patterning. The teenagers in the sample use non-standard case inflections to a higher degree than speakers from the other two age groups, and the same can be said about ‘new passive’ constructions, non-standard oblique case forms of the women’s names mentioned above and possibly the ‘am-to-frenzy’. No clear age grading appears, however, as regards ‘dative sickness’ and ‘genitive avoidance’ and when it comes to the kinship terms, teenagers and adults appear to use non-standard oblique case forms to the same extent, while the senior citizens show somewhat lower figures. In this discussion, the first lines in this paragraph should also be kept in mind, as in most cases the low overall rate of non-standard usage means that the social patterning just discussed is quite weak. To this there are only a handful of exceptions, such as the fact that women show a significantly higher level of ‘dative sickness’ than men do.

It can thus hardly be claimed that any one social group is generally more likely than others to use all the non-standard forms discussed in this thesis. This may of course be a quite natural result of the fact that the variables are of a varied nature, and even though it can be argued that e.g. ‘genitive avoidance’ and non-standard case inflection in general are in essence the same issue which should lead to a similar social patterning in both categories, the same cannot be said about e.g. ‘dative sickness’ and ‘new passive’. These are two distinctive linguistic features and a tendency of a certain speaker to use one of them does not necessarily have to translate into a tendency to use the other. Comparing one with the other in this way may therefore be rather futile. It may be more worthwhile to make another comparison at this point, namely that between the present results and results from what little previous research there exists on the variables examined here.

7.2 The present results vs. previous research

When we now come to comparing the results of the present study to the results emanating from previous research, it should first be noted that not all of the features discussed here have been examined previously from a sociolinguistic point of view. Thus, there exists very little with which the present results on the

‘am-to-frenzy’ can be compared, and this feature has not even been fully defined as yet. Therefore, the main contribution of the present study may be to add some dimensions to a definition of the ‘am-to-frenzy’, but, as mentioned in section 4.5 above, other current research is working towards this target.

Similarly, all we can compare the present results regarding case inflections other than ‘genitive avoidance’ with, are the previously mentioned claims of teachers of Icelandic and occasional “letters to the editor” about the emergence of a general instability in the case inflectional system of Icelandic. From the discussion in the previous section it should be clear that the present results do not yield any support to these claims, since the case inflectional system as a whole appears to be quite stable even though isolated parts of it, i.e. women’s names ending in *-ný* or *-ey* and a set of kinship terms, show clear signs of variation.

If case inflections are expanded to include ‘genitive avoidance’ some work exists against which the present results can be aligned. Still, the extent to which this can be done is highly limited as the previous work which exists on ‘genitive avoidance’ is aimed at identifying the feature and providing a first definition of it rather than establishing how advanced it has become (Kjartansson, 1979, 1999; Svavarsdóttir, 1994). The present results indicate that this may in many ways be beginning at the wrong end. First, genitive case does in general appear only to be marginally less stable than the other two oblique cases, i.e. accusative and dative, and the limited level of instability which emerges hardly warrants alarm bells to be rung. Second, the few examples of non-standard usage of genitive case which do appear, do not conform all too well to the tentative definitions of ‘genitive avoidance’ provided by Kjartansson (1979, 1999) and Svavarsdóttir (1994). Admittedly, there are examples in the present data of seeming ‘genitive avoidance’ emerging in complex syntactic contexts containing many case-inflected words, but such contexts are identified by Kjartansson (1979) as particularly likely to cause an insecurity on behalf of the speaker in question about the usage of genitive case. However, the few examples which emerged in my data of non-standard usage of accusative and dative case suggest that this insecurity is by no means limited to genitive case. Rather, complex syntactic contexts containing many case-inflected items can be problematic with respect to which case to use in general, thereby rendering the term ‘genitive avoidance’ somewhat questionable.

As is mentioned in section 4.4 above, there exists some work of sociolinguistic relevance concerning ‘new passive’ (Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997; Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002). Again, however, no direct comparisons between this research and the present results on usage can be made due to methodological differences. The work of Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling is based on a questionnaire where participants were asked to indicate whether or not examples of ‘new passive’ constructions were acceptable, while the results presented in this thesis are based on actual language use, both spoken and

written. This methodological difference is also the obvious source for the difference between the results in this thesis and those in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's work. This difference consists of a seemingly large gap between acceptance, on the one hand, and use, on the other. Thus, while Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001) found a generally high level of acceptance of 'new passive' constructions amongst their teenage informants, the level of usage of such forms is extremely low in my data. This in turn suggests that Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's application of their results to language use – but they claim that the high level of acceptance suggests that 'new passive' constructions are widely used by children and teenagers – is highly debatable. Interestingly, a similar contrast appears when Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's results are compared to the present results on attitudes towards 'new passive' constructions. As seen in section 6.4.5 above, around 80% of the informants in the present study expressed negative views towards 'new passive' constructions, a higher figure than for any of the other features examined. This is notable in light of the generally high level of acceptance of 'new passive' constructions in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's study and suggests that, contrary to what seems to be a normal assumption, the level of acceptance does not have to reflect attitudes in any direct way. Here, however, it should be kept in mind how the questions in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's study were formulated. For each construction presented to the respondents they were asked to mark one of two columns. One of these columns had the heading "yes, you can speak in this way" while the heading of the other was "no, you cannot speak this way". These headings are in many ways open to interpretation and the respondents' answers do not necessarily have any bearing on their views of the constructions in question. They could be equally indicative of whether or not the respondents had heard or seen the relevant constructions, or even of whether or not they thought it at all possible to form such constructions outside the test context. Thus, in this case the link between acceptance and attitudes may be not as self-evident as it may have seemed to be at first sight.

Apart from this general comparison, some more specific aspects of the two bodies of work discussed here can be examined from a comparative point of view. First, the present data on the emergence of 'new passive' in use does not mirror Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's finding that 'new passive' constructions containing verbs that govern for dative object case are more likely to be accepted than are constructions containing verbs that govern for accusative object case. In the present data no clear linguistic pattern of this kind emerged. There is some resemblance, however, between the results when they are considered from the perspective of the age of the informants. In their study, Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling included a group of adult informants, mainly for controlling purposes. It emerged, however, that while the acceptancy rate of 'new passive' constructions reached as high a figure as 75% amongst teenagers in parts of the country, it nowhere exceeded 9% amongst adults. In the present

study, the difference is not as sharp, but, as has recently been mentioned, the teenage group nonetheless displays a significantly higher level of usage of ‘new passive’ constructions in spoken language than the other two age groups, and the few ‘new passive’ examples found in the written data suggests that the pattern is the same there. Interestingly, this age grading, which appears as regards both acceptance and usage of ‘new passive’ constructions, fails to emerge when it comes to attitudes towards this feature. On the other hand, the sharp difference between teenagers and adults in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s study might be relevant with respect to the above mentioned general contrast between acceptance of and attitudes towards ‘new passive’ constructions. The youngest informants in the present study were a few years older than the teenagers in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s study. The fact that even this youngest group in the present study displayed a high level of negativity towards ‘new passive’ constructions may be a simple reflection of this group having in this case reached a stage where it conforms to adult rather than teenage attitudinal norms even though this has yet to fully filter through into the level of usage.

Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling found evidence of education being a relevant factor regarding the acceptancy rate of ‘new passive’, as teenagers with highly educated parents were less likely than those with less educated parents to accept such constructions. This is partly mirrored in the present results regarding the usage of ‘new passive’, as they indicate that there is at least some tendency for speakers who are here placed in the lowest educational/occupational group to use ‘new passive’ constructions than speakers in the two higher groups. As for the results on attitudes, however, they do not conform to this pattern as all three educational/occupational groups are equally negative towards ‘new passive’

With regard to both the gender and the geographical aspect of the usage of and attitudes towards ‘new passive’ constructions, the present results appear not to point quite in the same direction as do Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s results. Thus, while in Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling’s study teenagers in the central parts of Reykjavík were much less likely to accept ‘new passive’ constructions than were teenagers elsewhere in the country, no clear geographical pattern emerged as regards usage in the present study, other than a slight tendency for speakers from Reykjanesbær to be more prone to using ‘new passive’ constructions than speakers elsewhere. This is reflected by the fact that informants from Reykjanesbær were somewhat less negative towards ‘new passive’ constructions than informants elsewhere. Otherwise, the level of negativity was essentially the same in all communities. As for the gender aspect, Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling could not find any clear difference between the acceptance rates of the teenage boys and girls taking part in their study, but in the present data men appear to be slightly more likely than women to use ‘new passive’. This difference between the genders is reflected by the results on attitudes, as female informants are slightly more negative towards ‘new passive’ constructions than male informants are.

All in all, therefore, it seems that even though there are some similarities between the two sets of results, the main conclusion to be drawn from this comparison is probably that care should be taken not to treat acceptance and usage as two sides of the same coin, although the two may affect each other. Furthermore, we have here some indication that a clear distinction should be made between acceptance, as approached by Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling, and attitudes, as approached in this study. Thus, overall, the present results on attitudes appear to be a closer reflection of the results on usage than are the results on acceptance from Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling's study. A more detailed discussion on the general picture pertaining to attitudes follows in section 7.3 below.

Further comparisons between present and previous results can be made when it comes to 'dative sickness'. Here we encounter much the same pattern as in the case of 'new passive' discussed above, i.e. the present results add support to some aspects of the previous findings while they contradict some other aspects. It should be pointed out, however, that even though the methodological differences between the present study and previous ones are not as striking as regards 'dative sickness' as they are with respect to 'new passive', they nonetheless mean that the two sets of results can only be compared in a relatively indirect way. Note also that in the case of 'dative sickness' the present results on attitudes cannot be included in the comparison as no such element was included in the existing previous work in a way similar to that regarding the previous work on 'new passive'.

While keeping in mind the limitations just mentioned, an interesting contrast emerges between the overall results of the present study and those of previous studies. Thus while the average level of 'dative sickness' in the *written* data reaches 30% in Svavarsdóttir's (1982) study and 35.9% in Jónsson and Eypórsson's (2003) work, it only reaches 13.13% in the *spoken* data examined in this study. Furthermore, the overall level of 'dative sickness' in the written data examined here is only 5.13%. To this it should be added that while 90.8% of the informants in Jónsson and Eypórsson's study show some signs of 'dative sickness', only 22.81% of the informants who, in the present study, used the relevant verbs show such signs.

This contrast is of course interesting, especially as the level of 'dative sickness' is in this study lower in spoken language than it is in written language in the previous work that exists. However, it is quite likely that this contrast is largely traceable to the methodological differences mentioned above, which emerge in two main dimensions. First, both Svavarsdóttir's (1982) and Jónsson and Eypórsson's (2003) results come only from 11-year-old school children. Svavarsdóttir herself mentions that it is questionable whether her informants have fully mastered the use of the relevant impersonal verbs, and it seems likely that they have at least done so to a lesser extent than the majority of the informants in the present study, the youngest of whom are 17 years of age. Thus,

while there is no sharp difference between the three age groups in this study, this does not exclude the possibility that the age gap between my youngest informants and the informants in the previous studies partly explains the difference in the overall results, as the years between 11 and 17 may well include a period during which many children and teenagers obtain a firmer grasp of which inflectional cases to use for the subjects of impersonal verbs.

The second methodological dimension, which may lie behind the differences in the general rate of ‘dative sickness’ in the two sets of results, consists of this study being based on informal spoken language and written language not specifically produced for the purpose of my data gathering, while Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) and Jónsson and Eypórsson’s (2003) results emanate from test conditions specifically aimed at eliciting the informants’ usage of subjects of impersonal verbs in written language. With this as a starting point, the two sets of results should perhaps not be compared at all; rather it might be advisable to view them independently of each other as the product of two different approaches. Thus Svavarsdóttir’s and Jónsson and Eypórsson’s results should mainly be read as an indication of the level of ‘dative sickness’ in the conditions created for the gathering of their data. We should be careful, however, not to interpret these results as an indication of the emergence of ‘dative sickness’ in everyday usage, be it spoken or written. On this matter the present results are probably a better source of information. The end result here is therefore quite similar to the one mentioned above in relation to ‘new passive’, although in this case, i.e. regarding ‘dative sickness’, it is set test conditions which we should not confuse with everyday language use.

The present results also differ from previous results with regard to a few more specific aspects. Thus, both Svavarsdóttir (1982) and Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) found that the level of ‘dative sickness’ varied depending on which verb was used. Jónsson and Eypórsson suggest that this can be explained by looking at the frequency of the relevant verbs; the more frequently used ones are according to them less likely than others to appear with a dative subject. This pattern is not reflected in the present results where there rather appears to be only a minimal difference between commonly used accusative verbs, on the one hand, and less commonly used, ones on the other. Furthermore, the small difference that does emerge points in the opposite direction to previous results.

Another aspect where the present results apparently contradict previous results concerns the relationship between ‘dative sickness’ and gender. In a follow-up of her original study Svavarsdóttir, along with Pálsson and Þórlindsson (1984), found that gender appeared not to be a relevant factor, although the boys amongst the informants were slightly more likely to show signs of ‘dative sickness’ than the girls were. Similarly, in Jónsson and Eypórsson’s (2003) study, boys show stronger signs of ‘dative sickness’ than girls do. This is completely reversed in the present results where the female

informants are significantly more likely than the male ones to produce examples of ‘dative sickness’. It should be pointed out, however, that this is of course based on a very low total number of occurrences and thus, even though the difference is statistically significant, I would hesitate to exclude the possibility of this being a coincidental result which might be reversed in a larger bulk of data.

Having now examined the differences between the present results and previous ones, it should not be forgotten that there are also aspects where the two sets point in the same direction. Here it can first be mentioned that the present results appear to confirm Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) finding that the level of ‘dative sickness’ varies according to the type of subject used. As discussed in section 4.1 above, Svavarsdóttir only examined the 1st person singular pronoun and the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun. Here it emerged that the latter was considerably more likely than the former to be used in dative rather than accusative case with the relevant impersonal verbs. This pattern is repeated in the present results, with the addition that other 3rd person pronouns, other pronouns and common nouns join the 3rd person singular feminine pronoun in being more likely to be affected by ‘dative sickness’ than the 1st person singular pronoun. At the same time, the 2nd person singular pronoun can be grouped with the 1st person one in this respect, probably mainly due to the reason mentioned above, i.e. that both these pronouns follow the same inflectional pattern.

Resemblances between the present results and previous ones can be found in two further dimensions. The first of these regards class. Both Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) original work and the following closer analysis of her data (Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984) show that children from the lower social classes are more likely than children from the higher classes to show signs of ‘dative sickness’. To this it can be added that Jónsson and Eypórsson’s (2003) results show that the level of ‘dative sickness’ amongst the children tested decreases as the educational level of their mothers rises. This apparent relationship between the informants’ social and educational standing, on the one hand, and symptoms of ‘dative sickness’, on the other, is reflected in the present data, where the level of ‘dative sickness’ decreases as the informants’ level of education and occupational specialization rises. This pattern is especially clear in relation to 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subjects, which is interesting in light of the above comments about the generally low level of ‘dative sickness’ with such subjects being a possible result of the emphasis placed on them in the educational system. Perhaps, the low level of ‘dative sickness’ with 1st and 2nd person singular pronoun subject amongst the higher educational/occupational groups is a side-effect of this.

The second dimension where the present outcomes seem to reflect previous results relates to the geographical distribution of ‘dative sickness’. Both Svavarsdóttir, Pálsson and Þórlindsson’s (1984) study and that of Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) indicate that ‘dative sickness’ is more likely to be

encountered outside the Reykjavík area than within it, and the same picture emerges in the present results, although it should be reiterated that the low number of ‘dative sickness’ occurrences in each location in the present study means that no strong claims can be made in this respect.

In sum, this comparison between present and previous results regarding ‘dative sickness’ has shown that the present results indicate that ‘dative sickness’ has not reached the high level suggested by previous research, even though it appears to be a well-established feature in modern Icelandic. The present results also fail to support the previous ones regarding the relationship between gender and ‘dative sickness’, and with respect to the distribution of ‘dative sickness’ according to the frequency of the verbs used. However, there is some support to be found in the present results for the previous conclusions that ‘dative sickness’ does not affect all types of subjects to the same degree, at the same time as it does appear to be likelier to emerge outside the Reykjavík area and in the lower educational/occupational groups in Icelandic society. Yet again, however – and perhaps most importantly –, it should be pointed out that we are here comparing results which emerge from quite different methodological approaches which may in itself explain many of the contrasting aspects which emerge.

To then finally come briefly to the other ‘verb sicknesses’ treated in this thesis, what little information can be gleaned from the present results generally runs along the same lines as do the results in previous studies. Thus, we see in the present results signs of a tendency for the personal verb *hlakka* (= ‘look forward to’) to emerge as an instance of ‘oblique case sickness’, as there are examples of it occurring with an accusative subject rather than the standard nominative one. Both Svavarsdóttir (1982) and Jónsson and Eypórsson (2003) found a similar tendency, although in their data *hlakka* can appear with either an accusative or a dative case subject, apart from the standard nominative one. Furthermore, in their data the personal verb *kvíða* (= ‘be anxious’) shows the same tendency as *hlakka*, albeit not quite as clearly. *Kvíða* is used on only one occasion in the present data, and in this single example the standard nominative case is used for the subject.

The present results also add some confirmation to Svavarsdóttir’s (1982) and Jónsson and Eypórsson’s (2003) findings that certain verbs, such as *reka* (= ‘drift’), *hvolfa* (= ‘hvolfa’) and *dreyma* (= ‘dream’) tend to show signs of ‘nominative sickness’, i.e. to be used as if they were personal rather than impersonal and thereby to appear with a nominative subject rather than the standard accusative (*reka*, *dreyma*) or dative (*hvolfa*) one. Finally, no signs of ‘reverse dative sickness’, i.e. for accusative case being used rather than dative case for subjects, were found in the present data. This closely resembles the results from the previous studies discussed above where only traces of this feature were found.

If we then sum up this comparison between the present results and past ones regarding the relevant linguistic features, the first point to be made is that the comparison is of a somewhat limited value. First, few of the features discussed in this thesis have been treated before from a sociolinguistic point of view, and thus we are in part restricted to comparing the present results to a relatively unspecific general feeling of the state of things, as it appears in the general discussion amongst speakers of Icelandic. Second, even though the previous research discussed here which is of sociolinguistic relevance, it can hardly be said to use a strictly sociolinguistic approach. Hence, the outcomes of this research are not directly comparable to the present results. Nonetheless it seems clear that a general conclusion can be drawn from this somewhat debatable comparison, to the effect that while previous research and the general discussion paint a picture of linguistic change, the present results primarily point to linguistic stability regarding the features in question. Thus while Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling (2001, 2002; Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997) see their results as indicative of ‘new passive’ having become well established in modern Icelandic, only traces of this feature were found in the present study. Similarly, while the previous studies of ‘dative sickness’ (Jónsson & Eypórssón, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984) indicate that this feature is not only well-established, but also gaining ground, the present results imply that it has become stabilized at a level which admittedly suggests that it has become relatively firmly established in Icelandic, but is at the same time well below the level indicated by the previous studies.

It should be pointed out that the present results do in many respects reflect previous results, e.g. regarding the distribution of ‘new passive’ and ‘dative sickness’ according to some of the social background factors concerned. Similarly, there is some correspondence in the linguistic patterning of ‘dative sickness’ between the present and previous results. This, however, does not affect the above mentioned conclusion that the present results are indicative of stability rather than change, whereas the opposite can be said about the results of the relevant previous research. Shortly, an attempt will be made to explain this apparent linguistic stability, but first the results regarding the informants’ views of, and attitudes towards, the linguistic features displaying this stability should be briefly discussed.

7.3 Views of and attitudes towards change

As in the previous section it is not my intention here to go through the results again in any detail. Rather, a few comments will be made regarding some of the more interesting patterns which emerge in the results regarding the informants’ views of and attitudes towards change.

While the picture regarding the linguistic variables is rather uniform in that it mainly points towards stability, we face in some ways a slightly more

mixed bag when it comes to attitudes. The first thing to notice is the seeming contrast that appears between the informants' views of language change in general, on the one hand, and their views of each of the separate apparent changes, on the other. As we have seen, the attitude towards change in general is not overly negative and, even though it should be kept in mind that it was in many cases unclear what the informants saw as change, many of them believed that it was not only natural for Icelandic to undergo change; it was even seen as a necessary element in keeping Icelandic, and thereby Icelandic society, up to date with the modern world. However, when this 'general change' was broken down into its separate parts, some of which are treated in this thesis, the attitudes to these changes was negative, with the possible exception of the 'am-to-frenzy'. It seems, in other words, that as long as language change is discussed in general and unspecified terms it is acceptable, at the same time as each separate component of this change – or at least most of them – is regarded with suspicion or direct negativity.

Perhaps this contrast can be explained by looking at the qualitative aspect of the informants' responses regarding their attitudes. As seen in section 6.4.1 above, there was a strong tendency amongst the informants to single out foreign influences as noticeable and, in most cases, negative signs of changes to the Icelandic language. However, these comments were produced when the informants were invited to elaborate on their views regarding change in general by being asked e.g. if there were any particular features which they noticed more than others. Prior to this, the discussion was on a general level which the informants appear to have viewed as only pertaining to Icelandic in quite a strict sense, i.e. 'pure' Icelandic with a strong element of continuation from earlier times, without foreign influences. That this pure Icelandic evolves and develops so to speak from within, i.e. without any external interference, is regarded as natural. However, the average speaker had a very vague notion about the shape of this internal development, and at the same time, the almost legendary image of Icelandic – not the least in Iceland itself – as a more or less unchanging and unchangeable language, as long as it is left on its own, appears to be thriving amongst the informants. Hence each separate change is taken not as a sign of natural development within Icelandic itself, but rather as an indicator of foreign influences which, largely due to traditional nationalistic sentiments which still appear to loom large amongst the informants, are not welcome. Here it matters little whether the features in question can in more strict linguistic terms actually be traced to foreign influences or not. Ultimately we therefore seemingly arrive at a set of contrasts when it comes to Icelanders' views of change to their language; the common belief is that Icelandic needs to be developed to continue being a useful tool for communication in this day and age, but at the same time Icelandic is unchangeable from within and therefore all change must be initiated by external means which undermines the role of the Icelandic language as a purely Icelandic national symbol. It could thus be argued that Icelanders

apparently do not make any distinction between the stability and the maintenance of Icelandic, as these terms are generally used here; the structure of Icelandic can only be preserved (stability) by safe-guarding it as much as possible from external influences (maintenance).

This could possibly be related to Eckert's (2000, p. 35; see section 2.2.4) definition of community of practice where she claims that such a community is "an aggregate of people who come together around some enterprise". It is of course a somewhat simplified argument as I am here narrowing Eckert's concept of "enterprise" quite drastically, but it nonetheless seems possible to claim that when it comes to language, or at least to attitudes towards their own language, Icelanders are essentially a single community of practice. The shared enterprise in this case is to view external influences in a negative light to such an extent that their perceived effect is transferred onto what can only be characterized as internal changes, which would probably be seen as a natural development but for this perceived foreign threat. However, given the warning issued above about this view requiring a narrowing of Eckert's definition of community of practice, it might be more appropriate to relate the linguistic atmosphere in Iceland described above to Labov's (1972) definition of speech community. In his view, a speech community is a group of speakers who share attitudes and values regarding language forms and language use. It seems clear that on this basis Icelanders form a single speech community.

The above conclusions reflect a number of other theoretical observations in the literature. First, the suspicion with which foreign linguistic influences generally appear to be met with in Iceland rhymes well with the "us vs. others" distinction of which language can be a central element (Barbour, 1996, 2000a; Duszak, 2002; Oakes, 2001; see section 3.1.3). The conclusion also adds some weight to Preston's (2002; see section 3.2.1) ideas about a folk theory of language. According to this approach, the folk view is that language is external to human cognitive embedding and exists there in some "real" and correct state, while deviating from this reality implies that speakers move to more concrete features which tend to be seen as errors or bad language. In our case "pure" Icelandic, or at least the image of it, seems to hold this somewhat diffuse position outside human cognition, while bringing in foreign elements brings it back to the human realm in a tainted form. This way of thinking also runs along the lines of Milroy and Milroy's (1999; see section 3.2.1) claims about people tending to assume that there is one, and only one, way of speaking and all deviations are barbarisms. Again, "pure" Icelandic seems to be the idealized standard which would not be affected negatively by "purely" Icelandic developments, but at the same time this "pure" Icelandic is seemingly viewed as being in a finite state which can only be altered by foreign influences; if left alone, Icelandic will never change.

Judging by my informers' responses, Icelandic in as pure a form as possible has a great aesthetic value in their view. However, as Edwards (1982)

points out, this view does not reflect an aesthetic quality *per se* in Icelandic, but is rather an expression of a social convention. In the case of Icelandic, the social convention rests to no small extent on the historical backdrop of the strong literary tradition in Iceland and the Icelandic sagas which are widely regarded as containing *the* one and only model for modern Icelandic, but as Ryan, Giles and Sebastian (1982) mention, having respectable ancestors can be an important factor in determining the way in which a language or variety is viewed. A similar example to this Icelandic one can be found in St. Clair's (1982) description of how Parisian French came to form the foundation of a standardized French, through being regarded as the vehicle of French civilization.

The above conclusion about the somewhat self-contradictory language attitudes of Icelanders does not only reflect the various theoretical assumptions mentioned above. It also mirrors in many ways some of the few available previous examinations of Iceland from this perspective. Thus, a quick look back at the sections (3.1 and 3.2) in this thesis dealing with the relationship between language and nationalism, on the one hand, and language and attitudes, on the other, reveals that it has much in common with e.g. the findings of Gísladóttir (2002) and Árnason (2005) regarding their informants' views on the status and usage of Icelandic versus both Swedish and English.

To this it can be added that the views expressed by the informants generally echo the overall outline of Icelandic language policy. In section 3.3.2 above, we saw that the main features of this policy are e.g. the preservation and reinforcement of Icelandic, which is characterized by purity and continuation. Furthermore, it is argued that this policy appears to have become generally accepted and that the promulgation and maintenance of it can be regarded as a national concern. This picture gets strong support from the above overview of the informants' views which can be rephrased, by using the previously mentioned key concepts of Icelandic language policy. They thus result in a general view where reinforcement of the language is regarded as natural, or even necessary, as long as this does not adversely affect the preservation of the language in such a way that its purity and links to prior stages are jeopardized. Additionally, at the same time as this general view neatly reflects the traditional language policy, it reflects the more recent concerns of the Icelandic Language Committee about the threat posed by English influences (*Stefnuskrá Íslenskrar málnefndar 2002-2005*). In this latter case, however, it may be less certain whether the general public follows the Committee's lead or vice versa.

In light of the discussion above, it is interesting to note again that the 'am-to-frenzy' appears to spark less negativity than do the other features treated here. This is especially noticeable as this is the only feature which may be directly traceable to English influences (Friðjónsson, 2003). It has been indicated above that this can partly be explained by the 'am-to-frenzy' being the newest of the features, which may mean that it is yet to be stigmatized. At the same time its

novelty appears to make it noteworthy, as indicated by the high level of awareness of it amongst my informants, and there are even some small signs that it has, at least in these initial stages, a somewhat fashionable status. Thus, the majority of the informants who express themselves in positive terms about this feature are to be found amongst the highest educational/occupational group, at the same time as the level of negativity is highest in the lowest group. There is also a clear age-grading with respect to the attitudes to the ‘am-to-frenzy’ as the younger the informants are, the less likely they are to be negative. Furthermore, some might see it as a relevant factor in this respect that while men and women show almost exactly the same attitudes towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, women appear to more consistent in their usage of it.

It may also be the case that the possible or perceived English origin of this feature plays its part in this seeming initial popularity in some circles. Thus Árnason’s (2005) study showed that highly educated Icelanders use English more than others in their everyday lives, and this may be reflected in their views towards the ‘am-to-frenzy’, at least until the level of stigmatization rises. It is, of course, too early to tell if this will indeed happen and it may even be too early to reach any conclusion on the basis of the suggestions made above, but it should in any case be interesting to follow the future development of the ‘am-to-frenzy’ in Icelandic, both in terms of usage and attitudes.

As is mentioned in the summary of chapter 6 (section 6.5), no clear overall pattern emerges regarding the social distribution of the informants’ attitudes towards the linguistic variables as a whole. This is to say that when the linguistic features are combined, no community or communities, age group, gender, type of network, or educational/occupational group stands out as being generally more negative than another. Thus, while a clear tendency appears for the older generations to be more negative towards both ‘dative sickness’ and the ‘am-to-frenzy’, no age-grading appears regarding the other features. Similarly, women are seemingly more negative than men towards both ‘dative sickness’ and non-standard usage of case inflections, but no marked difference appears between the genders for the remaining features. Apart from this, however, the differences between the various social groupings are negligible and the clearest overall picture which emerges is one of a generally high level of negativity towards the linguistic features, again with the exception of the ‘am-to-frenzy’. This is of course interesting in itself, and adds some weight to the suggestion made above about Iceland essentially being a single speech community in terms of language attitudes.

A certain point should be made, however, which may work against this suggestion of Iceland being a single attitudinal speech community. It is noticeable that while attitudes to both ‘genitive avoidance’ and ‘new passive’ are evenly spread across all the social groupings, and only women stand out as being particularly negative towards non-standard case inflections and the same can be said about only the oldest age group when it comes to the ‘am-to-frenzy’,

attitudes towards ‘dative sickness’ do not show the same level of uniformity across the various groupings. Thus, the level of negativity towards ‘dative sickness’ rises with age as well as with the educational/occupational level of the informants, at the same time as women are more negative than men and informants in the fishing villages are apparently less negative than informants elsewhere in Iceland. This might indicate that through being the oldest and – as shown by the high level of awareness of it amongst the informants in this study – best-known of the features examined here, ‘dative sickness’ has become more socially marked than the other features, not the least as the groups which here display higher levels of negativity than others tend to form the more linguistically conservative layers of society in most sociolinguistic studies of a similar nature to this one.

It should also be mentioned that the social distribution of attitudes found here does not always match the social distribution of usage of the linguistic features in question. Thus, as has been pointed out earlier (section 6.4.2), women appear to be more likely than men to produce examples of ‘dative sickness’ at the same time as they are more negative towards this feature than men are. Similarly, the age-grading found regarding attitudes towards ‘dative sickness’ is not reflected in terms of usage as the three age groups show very similar levels in that respect. There are, however, a few more examples where the social patterning of attitudes does match the social patterning of usage of the relevant features, and, all in all, the contradictory examples mentioned above do not alter one of the main findings of the examination of the informants’ attitudes, namely that there generally seems to be a strong relationship between the usage of non-standard forms and the attitudes towards them.

As before it is not necessary to repeat the results in any detail here. Rather, let me just present a quick reminder from section 6.4 that as regards both, on the one hand, the informants’ attitudes towards language change in general and their overall usage of all the relevant non-standard forms, and, on the other, their attitudes towards each of the separate non-standard forms and their usage of them – with the possible exception of ‘genitive avoidance’ – , there appeared a clear pattern which indicates that the level of non-standard usage rises as the level of negativity towards change and non-standard usage decreases. It was also suggested that this meant that attitudes might play an important part in maintaining the stability which, as discussed in section 7.1 above, is the main finding of the strictly linguistic part of this thesis. We seem, therefore, to have arrived at a natural starting point for a closer look at language stability and some possible explanatory factors behind it.

7.4 Stability: A closer look

In previous sections of this thesis, I have on a number of occasions lamented the seeming exclusion of any detailed examination of stability in the various frameworks dealing with variation and change that have been discussed. This empty node is all the more noticeable as some frameworks, e.g. the social networks approach of Milroy and Milroy (see e.g. Milroy, 1980; Milroy & Milroy, 1985) explicitly claim stability to be their point of departure. However, this point of departure tends to be little more than just that and is quickly left behind. In a similar fashion, stability appears not to have been treated systematically either in studies on the interplay between language and nationalism or examinations of the effects of attitudes on language, despite at least some indirect comments about the potential link between nationalism and stability, on the one hand (Haugen, 1966), and attitudes and stability, on the other (Fasold, 1987; Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Admittedly, stability is addressed in a more direct way in discussions of language planning and is there acknowledged, on a theoretical level, as a goal of standardisation and purism. However, this theoretical standpoint does not seem to have been applied to any extent in studies on concrete examples of the effects of language planning (see section 3.3.1).

In chapter 3 above, an attempt was made to rectify this picture to some extent by examining how nationalism, attitudes and language planning may have contributed to the high level of relative stability of the Icelandic language. This examination suggests that both nationalism and certain instances of language planning have been important elements in maintaining the stability of Icelandic for the best part of the last two centuries, thereby overtaking the role previously played by close-knit and unchanging social networks (Milroy & Milroy, 1985). The evidence is less clear regarding the importance of attitudes in this respect. It is also unclear whether or not these three factors, i.e. nationalism, attitudes and language planning, can be said to have any effect on the present state of Icelandic, at the same time as suggestions have been made that this present state is increasingly characterized by instability and change rather than stability.

As was stated in the introduction to this thesis, the assumption that Icelandic is now undergoing a higher degree of change than before played an important part in sparking off the study presented here. The results presented in chapter 6 indicate that, at least as far as the linguistic features discussed there are concerned, this assumption does not rest on any solid factual foundations. Rather, a high degree of stability still appears to be an important characteristic of Icelandic. The results also indicate quite strongly that attitudes play an important role in maintaining this stability as the informants who produce examples of non-standard forms of the relevant linguistic features are generally less negative towards these forms than are those informants who only produce standard forms. Furthermore, there is a high general level of negativity towards the non-standard

forms and, judging by the informants' own explications on the matter, this standpoint appears to be firmly rooted in the traditionally nationalistic linguistic atmosphere in Iceland, which is evident not the least in most aspects of language planning and policy in the country. These policies tend to highlight factors such as purity and continuity as indispensable elements in keeping the language stable. The above points, in turn, suggest not only that each of the three factors of nationalism, attitudes and language planning are potential key factors in language stability, but also that they can work together in this respect.

We can in this way claim that the question posed towards the end of 2.3 above has been answered to some extent. This question asked whether or not a language community can remain stable even though its social surroundings and structures change radically enough to predictably lead to language change, as suggested by e.g. the social networks framework. In the case of Icelandic, the answer to this seems to be positive, even though the Icelandic nation has certainly undergone large-scale societal changes in the last century and a half. It is suggested above that this linguistic stability is in no small part due to the fact that even in this societal upheaval nationalistic sentiments and the core elements in language planning have remained intact, which has in turn resulted in a generally negative attitude towards language change.

On this Icelandic basis, it is tempting to suggest that a clear linguistic nationalism and language planning instances with a declared stability agenda are necessary requirements in language stability in general, and that the same should be said regarding attitudes that are supportive of stability. However, this generalization will not be made here as it seems perfectly conceivable that a high degree of stability can be reached without any of these elements. This is shown not the least by the Icelandic language community in the centuries prior to the fight for independence in the 19th century. For the best part of this period, no particular language policy or language planning measures can be said to have existed. Nationalism had yet to emerge in the modern sense, even though occasional comments can be found which appear to display a nationalistically tinted linguistic pride, and it was only in the mid-16th century that Icelanders had clearly started regarding Icelandic as a separate language. Even though this recognition was to be followed in the following centuries by occasional remarks on the value of the stability of Icelandic, it seems clear that neither nationalism, a stability-oriented language policy nor stability-supporting attitudes played any direct part in preserving the high stability level of the Icelandic language. Here, as is discussed in greater detail in section 2.4 above, social networks are likely to have been of much greater importance. Therefore, all that can be said at the moment is that the Icelandic evidence provided here suggests that nationalism, stability-oriented language policy and planning and stability-supporting language attitudes are clear potential elements in preserving language stability. As for the last of these factors, i.e. attitudes, it is interesting to compare this conclusion with Ladegaard's (2000; see section 3.2.1) previously mentioned

comments about language attitudes not necessarily being able to cause linguistic change. It seems that this can be applied to language stability as well, as past and present evidence from Iceland suggests that attitudes certainly can contribute to stability, while they do not appear to be a necessary element in this respect.

The above discussion, in turn, means that nationalism and language planning and attitudes in general are elements which should be taken into consideration in studies of language change and stability in order to see what effect, if any, they may have. We thus seem to have further evidence to support the view presented in section 2.2.3 above, that examining change and stability only from the perspective of factors, such as age groups, genders and socio-economic class, which tend to be examined primarily with quantitative methods, may be limited. More qualitative aspects should not be neglected, even though they may be difficult to measure in any principled way. Moreover, care should probably be taken not to determine *a priori* which social aspects may or may not contribute to language change or stability in any given language community.

Having now identified nationalism, stability-oriented language policy and planning, and stability-supporting attitudes as integral in preserving the stability of Icelandic – and thereby as potential ingredients in language stability in a general context – it should be pointed out that this does not mean that these necessarily are the only factors of importance, whether in Iceland or elsewhere. Indeed, in the Icelandic context examined here, I believe a number of other factors to be important, at the same time as we probably need to examine further how the stability-supporting attitudes, the strong nationalistic sentiment and the apparent general awareness of the Icelandic language policy have established themselves as generally amongst the Icelandic public as the present data suggests.

Let us first look at how the key arguments of the Icelandic language policy have become as pervasive and generally accepted amongst the general public in Iceland as seems to be the case, despite this policy not being official in any strict sense. I have mentioned earlier (section 3.3.2) that language planning has been incorporated to a large extent into the Icelandic educational system, not the least through the 1986 report which presented suggestions on language cultivation and the teaching of pronunciation in elementary schools and, in doing so, largely reiterated the traditional core values of Icelandic language planning, i.e. preservation and reinforcement (Kristmundsson et. al., 1986). I have also mentioned that e.g. case inflections are by tradition heavily emphasised in the teaching of Icelandic (section 6.1.3) and that teaching materials tend to make a special mention of ‘dative sickness’ where the stance towards it is clearly negative (section 7.1). Preserving the stability of Icelandic is, in other words, at least indirectly a prime concern in the teaching of Icelandic in schools. In this way, the Icelandic language policy, with its strong emphasis on the continuity and purism of Icelandic, can be said to have been transmitted

directly to Icelandic school pupils during the last few decades and it seems to have become firmly rooted in them.

A specific feature of the Icelandic educational system should possibly be mentioned in this context. Since 1977 all Icelandic school pupils sit the so called “samræmd próf”, i.e. national standardized exams, towards the end of their tenth and final year of elementary school.⁷³ Icelandic is amongst the subjects in which the pupils are examined, as could probably be expected, and a random look at a number of exams from previous years reveals that these exams lean heavily towards traditional language policy values. Thus, in the grammar part of the exams, which most years consists almost exclusively of multiple-choice questions, test items dealing with e.g. case inflections, verb conjugation, and parts of speech abound, and quite frequently the correct option is lined up amongst a string of well-known non-standard variants of the form in question. Thus, questions dealing with ‘dative sickness’ appear to be used quite regularly, and more often than not the question specifically requires the pupils to identify the “correct” or “generally acknowledged” form. In other words, formal knowledge of various grammatical categories is emphasized along traditional lines. These appear to closely follow the so-called eradicationist or replacive position described by Wolfram (1991, p. 213) in his discussion on the teaching of standard English, but the target in this position is to “wipe out students’ non-standard varieties and provide them with a standard one”.

These exams are quite important to most pupils as Icelandic high schools use their results to determine which students to accept and, strictly speaking, a minimum mark of 5, or 50%, is required to be accepted by high schools at all without having to take any preparatory courses. Furthermore, the results are made public each year and tend to be covered rather extensively by most media which in turn generally focus both on those schools which produce good results, as well as on those which produce the worst results, particularly if the schools in question have a record of consistently performing well or quite badly year after year. From my own experience as an elementary school teacher, it seems clear that this has had the effect that these exams determine to a great extent how teaching is organized in the last year of elementary school; it is geared towards the exams themselves, not the least due to pressure from the pupils themselves and their parents, and more often than not exams from previous years constitute an important part of the teaching material. This is confirmed in a recent study of the effects of these standardized tests on teaching methods in Icelandic schools (Sigþórsson, 2008). In terms of the teaching of grammar and language use and – more importantly – the pupils’ learning of these features, this equals a further incentive to emphasize the previously mentioned approach where an ideology of “rights-and-wrongs” along traditional language policy lines is quite pervasive.

⁷³ It should be noted that these exams are strictly speaking not obligatory. However, in most cohorts, the proportion of pupils taking the Icelandic part of these exams reaches almost a full 100%. The reasons for this should become clear as the discussion progresses.

The less strict line followed in some other teaching materials and the national curriculum for Icelandic (*Aðalnámskrá grunnskóla – Íslenska*, 1999), which in fact stipulates that language use should be emphasized rather than a purely formal grammatical approach, tends to be neglected. In this way it can be claimed that knowledge of standard language and, by implication, preserving its stability, is, as it were, a requirement for educational advancement.

To the above discussion it can be added that Icelandic elementary school pupils also sit national standardized exams in their fourth and seventh years. Here, again, formal grammatical knowledge is emphasised in much the same way as is done in the exams taken by the final year pupils. However, these fourth and seventh year exams are probably not as influential as the tenth year exams are in maintaining traditional language policy values, mainly because the former are regarded primarily as ‘könnunarpróf’, i.e. ‘status checks’ for each school to measure itself against the targets stipulated in the national curriculum, and their results do not have any direct effect on the progress of each pupil. Nonetheless, these exams are likely to further accentuate the effects of the tenth year exams towards heightening the awareness of the main features of the traditional Icelandic language policy.

The discussion in chapter 3 above reveals that there is quite a lively and ongoing debate about linguistic matters in Iceland. Aside from a few dissidents, the tone in this debate generally runs along the lines of the semi-official language policy in that both continuity and a high degree of purism are seen in a positive light and regarded as essential in both maintaining Icelandic when faced with the external pressure applied mainly by English, and preserving its more internal stability. As has been pointed out, this debate is mainly carried out by academics and what can be termed the Icelandic cultural élite, and it is difficult to measure in any principled way the extent to which it affects the linguistic standpoint of the general public. However, the results from this study, regarding both the generally high level of awareness of standard vs. non-standard forms and the high level of negativity towards non-standard forms, indicate that this debate is followed and taken in by a large portion of the general public, not the least as many of the arguments heard in the public debate are repeated more or less verbatim in the responses of my informants. This effect is probably not diminished by a strong tendency for politicians, in speeches made on various celebratory occasions, to emphasize the importance of Icelandic as a defining element of the Icelandic nation. The most recent example of this is the Icelandic president’s 2008 New Year’s address to the nation which is broadcast on national television. The language policy is, in other words, quite tangible both in the educational system and in the public debate and appears still to be accepted by the majority of the population. This is at least what the present data indicates, thereby yielding support to the hitherto empirically unsupported suggestions of e.g. Kristinsson (1991, 1994, 1997, 2001a, 2001b) and Ottósson (1997) that language policy is, in a sense, a national concern.

As for reasons for the Icelandic language policy being so widely accepted by the general public, a quick look should probably be taken in the rearview mirror. In section 3.1.4, I argued that the language of the common public was in most ways the model on which the language standard formed as an aspect of the fight for independence was based. The average Icelander thus did not have to alter his or her linguistic behaviour in any dramatic fashion to be regarded as speaking “proper” Icelandic, which was at the very core of the definition of Iceland as a separate nation. This acceptance (Haugen, 1966) or implementation (Deumert, 2003; Deumert and Vandenbusche, 2003) level of language planning in Iceland was therefore quite painless; the population is unlikely to have perceived the standard as superposed as it largely simply mirrored their vernacular. The step from a perceived Golden Age, in which the linguistic standards were believed to have been higher (cf. Milroy & Milroy, 1999), will, in other words, have been quite short as this linguistic Golden Age was by and large preserved amongst the general public. This will have had the effect that there were only minimal differences between the overt, or official, and covert, or public, language policy described by Schiffman (1996), at the same time as overt and covert prestige (Milroy & Milroy, 1999) will have pointed more or less in the same direction. This will have been further aided and accentuated by the fact that there were only minimal dialectal differences in Iceland. This meant that there were few variants which competed with the standard; rather the competition was seen as coming from abroad, initially from Danish which has later been replaced by English. What ‘us and others’ (Barbour, 1996, 2000a; Duszak, 2002; Oakes, 2001) effects there will have been in Iceland in linguistic terms are thus likelier to have been between Icelanders, on the one hand, and foreigners, on the other, than between different regions or classes in Iceland. Linguistic loyalties will, in other words, have been with Icelandic as a linguistic entity rather than with local or social variants.

Since this initial acceptance of the language policy, it appears to have been more or less self-perpetuating. This is due to e.g. the effects of a strong linguistic nationalism which has not shown any signs of weakening, until possibly in the last few years (cf. the discussion in section 3.1.5), and the incorporation of the policy’s values into the educational system, which has been made all the more palpable by the standardized tests described above. Other sets of values seem simply not to have had enough force to become established, and on the few occasions that the language policy has been questioned it seems that what Milroy (2001) calls the ‘complaint tradition’ (see section 3.3.1) has been too strong to allow other views to prevail. This complaint tradition, which is an expression of support for the standard language and its value as a precious inheritance, does of course in itself stem from the process described above in relation to the acceptance of a standard language, which in turn links to the Golden Age ideology. Thus, the complaint tradition adds to the perpetuation of the standard at the same time as it is self-perpetuating in itself. What this also

shows, is that language planning should not be regarded as a one-way channel through which policy-makers and planners can affect their language community. The Icelandic evidence discussed here rather suggests that planners and the general public can meet halfway to take a common direction from there, i.e. that speakers can affect the language policy just as much as the other way around. This, in turn, is likely to add further impetus to the self-perpetuation mentioned above, at the same time as it yields support to e.g. Ager's (2001) and Vikør's (1994) suggestions that sources of language planning should not only be sought for in various official spheres.

Having mentioned above that a strong linguistic nationalism aided the maintenance of the Icelandic language policy until the present day, we should probably also look at how this nationalism has prevailed as strongly as the present results indicate. The answer to this can probably be summed up by saying that Icelanders had and still have, to a large extent, precious little else on which to build their national identity. Thus, we have already seen how the Icelandic language essentially selected itself as a national symbol on which the demands for independence were built in the mid-19th century. This was not least due to language's function as a symbol of Iceland's original independence and literary golden age. There was little else to be used; Iceland could not pride itself on any great war victories or heroes, and factors such as religion and ethnicity did not set them apart in any tangible way from neighbouring nations. In Haugen's (1966; see section 3.1.1) terms, language was the main carrier of Icelandic nationhood. It should, however, perhaps be added that saying that Iceland had neighbours might be seen as an overstatement as it is an island in the midst of the North Atlantic without any adjacent neighbours. This, however, is primarily a geographical aspect rather than a characteristic of the nation itself, although Iceland's relative isolation and clear boundaries may well have further underlined a sense of separateness.

This role played by the language in defining the nation seems likely not to have waned to any extent in recent years and it seems clear from the present data that speaking Icelandic – according to the standard which, as we have seen above, is in essence the property of the Icelandic language community as a whole rather than particular social groups therein – equals to a large extent being Icelandic in the minds of the general public. In this context it may be worthwhile to refer back to the discussion on increased globalization in section 3.1.2 above and Oakes' (2001, p. 149) comment that globalization may serve to “emphasise differences and provoke ethnonational reactions to increased external pressures” by bringing disparate cultures into proximity. This may well be an important factor behind the apparent maintenance of the stability of Icelandic – both in terms of its independence of other languages and its internal stability. Iceland can by no means still be said to be an isolated country – not even in geographical terms, following recent advancements in communications – as is indicated by a quick glance at e.g. most cultural and economic spheres. Due to

this, preserving the language in as intact a fashion as possible is one of the few remaining ways in which to maintain some sense of separateness. This may be further accentuated by the fact that Iceland can be said to come quite close to being a prototypical nation in Barbour's (1996) terms, in that it occupies an independent sovereign state the independence of which rests to no small degree on a single, distinct language which is also a manifest of what cultural homogeneity there still exists in the country. This is interesting in light of the two previously mentioned (see section 3.1.1) different conceptions of the nation presented by Smith (1991). On the one hand, there is a Western model which rests primarily on legal-political grounds and allows people to choose which nation they belong to. On the other, there is an "ethnic" or Eastern model which is based on a view of the nation as a community of common descent and emphasises vernacular language, customs and traditions rather than the law as is done in the Western model. The result of this is that an individual's membership in a nation is determined at birth, either by parentage or location. Iceland would in many ways rather seem to fall into the eastern version, and the premises on which it is built appear in turn to be more supportive of language stability than the foundations of the western version are.

So far, this discussion has revolved primarily around the part nationalism and language planning play in the present linguistic stability in Iceland suggested by the results discussed here. At the same time, attention has been paid to how a strong linguistic nationalism and a high degree of awareness and acceptance of the language policy have prevailed until the present day. However, I have repeatedly mentioned that these are not the only relevant factors, and now this discussion will be rounded off with a brief examination of some of the other aspects which should be taken into consideration when searching for explanations of the maintained stability of Icelandic and, thereby, for potential stability-supporting factors in general.

Social networks are probably a natural starting point here. In chapter 2, I discussed in some detail, on the basis of Milroy and Milroy's (1985) work, how tight and stable social networks in Iceland are likely to have been a key factor in maintaining the stability of Icelandic until ca. 1850. I argued, however, that after this time their importance is likely to have waned. This claim is based on the fact that after 1850 Iceland has undergone large-scale societal changes which will certainly have radically altered the existing network structures, but during the same period the Icelandic language has maintained its high degree of stability, which is contradictory to the predictions made by the social networks framework. This is a major reason for the examination in this study of the stabilizing effects of other factors, such as nationalism, attitudes and language policy. Indeed, it has been argued here that these factors largely replaced social networks as a "language stabilizer" in the latter part of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, which was the period during which the social upheaval was the greatest. However, the conversion from an essentially

medieval agrarian society into a modern industrialized one is now in most aspects completed in Iceland, and thereby a question which needs to be asked relates to whether or not social networks have a part to play in the continued language stability indicated by the present results.

I believe the answer to this question is positive. While the relative importance of social networks in maintaining the stability of Icelandic may not be as great as prior to 1850, the present evidence suggests that they should certainly be taken into consideration in this context today. We have seen in this study that the linguistic variables generally show signs of stability rather than change. The frequency of deviations from the linguistic standard is quite low; in most cases too low to emerge as a clear indicator of variation which runs along the social lines of gender, age and other standard background factors. The linguistic picture emerging here is, in other words, one of uniformity and this is in many ways reflected by the social networks found amongst the informants. It should be reiterated here that it was not the purpose of this thesis to study social networks in Iceland *per se* and hence the analysis is not particularly detailed, but some tentative conclusions can nonetheless be presented in this respect. As is discussed in section 5.4.2.2 above, the main picture here is that the modern social networks show a high degree of uniformity across the informants. I would certainly not argue that these modern networks are as uniform as those found in Iceland before 1850, and if the standard scaling methods of social networks were to be applied, the past networks would in all probability emerge as being tighter and denser than the modern ones. Nonetheless the modern network structures appear to be quite similar from one locality to the other, from one age group to the other and so on. It should be added here that this conclusion is based on the scaling methods applied by me as a researcher and my judgements about which network categories my informants should be placed into, on e.g. the basis of the frequency and intensity of their interactions with their families and friends (cf. section 5.4.2.2). What struck me, however, during my work was that had I turned my perspective around and looked at the networks from my informants' point of view rather than from my own, I would in all likelihood have ended up with nearly all the informants in the same type of network. By this I mean to say that the informants generally appeared to perceive their networks as quite close-knit and tight, regardless of which category they fell into according to the scales used by me. Thus, the informants from the Reykjavík area generally had, according to my scaling, slightly more weakly knit networks than informants elsewhere in the country, primarily due to the former group's contacts with family and friends being less frequent than the latter group's. However, the informants in the Reykjavík area generally talked about their 2-3 weekly contacts with a number of people as being signs of them belonging to a close-knit group in much the same way as informants elsewhere talked about their 5-6 weekly contacts.

The end result of this is that there is seemingly a high degree of uniformity in modern social networks in Iceland, both as perceived by me and as perceived by my informants. In general the networks are relatively close-knit and this uniformity and tightness seem likely to re-establish social networks as an integral element in maintaining the stability of Icelandic. Here we can probably relate back to the discussion in section 2.2.4 above on Giddens' (1984) sociological theory on the role of routinization in the perpetuation of social structure. As is mentioned in that discussion, Giddens argues that routines lead to system preservation and norm-enforcement in much the same way as social networks do. Johnson (1990) has developed this further and claims that when our daily routines are broken, we tend to reroutinize our lives as the routines in themselves ensure that we can feel a sense of 'ontological security', as Giddens (1984) calls it, i.e. a sense of trust in the continuity of the object world. What appears to have happened in Iceland is that social networks have been, as it were, reroutinized; following the social upheaval of the late 19th and the early 20th century, which included a dismantling of the earlier social network structures, people have tried to re-establish a certain routine or stability for their networks. Once these networks became relatively stable again they are likely to have re-emerged as an important factor behind the continued stability of Iceland, even though they, in present times, seem to be supported more in this respect by other factors than was the case before ca. 1850.

As seen in section 2.2.4, Britain (1997, 2002) has adapted Giddens' routinization theory to his approach to language variation in which he specifically examines the effects of space and shows how various spatial factors, such as distance between settlements and infrastructural connections, can, in combination with more purely social factors, account for dialect boundaries. Horvath and Horvath (2001) have also used a "spatial" approach to explain the major isogloss that emerges between Australia and New Zealand. Interestingly they claim that this isogloss is the result of the distinctive national identity of New Zealanders, which they see, in turn, as a place effect. Following this, it can be argued that the seemingly clear national identity of Icelanders is a place effect in itself which in a sense overrides other place effects, such as those presented by Britain (1997, 2002) which may lead to the emergence of dialect boundaries, to instead further enhance language stability.

Including national identity as a space effect leads us on to a quick look at the possible effects of language contact on the present results. As seen in section 2.2.4 Trudgill (1989, 1992, 1996, 2002) has pointed out that the level of contact combines with the strength of the social networks involved to govern the rate of change. In Iceland, or at least amongst my informants, it would seem that the frequent contact modern society has with other languages, primarily English, has had – probably aided by the general re-establishment of relatively close-knit social networks – an effect which can be claimed to be reverse in that while the contact itself is not unwelcome, there is a strong reaction to its potential effects,

which extends not only to the maintenance of Icelandic as a language in its own right but also to its internal stability. Contact may thus be combined with, or be a part of, the effects of globalization mentioned above (Oakes, 2001).

The discussion in this section indicates that factors such as nationalism, language policy and planning, social networks, spatial aspects and language contact all play their part in producing the stability of the linguistic features examined in this thesis. To this list we should of course add the attitudinal factors discussed in the previous section and the considerations there of the folk view (cf. Preston, 2002) of language in Iceland and of Icelanders being essentially a single speech community (cf. Labov, 1972), or even a single community of practice (cf. Eckert, 2000), in terms of their linguistic attitudes and possibly even language use.

I would like to argue that all these factors combine to create in Iceland conditions which lead to the maintained stability of the standard forms of the features treated here. There may of course be more aspects which are relevant in this context, and the qualitative nature of the factors above renders it more or less impossible to measure their relative weight in the equation. However, I believe that the seeming stability which emerges from the present data cannot be explained if any of these factors are excluded and, at the same time, focussing on only one of the aspects would, while worthwhile in itself, only yield one dimension of a much more multi-faceted picture. It is also noteworthy that the present conditions seem not only to support stability in such a way that it halts variation in its initial stages, as seems to be the case with e.g. 'new passive' and the case inflectional system. They also seem to be able to stop established variation in its tracks, as suggested by the present data on 'dative sickness' which emerged and had probably become well-established well before the conditions described above were formed.

One important question that remains is the extent to which the present conclusions and results pertaining to Icelandic circumstances are generalizable to a wider context. Is it, in other words, possible on the basis of the results here to present e.g. a set of principles stating that if we have a language community that displays a high degree of linguistic nationalism, a puristic language policy, highly negative attitudes towards change and close-knit social networks, this community will invariably show a high degree of language stability? While I certainly believe a language community characterized by the above to be likely to be highly stable, as is witnessed by the present Icelandic results, I do not think this can be presented as a general principle. Thus, it seems plausible to me that even where the above conditions apply they do not necessarily have to result in a high degree of stability. Consider, for example, Trudgill's (1992) point, which gains support from Schilling-Estes' (2000, 2002) work, about there being room for linguistic playfulness in language communities which feel little external pressure. It seems to me, however, that internal playfulness is possible even in language communities that do experience strong external pressures; these may

react against this by emphasising the maintenance of their language as a separate entity but yet allow the language to change from within. It should also be taken into consideration that the conditions mentioned above as being crucial to the stability of Icelandic are, in turn, influenced by other conditions which may not directly affect the language itself. These external influences may interfere with the factors more directly linked to language stability in such a way that e.g. a strong linguistic nationalism does not materialize in stability, or that language planning does not include language stability in its agenda. We are, in other words, faced with an endlessly complex interplay between different layers of social conditions, where the ones directly affecting language and its stability may themselves be affected by other conditions which in turn seep down to the level of language. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that these layers combine in exactly the same way in any two societies. If we accept that language is first and foremost a social phenomenon, it is only natural that this means that the social conditions are not completely the same for any two languages. I would therefore like to suggest that the only generalization that should be made here is that if we want to fully understand the workings – or the lack thereof – of language stability and thereby language change, we need to examine the combined effects of many relevant social factors rather than singling out separate aspects. Of course, we can probably never be fully sure which aspects are relevant and in any given society we are likely to miss an aspect or two which contribute to either stability or change. However, by striving towards including all relevant aspects we are more likely to approach our target than by simply accepting that we will probably never quite reach it as all societies are of course in constant development and are likely to change as soon as we have come to a conclusion about its present state.

7.5 Suggestions for further research

I ended the previous section by pointing out that all societies are in constant motion and change and here Iceland is no exception. Thus, we have no guarantee that the present social conditions which form the foundation of a maintained high degree of linguistic stability will last for any longer period of time. On this basis, a natural continuation, which was hinted repeatedly at in section 7.1 above, of the present study would be to set up a longitudinal study which monitors, on the one hand, the development of the linguistic variables examined here and is expanded to include more features, not the least novelties which may emerge. On the other, this development, or the relative lack of it, should be examined in light of the social circumstances of the Icelandic language community. It has been mentioned here (see section 3.1.5) that nationalism in Iceland has recently shown signs of becoming more multi-faceted than before and it may even be losing some of its potency. This is one of the areas which need to be kept in mind as the development of linguistic variation is

tracked in Iceland, particularly as any changes in the nature of nationalism may have a direct effect on language policy and various language planning measures. Another aspect which should be mentioned is that recently a bill of law, regarding pre-schools, elementary schools and high schools, was passed by the Alþingi, the Icelandic parliament. One of the provisions in this bill essentially amounts to a devaluation of the standardized tests mentioned above, which are taken by all elementary school pupils towards the end of their final year. As we have seen these tests, through being national and through their emphasis on formal grammatical knowledge of the linguistic standard, provide strong support to the relative stability of Icelandic, at least as far as the features examined in this thesis are concerned. It should be interesting to monitor the possible linguistic effects of this new legislation.

I am aware that a longitudinal project like the one described above is no small matter, but if implemented, it should provide us with extremely valuable information on the nature of stability and change and its social conditioning, not only in an Icelandic context but also in a more general one, as the Icelandic results could be contrasted against results from other language communities showing various degrees of stability. With the results from a project of this kind we should be able to e.g. take a close look at the development of variation at various stages, but as we have seen the linguistic atmosphere in Icelandic does, at least presently, appear to jump on most forms of variation and potential change almost in their early actuation stage. Thus, we should here have an opportunity to observe certain features from their initial stages to either their rejection or acceptance by the language community and plot this against the social circumstances of the community.

Within this framework, it would of course also be possible to look more closely at some of the few noticeable differences between the various social groupings which emerge in the present study. Here we have e.g. seen a statistically significant difference between men and women when it comes to the usage of ‘dative sickness’ in spoken language (see section 6.1.1.3). At the same time, the numbers behind this analysis are very low and more data would reveal whether this difference is as tangible as the present results indicate and might even provide us with some answers as to why this difference emerges. Similarly, a closer examination could be made of the workings of both locality and social networks in this context, but in the present study we have e.g. seen some weak signs that speakers from both the Reykjavík area and Flúðir are less likely than speakers elsewhere to produce non-standard forms of at least some of the features examined (see sections 6.1.1.2, 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.2.1). Further evidence is needed to corroborate this and should this pattern be confirmed, we probably need to look for explanations relating to aspects such as the form in which linguistic nationalism appears in the communities, attitudes, education and social networks, to see how these aspects interact with each other and with the linguistic variables.

While possibly of less direct sociolinguistic relevance in some respects, it may also be worthwhile to delve more deeply into the difference between spoken and written Icelandic. As expected, the signs of variation were, on the whole, even smaller in the written data in this study than in the spoken data, although the difference was in many instances surprisingly small or hardly existed at all. I suspect that further research will confirm this difference but what may be of greater interest, even though it probably lies outside the scope of the large-scale project described above, is to use the data gathered to examine the differences between spoken and written language. We have some signs from this study that in spoken language it may be optional for a speaker to follow the case inflectional frame set up by a conversational partner (see section 6.1.3), while in written language it is more difficult to evade the norms for case inflection. Further comparisons of this kind can be made and a special mention should also be made of the value the present methodology might have for research within the framework of discourse analysis and/or conversation analysis. Data of the kind used here, i.e. extracted from conversations in natural (or at least near-natural) circumstances, is scarce in Iceland and with a notable exception or two, discourse and conversation analysis are fields that are hitherto untouched in an Icelandic context (see Blöndal, 2004, 2005; Hjartardóttir, 2006).

Apart from the above suggestions, it is tempting simply to say that just about anything goes when it comes to possible research within sociolinguistics in Iceland. While a positive development in the last few years suggests that the quote at the beginning of chapter 4 about sociolinguistics never having become popular or influential in Iceland (Hovdhaugen et. al., 2000) is less true than before, this is still certainly a field that has been more or less neglected. While I hesitate to make this admission, it also serves to make the future challenges all the greater and more interesting.

7.6 Summary

This section is in essence a summary of a summary as this chapter has focused on summarizing and discussing the present results. The first conclusion presented is that the general picture regarding the linguistic features examined in this thesis is one of stability. This is based on the fact that the results for all the features, with the exception of ‘dative sickness’ and the case inflection of two particular types of words, show very little, if any, signs of systematic variation. Rather they should be regarded as slips of the tongue or as change or variation in its initial stages. This, of course, does not mean that they are uninteresting, as monitoring them from this early stage should provide valuable insights into the actuation and transmission of change or, if that is the case, into the sociolinguistic factors which determine that a potential change never leaves these first stages, but rather peters out after having been rejected by the language community in question. As for ‘dative sickness’, it does seem to have become

relatively well established, but at the same time it shows signs of being an example of stable variation rather than change in progress as it appears with the almost same frequency in all age groups. The frequency of non-standard case inflections of the two types of words mentioned above, i.e. women's names ending with *-ný* or *-ey* in the nominative and a group of kinship terms, appears to be an isolated phenomenon within an otherwise stable case inflectional system and can probably be explained by equally isolated circumstances, such as the effect of a group of women's nicknames closely resembling the names mentioned above. The standard case inflection of these nicknames, which appears to be increasingly used for the full names in question, results in a non-standard case inflection for the latter.

One result of the general stability which appears for the linguistic variables is that the differences which appear between the various social groupings examined in the thesis are too small to enable any clear generalizations being made regarding the social distribution of the little variation that exists. Thus, while a certain social background factor may seem relatable to a relatively high level of usage of one or more non-standard features, this never applies to all the variables.

The present results can only partially be compared to previous results as some of the features treated here have not been examined from a sociolinguistic viewpoint before. Thus, no comparisons can be made between this study and previous work regarding the 'am-to-frenzy' and the case inflectional system in general. It can, however, be claimed that the present work suggests that the little work that exists on 'genitive avoidance' has started at the wrong end by identifying this feature as an emerging change without really examining the validity of this assumption. Genitive case shows, in this study, few of the signs of instability described previously (Kjartansson, 1979, 1999; Svavarsdóttir, 1994) and on the whole does not seem to be markedly less stable than the other oblique cases. As for 'new passive', a comparison between this study and previous ones (Maling & Sigurjónsdóttir, 1997; Sigurjónsdóttir & Maling, 2001, 2002) reveals a sharp contrast, even though there are resemblances between them in some aspects, e.g. regarding the relationship between the informants' educational level and their usage of 'new passive' constructions. Overall, however, only traces of 'new passive' were found in the present study, while Sigurjónsdóttir and Maling see their results as indicative of this feature having become firmly established in Icelandic. Furthermore, it appears that the level of acceptance of 'new passive' does not in any direct way reflect attitudes towards this feature. Finally, a similar pattern emerges regarding 'dative sickness'; despite some resemblances between certain aspects of the results, previous work (Jónsson & Eyþórsson, 2003; Svavarsdóttir, 1982; Svavarsdóttir et. al., 1984) suggests that this feature has become quite pervasive and is gaining ground, while the present study indicates that the level of 'dative sickness' is considerably lower than previously suggested, even though it seems to have

become relatively firmly established, and that it has become stabilized at this level rather than being in the process of gaining further ground.

Following this discussion of the linguistic features, the results pertaining to the informants' attitudes towards and awareness of these features are reviewed. The main conclusion here is a rather contrastive one; at the same time as people believe it to be necessary for Icelandic to develop to meet the demands of an ever-changing modern world they regard the language as unchanging and unchangeable in itself, and change can only be initiated by external, i.e. foreign, influences which are regarded in a negative light. In this way the internal stability of Icelandic becomes, at least in the general view, dependent primarily upon the maintenance of Icelandic as a separate and pure language. This conclusion is then related to theoretical assumptions, such as Labov's (1972) approach to the speech community as it is claimed here that Icelanders essentially form a single speech community in terms of attitudes towards their own language. The conclusion is also related to the few earlier studies which exist that are relevant in the context of language attitudes in Iceland, but the present results generally point in the same direction as the previous ones, although the focus of the two sets differs somewhat. Furthermore, it is claimed that this general view found amongst the informants in this study goes hand in hand with some of the key components of the Icelandic language policy. Finally, one aspect of the picture emerging in the results is reiterated, namely that the generally highly negative view of non-standard use of the linguistic features examined appears to be an integral part in the stable usage of standard forms.

Further dimensions are then added to this discussion about the reasons for the high level of language stability found in this study. This is done primarily by examining the role played by linguistic nationalism and language policy and planning in this respect, and it is argued that the high level of linguistic nationalism found in the study, along with a seemingly great awareness and acceptance of the language policy which in turn is heavily influenced by nationalism, contribute directly to preserving the stability of Icelandic. A brief examination is then given of how this high level of linguistic nationalism and general adherence to the language policy have been maintained, focusing e.g. on the effect of the educational system and the language's status as one of the few available national symbols for Icelanders.

Linguistic nationalism and a generally accepted pro-stability language policy may thus be of great importance in the maintained language stability in Iceland, but it is claimed that even further aspects need to be regarded. These include e.g. social networks, but one conclusion from the present study is that these seem to have re-established themselves as stable and relatively close-knit after a prolonged period of upheaval, with the effect that networks again have a part to play in providing the conditions necessary for language stability, even though their relative importance is now smaller than before ca. 1850. Finally, it is argued that these aspects, together with the previously mentioned attitudinal

factors, spatial factors and reactions to language contact circumstances, combine to create the conditions in Iceland which result in language stability and hence this combination needs to be examined as a whole to arrive at a full explanation of the stability emerging in the study. At the same time, doubts are raised as to whether this particular combination of social circumstances can be generalized in such a way that it forms a set of principles necessary for language stability in general. Rather, for any given society which displays a high degree of linguistic stability, a unique combination of factors which supports this stability should be searched for. This, in turn, means that the only generalization that can be made is that, if a full explanation of stability or change is our target, many seemingly relevant social aspects should be examined in combination rather than singling out one or two separate aspects, as fruitful as that may be in itself, as a step along the way towards the final target which we may never reach.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Denna avhandling består av en studie av språklig stabilitet som en del av det generella studiet av språklig variation och förändring. Mer specifikt handlar den grundläggande frågeställningen avhandlingen utgår ifrån om huruvida språksamhällen som karakteriseras av en hög grad av stabilitet kan bibehålla denna stabilitet även om de genomgår radikala sociala förändringar som kan förväntas leda även till språkliga förändringar. Om svaret till denna basfråga är positivt följer det naturligen att fråga vilka omständigheter i de givna språksamhällena bidrar till bevarandet av den språkliga stabiliteten. För att besvara dessa frågor görs här en studie av modern isländska men Island ses av många som ett typexempel på ett stabilt språksamhälle där språket bevarats utan några större förändringar allt sedan ön först befolkades. De senaste åren har det dock hävdats, både i vetenskapliga sammanhang och bland allmänheten, att denna stabilitet har börjat spricka upp och att språket nu genomgår förändringar, inte minst av morfologisk och syntaktisk natur, i en raskare takt än tidigare. Med detta som utgångspunkt valdes här för examination ett antal variabler som har pekats ut som exempel på pågående förändring inom det isländska språket. Data om bruket av dessa variabler, i tal- så väl som skriftspråk, samlades in bland en grupp informanter som även intervjuades om sina attityder till variablerna. Syftet med detta är att få en bild av huruvida isländska fortfarande kan sägas karakteriseras av stabilitet och, om så är fallet, vilka faktorer bidrar till den. Resultaten från denna studie relateras sedan till de allmänna frågeställningarna bakom avhandlingen.

I avhandlingens första kapitel, *Introduction*, presenteras de ovan nämnda frågeställningarna, tillsammans med en kort presentation av de relevanterna språkliga variablerna och en allmän diskussion om avhandlingens syfte och omfattning. Kapitel 2, *Approaches to change and stability*, utgörs sedan huvudsakligen av en allmän bakgrundsdiskussion om hur man i tidigare forskning har nämnt språkförändring och språklig stabilitet. De första två sektionerna, 2.1 och 2.2 berör olika teoretiska synsätt på hur språklig förändring initieras och sprids i språksamhällen. Tonvikten här ligger på det sociolingvistiska fältet, inte minst på hur sociala nätverk kan påverka graden av språklig förändring. Det hävdas dock i sektion 2.3 att även om många sociolingvistiska studier har stabilitet som sin utgångspunkt så läggs denna aspekt snabbt åt sidan samtidigt som fokuseringen överförs till språklig variation och förändring. Detta framhålls här som en brist i forskningen då en full förståelse av variation och förändring ej kan nås om dess motsats, dvs. stabilitet och dess förutsättningar, inte studeras. I och med detta pekas stabilitet även ut som denna avhandlings huvudsakliga ämne och för att utforska det introduceras isländska och det isländska språksamhället som en lämplig bas. Sektion 2.4 består sedan av en kort historisk översikt över hur det isländska språkets stabilitet har bevarats. Här hävdas det att täta och stabila sociala nätverk var den starkast

bidragande faktorn allt sedan ön först befolkades och fram till mitten av 1800-talet. Det påpekas dock att de senaste 150 åren har kännetecknats av sociala omvälvningar som t.ex. lett till upplösningen av de tidigare sociala nätverken och borde således, enligt sociolingvistisk teori, även ha lett till språkförändringar. Så verkar dock ej vara fallet då det isländska språkets stabilitet verkar ha bevarats åtminstone fram till de senaste åren. Det hävdas sedan att för att förstå denna stabilitet behöver flera bidragande faktorer än sociala nätverk och andra traditionella sociolingvistiska bakgrundsfaktorer inkluderas. I detta sammanhang pekas särskilt nationalism, attityder och språkplanering ut.

Kapitel 3, *Stability: a broader approach*, diskuterar de tre faktorer som nämns ovan som potentiellt bidragande till språklig stabilitet. I sektion 3.1 redogörs det för sambandet mellan språk och nationalism. De tidigare studier som här diskuteras visar att nationalism kan ha en direkt påverkan på språk (och vice versa). I dessa tidigare studier fokuseras det dock främst på hur språk kan bidra till gränsdragandet mellan olika nationer och på hur nationalism kan leda till språklig förändring. Sambandet mellan nationalism och språklig stabilitet negligeras dock oftast, även om forskare allmänt förefaller vara medvetna om denna möjliga koppling. Som ett första bidrag till en mer balanserad diskussion följer en beskrivning av hur nationalism verkar ha varit en direkt bidragande faktor i isländskans stabilitet, inte minst under den senare delen av 1800-talet och i början av 1900-talet, då det isländska språket blev i sig självt ett viktigt led i argumentationen för Islands självständighet. Det framhålls dock att det är oklart om nationalism fortfarande spelar denna roll och vissa tecken de senare åren tyder på att dess ställning i detta sammanhang har försvagats något.

Sektion 3.2 tar upp det möjliga sambandet mellan attityder och språklig stabilitet. Här framkommer i stort sett samma mönster som för sambandet mellan stabilitet och nationalism, dvs. även om de flesta forskare verkar utgå ifrån att attityder kan bidra till språklig stabilitet så utforskas denna möjlighet inte i någon utsträckning. När denna diskussion sedan överförs till ett mer specifikt isländskt sammanhang kommer det först och främst fram att attityder till språk knappast har berörts alls i isländsk forskning vilket innebär att det är oklart hur starkt attityder kan ha bidragit till det isländska språkets stabilitet. Det finns dock vissa tecken på att nationalistiskt färgade attityder som understrukit värdet av ett närmast oföränderligt och "ordentligt" språk kan ha dragit sitt strå till stacken i detta sammanhang.

Sektion 3.3 utforskar, slutligen, huruvida språkplanering kan bidra till språklig stabilitet. Här dyker mönstret från sektion 3.1 och 3.2 återigen upp. Vissa forskare som studerat språkplanering och dess påverkan på språken i fråga påpekar visserligen att språkplanering kan ha stabilitet som sitt mål men hur detta mål uppnås och hur stabilitet bibehålls lämnas därhän. Här görs det sedan ytterligare ett försök att framhäva stabilitet genom att överföra diskussionen till ett isländskt sammanhang för att se om isländsk språkplanering varit en

bidragande faktor till isländskans stabilitet. I denna genomgång framkommer det tydligt att språkplanering visserligen spelat en viktig roll i detta sammanhang. Detta beror inte minst på att bevarandet av isländska i en så "ren" form som möjligt varit en central komponent av isländsk språkplanering ända sedan den först kom fram i en organiserad form mot slutet av 1700-talet och det är först nu de senaste åren som tecken på en ändrad inriktning börjat dyka upp. Denna inriktning kan i sin tur till en stor del relateras till den växande nationalismen under 1800-talet. Språkplanering och nationalism verkar således ha bildat ett slags allians, där attityder troligtvis även ingår, som till en stor del ersatte de sociala nätverken som stöttepelare för det isländska språkets stabilitet, åtminstone fram till de senaste åren

De språkliga variabler som används i avhandlingen som ett slags måttstock på det isländska språkets nuvarande stabilitet presenteras i kapitel 4, *Linguistic variables: definitions and earlier work*. Variablerna i fråga är de följande:

- a) *Págufallssýki* eller 'dativsjuka'; en förändring i kasus för subjekt till så kallade opersonliga verb som i standardspråk har subjekt i ackusativ.
- b) *Eignarfallsflótti* eller 'genitivflykt'; en tendens till att antingen använda nominativ, ackusativ eller dativ där genitiv krävs, eller använda ändelser för genitiv som avviker från standarden.
- c) Andra kasusböjningar; det hävdas att det isländska kasusböjningssystemet börjat visa tecken på en allmän instabilitet som visar sig på så sätt att ackusativ, dativ och genitiv inte används alls (enbart nominativ kvarstår), eller att ett visst kasus används där det i standardspråket krävs ett annat kasus.
- d) *Ný þolmynd* eller 'ny passiv'; en ändring i passivkonstruktioners struktur.
- e) *Er-að-æðið* 'är-att-hysterin'; en förefallande utvidgning av konstruktionen *vera að* + infinitiv som i standardisländska används med en begränsad grupp av verb för att bilda pågående aspekt.

Alla dessa variabler definieras närmare och beskrivs i kapitlet. Där ges även en översikt över tidigare forskning om dem. Av variablerna är det dock endast 'dativsjuka' och 'ny passiv' som behandlats utifrån ett för sociolingvistik relevant perspektiv. Denna tidigare forskning tyder på att 'dativsjuka' har etablerat sig inom isländska och att 'ny passiv'-konstruktioner accepteras i hög grad. Det hävdas dock här att det är tveksamt hur mycket dessa tidigare resultat säger om spridningen av dessa variabler i den isländska befolkningens

vardagliga språk då forskningen bakom resultaten inkluderar närmast enbart barn och ungdomar och bygger på testförhållanden snarare än naturligt förekommande språk. Dessutom – så som antyds här ovan – handlar tidigare sociolingvistiskt inriktad forskning om ‘ny passiv’ om acceptansen av sådana konstruktioner snarare än användningen av dem. Vad gäller tidigare forskning om de övriga variablerna så har det hittills enbart gjorts försök till att definiera ‘genitivflykten’ och några trevande förslag har lagts fram om hur ‘är-att-hysterin’, som först uppmärksammades för ungefär 10 år sedan, bör ses. Att det isländska kاسوبjöjningssystemet börjat visa tecken på instabilitet är sedan än så länge enbart ett informellt antagande.

I kapitel 5, *Methods*, redogörs det för de metoder som användes vid insamling och analysering av data för avhandlingen. Totalt deltog 108 informanter i undersökningen; 12 från var och en av de nio orter som valdes ut. Dessa orter valdes då de sågs som representativa för de olika typer av tätorter som finns på Island, samtidigt som de täcker alla de regioner som Island delas upp i för diverse offentliga ändamål. I varje ort delades de 12 informanterna upp i tre åldersgrupper om fyra personer vardera; ungdomar (16-20 år), vuxna (20-65 år) och äldre (äldre än 65 år). Könsfördelningen i varje åldersgrupp på varje ort var jämn (2/2), med ett fåtal undantag där tre informanter av det enda könet och en informant av det andra ingick. Den socio-ekonomiska bakgrunden bland informanterna på varje ort skulle sedan återspegla samhällstrukturen på orten i fråga var gång. Alla informanter spelades sedan in under samtal i grupper om 2-4 personer där alla kändes inbördes. Forskaren närvarade ej vid inspelningarna. Syftet var att minimera forskarens påvekan på samtalen och således få fram talspråk som låg så nära vardagligt talspråk som möjligt. Alla informanter ombads även lämna in exempel på sitt skriftspråk, ej skrivet specifikt i samband med studien. 52 informanter lämnade in data av detta slag. Slutligen intervjuades alla informanter för att få fram diverse bakgrundsuppgifter (ålder, utbildning, arbete o dyl), uppgifter om deras sociala nätverk och uppgifter om deras attityder till och medvetenhet om de språkliga variablerna. Inspelningarna från samtalen transkriberades och transkriptionerna analyserades sedan med avseende på de språkliga variablerna. Skriftspråksdata analyserades på samma sätt. Utifrån intervjuerna analyserades även informanternas sociala nätverk och informanterna placerades på en 5-gradig skala där 1 indikerade svaga och löst sammanfogade nätverk medan 5 indikerade starka och sammansvetsade nätverk. Vad gäller attityderna så analyserades dessa och för varje språklig variabel placerades informanterna på en skala som tillkännagav hur negativa/positiva de var till och hur medvetna de var om variabeln i fråga. Slutligen registrerades alla bakgrundsuppgifter.

I det sjätte kapitlet, *Results*, behandlas resultaten från studien. Sektion 6.1 redogör för resultaten angående talspråk och här visar det sig att endast ‘dativsjuka’ kan sägas ha etablerat sig i någon utsträckning då den förekommer i 13.13% av de tillfällen då de relevanta opersonliga verben används.

‘Dativsjukan’ förefaller även vara markant vanligare bland kvinnor än män och det finns vissa tecken på att den förekommer i större utsträckning i mindre fiskebyar än i andra orter, samt att den är vanligare bland de grupper som har relativt lite utbildning och/eller har arbeten som inte kräver specialisering än bland de grupper som har en högre utbildningsgrad och/eller specialiserade arbeten. Det nämns även att ‘dativsjukan’ i första hand verkar påverka subjekt som ej är 1 eller 2 pers. pronomen singularis.

Vad gäller ‘genitivflykt’, kasusböjningssystemet och ‘ny passiv’ så finns det få tydliga förändringstecken i talspråksdata för denna studie. Således når ‘ny passiv’ endast en frekvens på 2.63% och ‘genitivflykt’, så som den har definierats i tidigare forskning, förekommer knappast alls. Det påpekas dock att ‘ny passiv’ huvudsakligen förekommer bland ungdomar i denna studie, vilket kan tyda på att detta är en förändring i ett tidigt skede. Vad gäller kasusböjningssystemet förefaller det generellt vara mycket stabilt och de icke-standard exempel som förekommer sägs i de flesta fall kunna relateras till den syntaktiska kontexten, snarare än svårigheter bland informanterna med kasusböjningen som sådan. Detta gäller även för större delen av de avvikande genitivformer som förekom i talspråksdata. Det finns dock två typer av ord där informanterna visar en tydlig tendens för användning av icke-standard kasusböjning. Den ena av dessa är kvinnonamn som i nominativ har ett *-ný* eller *-ey*-suffix. I standardspråk tar dessa namn en *-ju*-ändelse i ackusativ och dativ (*-nýju/-eyju*) men då de relevanta namnen används i dessa två senare kasus i de inspelade samtalen används nominativ-formen (*-ný/-ey*) i 81.25% av alla tillfällen. Det totala antalet tillfällen är dock mycket lågt (16). Den andra typen är släktskapstermerna *systir*, *dóttir*, *móðir*, *bróðir* och *faðir* (som knappast kräver en översättning till svenska). Den nominativa *-ir*-ändelsen ersätts i standardspråk med *-ur* för, ackusativ, dativ och genitiv, men i talspråksdata för denna studie står nominativ-formen kvar i 46,43% av alla tillfällen (totalt 56) då *-ur* strikt taget borde användas.

För att slutligen komma till ‘är-att-hysterin’ i talspråk så är detta den vanligast förekommande variabeln då den används 37 gånger i de inspelade samtalen. Då denna variabel ännu ej har fullständigt definierats var det dock omöjligt att fastslå någon relativ frekvens i detta sammanhang. Den rena frekvensen ses ändå som ett vagt tecken på att denna variabel hunnit smyga sig in i språket till en viss del.

Resultaten vad gäller skriftspråksdata behandlas sedan i sektion 6.2. Här räcker det sammanfattningsvis att säga att ingen av variablerna verkar ha etablerat sig i någon utsträckning i skriftspråk och ‘är-att-hysterin’ förekommer inte alls i denna del. De enda synliga tecknen på instabilitet ligger i att det även här finns en tendens bland informanterna att använda icke-standard kasusböjningar för de ovan nämnda kvinnonamnen och släktskapstermerna. Denna tendens är dock betydligt svagare här än vad gäller talspråk.

Denna presentation av resultaten angående tal- och skriftspråk följs av en examination av huruvida det fanns ett samband mellan några två eller flera av de språkliga variablerna således att en informant som använde en viss icke-standard form visade tecken på en benägenhet att även använda en eller flera andra relevanta icke-standard former. Inga sådana tecken hittades dock.

I den sista sektionen (6.4) i resultatkapitlet presenteras resultaten angående informanternas attityder till och medvetenhet om de språkliga variablerna och om språkförändring generellt. Dessa resultat tyder på att medvetenhetsnivån bland informanterna om både språkförändring generellt sett och om de olika variablerna är hög, med 'genitivflykt' som ett möjligt undantag. Samtidigt förefaller informanterna generellt hålla en negativ ställning gentemot de språkliga variablerna, där dock 'dativsjuka', 'ny passiv' och avvikande kasusböjningar verkar ses som mer negativa företeelser än 'genitivflykt' og 'är-att-hysterin'. Informanterna verkar däremot hålla en något neutral ställning gentemot generell språkförändring, men denna hållning relateras delvis till att informanterna här inte hade något konkret exempel att utgå ifrån och verkade ha en ganska oklar föreställning om vad begreppet "språkförändring" innebär.

Dessa attitydresultat kopplas slutligen till resultaten gällande tal- och skriftspråk. Här framkommer ett tydligt mönster som hävdas tyda på att det finns ett samband mellan attityder och språkbruk således att de som har en negativ attityd till icke-standard former av de språkliga variablerna är mindre benägna än de som är neutrala eller rent av positiva att använda dessa former.

I det sjunde och sista kapitlet, *Concluding discussion*, dras resultaten från kapitel 6 samman och kopplas till den tidigare forskningen för att presentera avhandlingens slutsatser. Den första slutsatsen som dras är att isländska kännetecknas av stabilitet snarare än förändring. Detta byggs på avhandlingens resultat som generellt sett pekar i en annan riktning än den allmänna diskussionen och tidigare forskning om de relevanta variablerna. Denna slutsats kopplas sedan till resultaten angående informanternas attityder samt den tidigare diskussionen om nödvändigheten av att inkludera faktorer så som nationalism, attityder och språkpolitik. Det hävdas sedan att den stabilitet som fortfarande verkar känneteckna isländska kan till en stor del förklaras med hjälp av dessa faktorer. Således förefaller det tydligt att det finns en direkt koppling mellan attityder och språkbruk och de negativa attityder till icke-standard språkbruk som dominerar bland informanterna relateras till att de återspeglar en stark nationalistisk känsla som har bevarats i det isländska språksamhället. Denna känsla framkom starkt då informanterna i studien förklarade sina attityder till icke-standard formerna av de språkliga variablerna; de ser dem som ett negativt utländskt inflytande även om den kopplingen knappast kan göras på lingvistiska grunder. Denna språkliga nationalism har i sin tur inte minst framkallats med hjälp av en språkpolitik som verkar vara allmänt accepterad och har implementerats i skolsystemet. Denna politik fokuserar till en stor del på just stabilitet och utgår där ofta ifrån nationalistiska argument. Det hävdas alltså att den ovan nämnda

alliansen mellan nationalism, attityder och språkpolitik fortfarande fungerar som en stöttepelare för isländskans stabilitet. Andra faktorer vägs dock även in. Således påpekas det att även om de sociala nätverken som bibehöll isländskans stabilitet fram till mitten av 1800-talet nu har försvunnit så tyder resultat från studien på att det isländska samhället har hittat tillbaka till en viss stabilitet efter en något turbulent period under större delen av de senaste 150 åren. Således upplever de flesta informanterna i studien sina sociala nätverk som starka, täta och stabila och det hävdas att detta bidrar till språklig stabilitet.

Som en slutpunkt i avhandlingen hävdas det att även om de ovan nämnda faktorerna, dvs. stabila sociala nätverk, en stark språklig nationalism, en konservativ språkpolitik och negativa attityder till språkförändring, kan, utifrån avhandlingens resultat, ses som nödvändiga förutsättningar för språklig stabilitet generellt sett så bör detta inte tas för givet. Diverse andra sociala faktorer kan påverka denna kombination på så sätt att den tar en annan riktning. Det påpekas även att det förefaller osannolikt att faktorerna kombineras på helt samma sätt i olika samhällen. Den enda generaliseringen som presenteras är därför att om en full förståelse av språklig stabilitet och därmed språkförändring skall uppnås så är det nödvändigt att utforska den kombinerade effekten av så många sociala faktorer som möjligt hellre än att plocka ut enstaka aspekter och studera dem som isolerade enheter.

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Appendix 1

Social networks – basic questions

Icelandic

1) Fjölskyldutengsl

Hvaða fjölskyldumeðlimi og ættingja hefur þú reglulegt samband við?

Hvernig umgengstu þetta fólk, þ.e. hvað gerið þið þegar þið hittist?

Hve oft hittist þið og hvar hittist þið?

Hefur þú reglulegt samband við fjölskyldumeðlimi eða ættingja sem búa utan heimabyggðar þinnar? (Spurningin eingöngu borin upp væri ekki búið að minnast á þetta fólk í tengslum við fyrstu spurningu)

Leitar þú til fjölskyldumeðlima eða ættingja þegar þú þarft á hjálp að halda (tilfinningalegri/fjárhagslegri/annarri)? Ef já, hvaða fjölskyldumeðlima/ættingja? Ef nei, hvert leitar þú?

2) Vináttutengsl

Myndir þú segja að þú værir vinmargur/mörg (gerðu greinarmun á vinum og kunningjum)? Hve margir eru vinirnir? Hve margir vinanna búa í þinni heimabyggð?

Hvaða vini þína hefur þú reglulegt samband við? Búa þessir vinir í eða utan heimabyggðar þinnar?

Hvernig umgengst þú vini þína, þ.e. hvað gerið þið þegar þið hittist?

Hve oft hittir þú vini þína og hvar hittist þið?

Leitar þú til vina þinna þegar þú þarft á hjálp að halda (tilfinningalegri/ fjárhagslegri/annarri)? Ef já, hvaða vina? Ef nei, hvert leitar þú?

Hve nán eru tengsl þín við næstu nágretta þína?

Eru einhverjir næstu nágretta þinna jafnframt vinir þínir og/eða fjölskyldumeðlimir/ættingjar?

Hafa þau fjölskyldu- og vinabönd sem þú lýsir haldist stöðug í gegnum tíðina?

3) Vinnustaða/skólatengsl

Umgengst þú vinnu-/skólafélaga utan vinnu-/skólatíma? Ef já, hvernig umgengstu þetta fólk og hve oft hittir þú það??

Telur þú einhverja vinnu-/skólafélaga þína til vina þinna („vinir“ í sömu merkingu og hér fyrir ofan)?

Eru einhverjir fjölskyldumeðlimir þínir eða ættingjar jafnframt vinnu-/skólafélagar þínir?

Hve lengi hefur þú unnið þar sem þú vinnur núna?

Skiptir þú oft um vinnu? Tengjast fyrri vinnustaðir núverandi vinnustað þínum með einhverjum hætti?

4) Félagslíf

Tekur þá þátt í einhverju félagsstarfi (innan sem utan heimabyggðar)? Ef já, hvaða?

Hve oft sækir þú viðkomandi fundi/atburði/samkomur?

Hve nán(n) ertu þeim sem þú stundar félagsstörfin með? Teljast einhverjir þeirra til vina þinna („vinir“ í sömu merkingu og hér fyrir ofan) og/eða fjölskyldumeðlima/ættingja?

5) Tengsl við heimabyggð

Hve lengi hefur þú búið í bænum/sveitarfélaginu?

Hve lengi hefur fjölskylda/ætt þín búið hér?

Hvernig myndir þú lýsa tengslum þínum við heimabyggð þína og hver er, að þínu mati, staða þín í henni?

Reiknar þú með að búa hér áfram? Hvers vegna/hvers vegna ekki?

English translation

1) Family ties

Which family members and relatives do you have regular contact with?

How do you socialize with them, i.e. what do you do when you meet?

How often do you meet them and where do you meet?

Do you have regular contact with any family members or relatives living outside your home municipality? (Asked only if this did not come up in relation to the first question)

Do you turn to family members or relatives when you need help (emotional/financial/other)? If yes, which family members/relatives? If no, who do you turn to?

2) Friendship ties

Would you say you have many friends (make a distinction between friends and acquaintances)? How many? How many of your friends live in your home municipality?

Which of your friends do you have regular contact with? Do these friends live in or outside your home municipality?

How do you socialize with your friends, i.e. what do you do when you meet?

How often do you meet your friends and where do you meet them?

Do you turn to your friends when you need help (emotional/financial/other)? If yes, which friends? If no, who do you turn to?

How close is your relation to your nearest neighbours?

Are any of your nearest neighbours also your friends and/or family members/relatives?

Has the pattern you describe in your answers about family and friendship ties remained stable through the years?

3) Networks at work/school

Do you socialize with people you work with/go to school with outside working/school hours? If yes, in what way do you socialize with them and how often do you meet them?

Do you regard any of your co-workers/schoolmates as your friends (in the same meaning of "friends" as above)?

Are any of your family members or relatives also your co-workers/schoolmates?

How long have you worked where you work now?

Do you change jobs often? Are your former places of work in some way connected to the current one?

4) Social activities

Do you take part in any social activities (local and/or outside the local community)? If yes, which activities?

How often do you go to the relevant meetings/events/activities?

How close are you to those who take part in the same social activities as you do? Are any of them your friends (in the same meaning of “friends” as above) and/or your family members or relatives?

5) Local integration

How long have you lived in this town/municipality?

How long has your family lived here?

How would you describe your connection and attitude to the municipality and how do you view your place/role in the local community?

Do you think you will continue to live here in the future? Why/why not?

Appendix 2

Basic questions on attitudes to and awareness of language change

Icelandic

- 1) Hvert er viðhorf þitt til málbreytinga almennt?
 - Verður þú var/vör við einhverjar tiltekna breytingar í málumhverfi þínu?
 - (Þú kveðst vera neikvæð/ur gagnvart málbreytingum; tekur sú neikvæðni til einhverra sérstakra atriða?)
- 2) Kannast þú við hina svo kölluðu „þágufallssýki“ (dæmi gefin ef með þarf)?
 - (Að hve miklu leyti verður þú var/vör við „þágufallssýki“ í málumhverfi þínu?)
 - Hvert er viðhorf þitt til „þágufallssýki“?
- 3) Kannast þú við hina svo kölluðu „nýju þolmynd“ (dæmi gefin ef með þarf)?
 - (Að hve miklu leyti verður þú var/vör við „nýja þolmynd“ í málumhverfi þínu?)
 - Hvert er viðhorf þitt til „nýrrar þolmyndar“?
- 4) Kannast þú við hinn svo kallaða „eignarfallsflótta“ (dæmi gefin ef með þarf)?
 - (Að hve miklu leyti verður þú var/vör við „eignarfallsflótta“ í málumhverfi þínu?)
 - Hvert er viðhorf þitt til „eignarfallsflótta“?
- 5) Kannast þú við tilhneigingu til rangrar eða eða frávíkjandi fallbeygingar í tengslum við önnur föll en eignarfall (dæmi gefin ef þörf krefur)?
 - (Að hve miklu leyti verður þú var/vör við þessa tilhneigingu í málumhverfi þínu?)
 - Hvert er viðhorf þitt til þessarar tilhneigingar?
- 6) Kannast þú við hið svo kallaða „er-að-æði“ (dæmi gefin/önnur heiti nefnd ef með þarf)?
 - (Að hve miklu leyti verður þú var/vör við „er-að-æði“ í málumhverfi þínu?)
 - Hvert er viðhorf þitt til „er-að-æðis“?

English translation

- 1) What is your attitude towards language change in general?
 - Do you notice any particular signs of change in your everyday linguistic environment?
 - (You say you are negative towards language change; are there any particular features that you are thinking of in this respect?)
- 2) Are you familiar with the so-called 'dative sickness' (examples if necessary)?
 - (To what extent do you feel you encounter "dative sickness" in your everyday linguistic environment?)
 - What is your attitude towards 'dative sickness'?
- 3) Are you familiar with the so-called 'new passive' (examples if necessary)?
 - (To what extent do you feel you encounter 'new passive' in your everyday linguistic environment?)
 - What is your attitude towards 'new passive'?
- 4) Are you familiar with the so-called 'genitive avoidance' (examples if necessary)?
 - (To what extent do you feel you encounter 'genitive avoidance' in your everyday linguistic environment?)
 - What is your attitude towards 'genitive avoidance'?
- 5) Are you familiar with a tendency for deviant case inflections in connection to other cases than genitive (examples if necessary)?
 - (To what extent do you feel you encounter this tendency in your everyday linguistic environment?)
 - What is your attitude towards this tendency?
- 6) Are you familiar with the so-called 'am-to-frenzy' (examples/other terms if necessary)?
 - (To what extent do you feel you encounter the 'am-to-frenzy' in your everyday linguistic environment?)
 - What is your attitude towards the 'am-to-frenzy'?