“But then there is still something, you know, of course, natural for one to speak Icelandic, it is my mother tongue”

Icelandic lyricists’ identity and language choice
Abstract

This thesis reports the findings of a study that explored Icelandic lyricists’ choice of language, English or Icelandic, in their writing and the role of the languages in their identity construction. This is an area of inquiry that falls within the field of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) that has not received much attention from ELF scholars. Data was collected through interviews with Icelandic musicians/lyricists. The interviews were analysed using thematic coding approach based in grounded theory. The results show that lyricists choose English and Icelandic for different reasons. The main reason for musicians choosing English over Icelandic is that the language offers better access to the international music market and reaches a wider audience. Although writing in Icelandic is easier for the participants most choose to write in English and Icelandic is thought to be best suited for the Icelandic market. The results also show that English is mostly seen as additional language used for pragmatic reasons while Icelandic is the language that the participants seem to predominantly define themselves by. The languages can be seen to play essentially different roles in their lives with English mostly being a “language of communication” while Icelandic is their “language of identification”. Despite these different roles both languages are important sources of identity construction.
Preface

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to the many people who helped me in the process of writing this thesis. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, for her most valuable guidance and motivation. I would like to thank my husband, Hrólfur Vilhjálmsson, for his endless support and my three little girls for their patience the many times I had to sneak off to write. Finally, I would like to thank all the musicians who were willing to give me their time and participate in the study.

Íðunn Andersen
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1 Introduction

In today’s globalized world the English language has spread widely and is currently spoken by far greater number of non-native speakers than native speakers of English (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008, p. 28.1). English is truly an international language and is commonly used as a lingua franca between people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds. An extensive body of research on the area of use of English as a Lingua Franca has been building up in recent years (see e.g. Seidlhofer, 2011; Baker, 2015; Jenkins, 2009; Hülmbauer, et al., 2008). ELF scholars’ research has been concerned with aspects that include the formal deviations from natives’ norms that occur in lingua franca communication (See Hülmbauer et al., 2008 for a list of studies), and the relationship between identity and language ideologies in ELF contexts and the notion of the legitimate speaker and the ownership of the language (Jenkins, 2007, 2009; Cogo, 2012b; Rindal, 2014; Seidlhofer, 2007; Phan, 2009; Virkkula & Nikula, 2010). ELF studies are most commonly conducted in educational contexts with non-native teachers or learners.

An area of interest that has not received attention from ELF scholars is that of the international music industry. Within that industry, English has been the dominant language for over half a century (Hilgendorf, 2007) and is often used by non-native English speakers who aspire to succeed on the international scene. In this context of use, the musicians/lyricists can be seen to be using English as a Lingua Franca to gain access to international markets and to reach a wider audience. This is a common practice of Icelandic musicians that seems to be on the rise, which is a development that worries language authorities in Iceland (Ministry of Education, 2008) and is what sparked my interest in the subject. The focus of this study is on Icelandic pop musicians/lyricists and their use of English as a Lingua Franca in their lyrics compositions. This is an ill-definable group as they cannot so easily be linked to a particular scene or cultural movement unlike rap-music and lyrics that have been researched extensively (see e.g. Pennycook, 2003, 2007, 2008) that draw from hip-hop culture.

Given how widely English is used by non-native musicians this area of research is of importance for it provides an opportunity to get a deeper understanding of the various reasons non-native musicians/lyricists choose to use English instead of their native languages in their
lyrics and can give some insight into how their choices affect or are affected by their identity. For this purpose the following research questions were developed:

- Has English become the language Icelandic lyricists and musicians prefer?
- What are the underlying reasons for their choice of language?
- How is their linguistic identity affected and constructed through their choice of language?

To get an answer to these questions nine Icelandic musicians/lyricists that had written lyrics in English, Icelandic or both languages were interviewed. The interviews were analysed by using a thematic coding analysis approach based in Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992). The findings show that the underlying reasons for language choice are various and personal although the principal reason for choosing to use English is the greater access to the international scene the English language provides. Hüllen’s (1992) concepts of ‘language of identification’ and ‘language of communication’ were found useful to explore the identity construction issues related to language choice. Both languages were found to be important sites of identity construction, yet the findings show that the two languages play fundamentally different roles in the participants’ lives with Icelandic holding the place as their ‘language of identification’ and English predominantly their ‘language of communication’. Further research needs to be conducted to reach a better understanding of the linguistic realities of today’s musicians. Areas of interest suggested in this study are that of lyrics translation in relation to identity construction and further investigation into lyricists’ attitudes towards languages and language ideologies and the ownership of the English language.

Chapter two of the thesis contains the literature review, and the methodology of the study is presented in chapter three. Next, I present the results of the analysis which is followed by a discussion of the findings. The paper then closes with a short conclusion.
2 Review of literature

2.1 English in the global context

The English language is spoken all over the globe by native and non-native speakers and has become the international language or lingua franca of the world. Currently, the native speakers of the language are far outnumbered by non-native speakers which is a development that is “projected to pick up speed” (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008, p. 28.1).

English as a native language is pluricentric, that is, there exist different national language varieties, such as American, British and Australian varieties, of which the dominant nations’ varieties are considered to be the norm-setters (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008). Kachru (1985 cited in Clyne & Sharifian, 2008) discussed this pluricentricity of English in his model of the three circles; the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. The model is based on nations, actual boarders in which the Inner Circle refers to countries that have English as a first language (UK, USA, Canada, Australia), the Outer Circle includes countries where English has the status of a second language (India, Singapore), and the Expanding Circle where English is considered to be a foreign language.

In Iceland, English has traditionally been taught as a foreign language (EFL) and thus, according to the model, belongs with the countries of the Expanding Circle. However, with the growing presence of English in Iceland this definition does not fit any longer and English can neither be said to be a foreign language nor a second language (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2012b) but somewhere in between. Consequently, the current status of English in Iceland cannot readily be defined according to Kachru’s model.

In modern times of international mobilisation and communication due to globalization, English is increasingly used as an international or a lingua franca language, and scholars are finding Kachru’s categorization of English use based on geographical borders problematic and unable to grasp the current spread and use of English in the world (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008; Pennycook, 2008). Pennycook (2008) argues that globalization with its increased border-crossing of people, information and communication does affect all languages which calls for the rethinking of language knowledge and use in general that “move[s] away from locating diversity in national/geographic terms” (p. 30.1) and instead “deal with the contextual use of language” (p. 30.6). This is a view common amongst scholars who have been investigating English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) which is of importance for this study,
and we will discuss in more detail later. First, we will turn to the language environment in Iceland, beginning with a historical account of the presence of English in Iceland and language attitudes and ideologies. Then the current language environment is presented with particular focus on English. Lastly, the attitudes towards English in Iceland will be discussed.

2.2 The language environment in Iceland

2.2.1 Icelandic and language ideology and growing presence of English

Historically the Icelandic language is closely connected to the fight for independence, the construction of the nation and the Icelandic national identity and is still today considered to be one of the major defining factors for the Icelandic nation. At the beginning of the 19th century, the language was first used for political purposes and one of the arguments for independence was the notion that Icelandic was one of the oldest and noblest languages in Europe. The Icelandic language has been considered to be a living remnant of the Proto-Norse, whose historical value has been used to strengthen the argument to conserve and protect the language and to avoid language changes (Hálfdánarson, 2005). Hálfdánarson (2005) points out that these ideas about the language can still be felt to some extent in today’s social discourse.

In the 19th century, Icelanders’ pride in their language and literary tradition gave rise to linguistic nationalism and with it came the pure language movement (hreintungustefnan) that worked toward ridding the language of all Danish influence that had found its way into the Icelandic language over five centuries of Danish dominance over Iceland. In the 20th century, the protectionist efforts continued with the focus gradually moving from Danish to English (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). Around the time when Icelanders gained their independence (in 1944) the preservation and the protection of the Icelandic language from foreign influences became an issue of even more importance than before and the preservative language ideologies spread into both school curriculums and public institutions as well as to the general public (Þórarinsdóttir, 2011).

The origin of English influences in Iceland date back to the Second World War when the country became occupied by the British (1940), and subsequently the Americans (1941) (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). Prior to this contact with English, speakers had been limited to trade and the occasional traveller. Ten years later an American NATO base was established. With the American soldiers came the “Yankee” radio and TV channel whose cultural and linguistic influences were lamented by those who opposed the base
(Þórarinsdóttir, 2011). In the Cold War years (the 1960s and 1970s) the impact of American culture on Icelandic society caused further strong negative reaction against English as it was considered by Icelandic intellectuals to have a bad influence on Icelandic culture (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). The influence of English prevailed aided by cultural and linguistic influences through entertainment and media.

In the 90s Iceland entered the European Economic Area (EEA) which led to the opening of the Icelandic borders and a rise in immigration. With that came considerable changes in the language environment in Iceland which had previously been one of the most uniform nation states in the world with respect to both culture and religion as well as language (Þórarinsdóttir, 2011). At the same time, globalization further increased the impact of English in Iceland, which currently has found its way into various domains of Icelandic. The growing influence of English within Iceland and concerns about a possible language shift to English has sparked a rise in protectionist language policies (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). This development is not only bound to Iceland but is affecting countries all over the globe (Crystal, 2003). In other Scandinavian countries, where the impact of English resembles that of Iceland, protective language policies have also been established (e.g. Denmark, Sweden, Norway) to prevent domain loss (Phillipson, 2008).

Various measures have been taken through the years to preserve the language against global language forces. Institutional bodies such as the Icelandic Language Institute (Íslensk Málstöð), which was established in the early 1960s, and the more recent Icelandic Language Committee (Íslensk Málnefnd) have played a big role in efforts to preserve the language (Þórarinsdóttir, 2011). The practice of forming neologism, to coin new Icelandic words, has also been important. This practice is not only bound to institutions and authorities as Icelandic citizens are often inventors of neologisms (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009).

The Icelandic people are proud of their language and want to preserve it because they see it as their connection to their history and their roots (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). At the same time, people are aware that in modern times the use of English is vital for economic and social success. This is especially true for speakers of small languages such as Icelandic, who may need to be able to access information, communicate and even write texts in English (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). Although Icelanders realize the pragmatic value of knowing English, the growing presence of English within Icelandic society has made many anxious about the future of the Icelandic language. Concerns about the linguistic development of the language and the possible imminent death of the language with the consequent loss of cultural values have been expressed, as well as the need to
strengthen linguistic education in Iceland. (Hálfdánarson, 2005). However, although the Icelandic speech community is small (just above 300,000), Hálfdánarson (2005) argues that these dire predictions are not built on any factual evidence and are simply “an integral part of the existential angst of the age of globalization” (p. 56). Further, Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson (2009) argue that because of the status the Icelandic language holds within all domains of expertise the Icelandic language is in no imminent danger. In the same vein, Hálfdánarson (2005) remarks that as long as the people continue to care about their language, it is improbable that the language will die out.

To sum up, the Icelandic language is one of the main characteristics that define Icelanders as a nation. The language has been, and still is, held in the highest regards and is a source of pride for the Icelandic people. Through the years various measures have been taken to protect and conserve the small language against foreign influences. However, with the growing presence of English within different domains in Iceland caused by globalization, the task of safeguarding the language is becoming ever more challenging. This has caused concerns about the survival of the language and led to an increase in protectionist language policies, and yet there are those who believe that the language is in no danger of disappearing. Icelanders are fond and proud of their language and long to preserve it, but at the same time, they realize the pragmatic value of knowing English in the modern world of globalization. In the following section we will look more closely at the current language environment in Iceland in relation to English.

### 2.2.2 Current language environment in Iceland

As we have seen, the influences of English in Iceland date back to the Second World War and its impact in Iceland has been growing at an unprecedented speed in recent years due to various reasons including globalization. In today’s society, English is widespread and Icelandic citizens are likely to be exposed to or need to use, English every day whether be it through their studies, work or in their leisure time. Arnbjörnsdóttir (2011) studied the amount and type of exposure an average Icelandic adult experiences in his/her daily life. She conducted a telephone survey in which 750 Icelanders all around the country were asked about their exposure to, and use of, English. The results show that over 85% of respondents hear English every day and almost half of them read English daily. The results for productive English use paint an almost opposite picture. Just under 20% say they speak English every day and around half of the respondents say they write English once a month or less. The
amount of exposure/use increases the younger the respondent is. These findings show that
Icelanders’ receptive English exposure (language that is heard) is way greater than
Icelanders’ productive use of the language. Much of the receptive exposure that Icelanders in
general experience comes through the media where the majority of material broadcast on
Icelandic TV stations is in English. This material is usually subtitled except for, for instance,
programs intended for young children which are most often dubbed. A study done by Ortega
(2011) showed that during one week in June 2011, just under 30% of the broadcast material
on Icelandic TV stations was in Icelandic. Similarly, most of the music broadcast in Iceland
is in English and produced by Anglophone artists and artists from the expanding circle
(countries where English has the status of a foreign language), including Icelandic.
Furthermore, over 95% of Icelandic households have access to the internet (Guðjónsdóttir,
2015) which is dominated by English. Computer games sold in Iceland are also usually in
English.

The growing number of immigrants in Iceland has also altered the linguistic landscape. In
2015 immigrants were 7% of the total population in Iceland, which is over triple what it was
25 years ago (1.4 % 1980) (Guðjónsdóttir, 2015). Communication between immigrants and
speakers of Icelandic is often in English, which has led to English becoming a lingua franca
in businesses manned by immigrants. In addition, the tourism sector has experienced an
expeditious growth in recent years which has caused a great demand for employees that have
a good command of the English language. English is also widely used in other sectors, such
as international business and trade.

Children begin their formal English education in 4th grade (10 years old) although English
instruction begins earlier in some schools. It is not uncommon that at the start of formal
English education, children have already surpassed the National Curriculum (aðalnámskrá)
benchmark for 4th graders (Jóhannsdóttir, 2010). Obligatory study of English ends after 10th
grade and those who continue their studies in upper secondary school (age 16-20) are usually
required to take 3-5 courses in English (Guðmundsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2014). At the
university level, 90% of the required reading material is in English (Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2009)
although usually the classes are taught in Icelandic (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2015).

Many of the studies quoted above are a part of a comprehensive study that was recently
conducted in Iceland that investigated the Icelandic language environment in relation to
English at all levels of the educational system (except kindergarten) as well as in the labour
market (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2012b). These studies showed that English is
dominant in Icelanders’ everyday life. As discussed above, Icelanders use their receptive
skills (reading and listening) more than their productive skills (speaking and writing), and they consider themselves to be stronger at the former than the latter. Furthermore, Icelanders seem to tend to overestimate their English competence (Guðmundsdóttir & Arnbjörnsdóttir, 2014). According to the authors, the findings of the study suggest that a new language environment is developing in Iceland. English no longer fits the officially assigned status of a foreign language because it is all too present and too widely used within the society. Neither can it be assigned the status of a second language because it is not privileged to the same status as the Icelandic language (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsóttir, 2012b). Thus, English in Iceland is currently somewhere in between being a foreign language in Iceland or a second language. Jeeves (2015) describes the current language situation as “Icelandic as a home language and a context of ‘extended use of English as a further language’” (Jeeves, 2013 cited in Jeeves, 2015). Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsóttir (2012a) assign English the status of a “utility language”. It remains to be seen whether English will be granted the status of a second language within Iceland in the future, but it is clear that its current impact on Icelandic society is extensive and, as Arnbjörnsdóttir and Ingvarsóttir (2012b) point out, is likely to have effect on the development of Icelandic, Icelandic identity and English language teaching policies.

2.2.3 Attitudes in Iceland towards English

Jeeves (2015) investigated the relevance of English to young people in secondary school, university and in the workplace and found that the participants’ attitudes towards English were generally positive. English was seen as important and necessary for various aspects of their daily lives, such as for their various leisure time activities as well as for education and work. Some even felt they could hardly function in Iceland without knowing English. “Knowing English is perceived by participants as being as relevant as knowing Icelandic; and poor proficiency in English can produce feelings of low self-esteem and helplessness and a sense of not fitting in” (Jeeves, 2015, p. 264). However, Jeeves notes that, although the students show strong affiliation with English that might be on par with their affiliation with Icelandic, the students’ comments suggest that that is not the case. The students seem to have a strong national identity and to be concerned about their mother tongue as can be seen from their comments expressing worries about the future of Icelandic. She, therefore, argues that “it would seem that national identity can be maintained despite daily use of a foreign
language, but that one’s personal identity as a young person is substantially enacted through English rather than Icelandic” (p. 266).

Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson (2009) note that Icelanders are well aware of the pragmatic value of knowing English for people of such a small speech community. Despite that, the growing presence of English in Iceland is believed by many to pose a threat to the Icelandic language as well as the national identity which, as was mentioned above, has triggered a rise in protectionist language policies. They further note that because English has found its way into various domains in Iceland, there have been growing concerns about domain loss, as for instance, in information technology, which they argue “can have serious implications for the transmission of language” (p. 361).

One of the domains that linguists are concerned about is that of lyrics to popular music which has been dominated by English throughout the world since the 1950s (Hilgendorf, 2007). As we saw in a previous section, the major part of music broadcast in Iceland has lyrics in English, with the largest number of artists from Anglophone areas but also many non-native speakers of English, including Icelandic musicians. Through the years, many Icelandic artists have chosen to sing in English, and this preference to use English over Icelandic seems to be increasing, indicating a growing acceptance and positive views towards the use of English amongst artists in the field of popular music. However, this development does not sit well with the safeguards of the mother tongue. In 2008, the Icelandic Language Committee (Íslensk málnefnd) published a report with suggestions for an Icelandic language policy (málstefna). The main goal of the committee was to ensure that Icelandic would be used in all domains within Icelandic society (Ministry of Education, 2008). The authors expressed grave concerns about the increased use of English amongst Icelandic lyricists and the prospects of English becoming a natural and self-evident language to use in Icelandic popular music alarmed the committee (p. 71). In the Jeeves (2015) study mentioned earlier, that elicited young peoples’ attitudes towards English, two of the participants claimed to write lyrics in English and one of them commented that “there’s something inside you that makes you write music in English” (p. 255). This comment indicates that the exposure to English in popular music is having an effect on Icelandic youth when it comes to choosing a language to write their lyrics in to the point that it has become the innate and natural language to use, at least for this participant. Surely, lyricists are very familiar with the form of English lyric writing, given that most of the music broadcast in Iceland is in English which puts the Icelandic language at a disadvantage within the domain. As noted in the report, this development in language choice and use is difficult to control with injunctions and authority,
but the committee urged musicians/lyricists to show more ambition on behalf of the mother tongue. The authors further suggested that lyricists write both Icelandic and English lyrics for their songs and take as paragons the works of the most popular and successful Icelandic lyricists/musicians that sing chiefly in Icelandic (p. 71). Lastly, the committee points out the need for systematic instruction in creative writing, including the art of writing poetry, in Icelandic schools, to increase the use of Icelandic in popular music (p. 73). Although this may increase lyricists’ confidence in creative writing in Icelandic it must be recognized that lyricists’ reasons for language choice are a much more complicated issue that is probably not only governed by language proficiency.

English pervades many aspects of Icelanders’ daily lives and attitudes seem to be generally positive towards the use of English in Iceland. English is seen as necessary and practical. However, those who are concerned about the future of the Icelandic language may see the increased use of English as a threat to the Icelandic language and culture although they acknowledge the pragmatic value of knowing English at the same time (Hilmarsson-Dunn and Kristinsson (2009). It is likely that young Icelanders to some extent no longer associate English with a particular culture, but see it as a means to access and be a part of the international community and therefore see it as a lingua franca rather than as belonging to a particular people.

2.3 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The English language has spread throughout the globe and, as mentioned earlier, is used/spoken by much greater numbers of non-native speakers than native speakers. Because of how widespread its use is, it has become the preferred language of communication, or a lingua franca, between people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds. The participants of this study, to whom English is a second or a foreign language, thus likely often find themselves using English in a lingua franca situation and are using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in their English lyrics although, depending on their position towards the language, they may also be using English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

In the following sections I will go over what is meant by English as a Lingua Franca, how it is defined, and how it differs from English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Then I will look at how ELF scholars’ views on language use and knowledge differ from those of the traditional prescriptive view on languages.
English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) as defined by Seidlhofer (2011) encompasses “any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often only option” (p. 7, italics in original).

Seidelhofer takes a broader view on ELF than the majority of ELF researchers (Jenkins, 2009) by including both non-native speakers of English as well as native speakers within her definition. As Baker (2015) points out, this is of importance since native speakers of English also participate in intercultural communication and excluding them from research would be leaving out parts of the contexts or situations in which ELF communication occurs. However, as Jenkins (2009) points out, when native speakers of English take part in ELF communication “they do not set the linguistic agenda” (p. 201) but rather, irrespective of the circle of use from which the participants in an ELF communication are, all need to adjust their local English variety to their interlocutors’ needs in order to increase the possibility of a successful communication. Thus, the main objective in ELF communication is not formal correctness and to conform to native speakers’ norms, but effective communication (Hülmbauer, et al., 2008).

English as a Lingua Franca is not an established variety of English but is used in majority by speakers who do not speak an established “variety” of English (Baker, 2015) and often in situations far removed from Anglophone areas or native speakers of English. As mentioned before, English is a pluricentric language, which globally has many different local varieties. Of these varieties, those of the inner circle, as according to Kachru’s model, have tended to be considered by governments, prescriptive grammarians as well as the general public to be the most prestigious varieties. However, most of today’s scholars of “world Englishes”(WE) consider all local varieties that are spoken as a first language or used in communication between local people as legitimate varieties in their own right irrespective of whether those varieties are seen as “standard” or “educated” and where the speakers of those varieties are from (Jenkins, 2009).

When it comes to varieties spoken in the expanding circle where English has the status of a foreign language, Jenkins (2009) points out that those are still considered, even by some WE scholars, to be “learnt English” or “interlanguages” dependent on norms of the language variety used as a model for English instruction within educational institutions. Similarly, ELF, which is used globally mostly by non-native speakers of English who do not share another common language, is generally not considered to be a variety in its own right but assumed to be a “franchised copy of” (Seidlhofer, 2011, loc. 692) native English, a learnt English based on native English speakers’ norms (Seidlhofer, 2011).
ELF scholars have argued that ELF speakers cannot merely be viewed as learners but need to be seen as users of the language although learning may happen incidentally (Hülmbauer, et al., 2008). Along that line Seidlhofer (2011) argues that ELF needs to be accepted as “legitimate use of English in its own right” (loc. 798) and its use and variations researched and described in the same way as has been done widely with other varieties of English that are considered legitimate.

There already exists a considerable body of descriptive work covering various aspects of ELF which are important steps towards making ELF a tangible concept and to work towards the acceptance of ELF “as a legitimate and not a ‘deviant’, linguistic code of intercultural communication” (Hülmbauer, et al., 2008, p. 30). Although it would seem that the main objective of ELF research is to identify or describe ELF as a particular variety of English that is not the case (Baker, 2015) and ELF is generally thought to present too much variation to ever become a variety in its own right (Baker & Jenkins, 2015 cited in Baker, 2015). What ELF research is more concerned with is the “variable use of English in intercultural communication” (Baker, 2015, p. 6), that is, the contextual use of the language. ELF scholars thus consider language use to be a social practice, and that languages must be researched from that point of view and not as discrete systems that have clear boundaries or distinct varieties (Baker, 2015). I will return to this point later but first I will turn to the distinction ELF scholars make between ELF and EFL (English as a Foreign Language).

2.3.1 ELF vs. EFL

ELF scholars make a clear distinction between the use of English as Lingua Franca and as a Foreign Language. The fundamental argument for the distinction is that deviations from native speakers’ norms in English language speech amongst speakers of ELF and EFL do not hold the same status because of the different lingua-cultural contexts in which the deviations occur (Jenkins, 2009). ELF is used for intercultural communication in contexts often far removed from native speakers of English where the main objective is successful communication. In that context, the ability to accommodate one’s speech to the needs of one’s interlocutor, for instance, by code-switching, paraphrasing and repetition is of more importance than using correct language forms. Therefore, in that sociolinguistic reality inner circle linguistic norms become irrelevant (Jenkins, 2009) and instead of being taken as errors they might be considered as legitimate variants of ELF (Cogo, 2010).
Conversely, in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the kind of deviations that occur in ELF situations would be considered errors surging from the speakers’ interlanguages. In EFL settings, the learners and users of English are encouraged to follow the lingua-cultural norms of the particular variety of English they are learning/using and to strive for near-native competence. That is, the learner/user is supposed to accept the native speakers’ “authority as distributors of their language” (Seidlhofer, 2011, loc. 647). Those who ascribe to this model, Seidlhofer (2011) explains, are likely to have particular interest in the community where the variety they are learning is spoken “and wish to identify with the community that speaks it, for instance because they love the literature, have friends there or because they want to study in or emigrate to a country where English is a dominant/majority/official language” (loc. 649). In this setting, it is likely that the non-native speaker will try to follow the lingua-cultural norms of the target variety (Seidlhofer, 2011). What must be noted is that speakers can find themselves in both these situations at different times depending on the context. Essentially, it comes down to how individuals positions themselves in relation to the English language, that is, their aspirations and attitudes towards the language and its use determines whether they are using the language as a foreign language or a lingua franca. In that light, the lyricists can be using English as a Lingua Franca and as a Foreign Language when using English for their lyrics. For instance, they can be using English as a lingua franca to reach a wider audience, that is, to be understood by all those who understand English. However, during the process of writing their lyrics, they can use English as a Foreign Language by conforming to the linguistic norms of native speakers of some pre-established variety and using them as their model.

2.3.2 English as a Lingua Franca; a social practice

The Icelandic lyricists’ reasons for language choice are surely not only governed by language systems and proficiency and therefore the bigger context in which these language choices are made needs to be investigated. To that end, it is useful to adopt the view ELF scholars take on language use as a social practice. As mentioned above, ELF researchers do not view languages as discrete systems with clear boundaries or varieties but rather as a social practice (Baker, 2015). This is a usage-based perspective that sees “language knowledge as an inherently dynamic set of patterns of use which, in turn, is subject to a variety of stabilizing influences that are tied to the constancy of individuals’ everyday lived experiences, and more generally, to more encompassing societal norms that value stability”
(Hall, et al., 2006, p. 229). Thus, the starting point for ELF research is the social activity or the context in which communication occurs rather than the linguistic code/s being used. From this point of view terms like interlanguage, transfer, interference and shift, that have been used to describe the cross-linguistic influences that one linguistic system has on another, become irrelevant (Hall, et al., 2006). Instead it becomes useful to refer to an individual speaker’s language knowledge as the language resources available to that speaker to express himself or as his linguistic repertoire.

The term linguistic repertoire is used instead of the dichotomy of native and non-native speaker and “dispenses with a priori assumptions about the links between origins, upbringing, proficiency and types of languages” (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). By adopting this term the much-contested idea of the idealized native speaker is abandoned and focus is set on the “individuals’ very variable (and often rather fragmentary) grasps of plurality of differentially shared styles, register and genres” (Blommaert & Backus, 2011, cited in Blommaert & Rampton, 2011, p. 4). Individuals’ linguistic repertoire includes all language knowledge a person may have acquired through their lifetime whose knowledge of the languages within the repertoire is never “‘complete’ or ‘finished’: all of them are partial, ‘truncated’, specialized to differing degrees, and above all dynamic” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 29). This includes “the ‘mother tongue’, that mythical finished-state language spoken by the ‘native speaker’ of language-learning literature” (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, p. 29).

The linguistic repertoire of an average Icelander that has gone through the Icelandic school system would then include Icelandic, English, Danish and most likely a bit of Spanish, German or French. Within those languages, an individual speaker may be comfortable with different genres within each language. A speaker might be more comfortable speaking in Spanish about his vacation than for example carpentry, or more comfortable with everyday conversational language than academic language in his L1. Of the foreign languages, English stands out as the language Icelanders are most likely to also encounter outside of educational institutions in their daily lives because of its great presence in Iceland and its widespread use as an ELF in intercultural communication and technology. By considering the fact that Icelandic radio stations broadcast much music in English, Icelanders may well believe themselves to be comfortable with writing lyrics in English because their knowledge of that genre may form a large part of their linguistic repertoire.

ELF research is concerned about the contextual use of language and how speakers work together towards successful communication by drawing on the languages in their linguistic
repertoires. Now, when it comes to lyrics writing this dialogue between interlocutors is absent or in a sense delayed and thus, it becomes unclear whether the participants’ lyrics writing can be said to be ELF communication and to what extent their lyrics writing is governed by native English speaker models. What is clear though, is that Icelandic lyricists, when using English in their lyrics, are making use of a language in their linguistic repertoire that they are most likely to share with much greater numbers of people globally than by using any other language in their repertoire. Thus, by using English they are making their voice and message accessible to a wider audience, and from that point of view, they are using English as a Lingua Franca.

2.4 ELF and linguistic identity construction

The concepts language and identity have an intimate relationship, and the one can hardly be separated from the other. Because of that, it is of importance to look at how identity is tied to and constructed through the use of different languages in the lyricists’ repertoires. In this section, I will look at research on identity construction amongst speakers/learners of English in the expanding circle. First I will define the concept of identity and then turn to identity construction in ELF situations as discussed from the dichotomy of “language of identification” and “language of communication”. After that, I will look at identity construction in relation to language ideologies and the notion of ownership of the language. Lastly, I will have a look at the musical industry and English use in relation to identity.

2.4.1 Linguistic Identity

The view taken on identity in this study is in line with the view on language presented above, that is, the construction of identities can be seen as social actions that are ever changing according to the contexts in which they occur. This is a poststructuralist view that, as Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) note, makes it possible to study and describe how identities are negotiated “within larger socioeconomic, sociohistorical, and socio-political processes” (p. 3). In that view, speech acts can be understood from the context of the social structures in which they occur and how that context influences the identity negotiation. According to the poststructuralist framework, identity is not a stable phenomenon but “constructed, negotiated, and transformed in discourse, for example, in social interactions with other people in society” (Buchotz & Hall, 2005, cited in Sung, 2014, p. 44). From that
perspective, identities change over time and different contexts and are closely connected to the way “people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, p. 410; Norton, 2000). Thus, according to the poststructuralist view, there is no stable core identity or personhood but identities are “rather more superficial, plastic and manipulable” (Bendle, 2002).

2.4.2 Language of communication or language of identification

The manner in which non-native speakers of English construct their identity and on which culture their identity is based has been discussed by ELF scholars. Researchers have found Hüllen’s (1992) dichotomy of “language of identity” and “language of communication” helpful concepts when discussing identity construction in ELF contexts. Hüllen’s dichotomy is described by Knapp (2008, cited in Fiedler, 2011) as follows:

A “language of communication” is used for practical communicative purposes, and due to its primary functional nature, correctness or particular stylistic and cultural features associated with the speech community from which this language originates are less important. On the other hand, “language of identification” means a language which is learnt in order to be integrated into and identify with the respective speech community. (p. 133)

Building on Hüllen’s (1992) dichotomy both House (2003) and Pölzl (2003) argue that in ELF communication English is used as a “language of communication”. House (2003) argues that in ELF contexts English is “bereft of collective cultural capital, […] usable neither for identity marking, nor for a positive (‘integrative’) disposition toward an L2 group, nor for a desire to become similar to valued members of this L2 group – simply because there is no definable group of ELF speakers” (p. 560). She further remarks that it is unlikely that ELF speakers perceive ELF as a language for identification exactly because it is not the speakers’ local language or L1 that carries “the collective linguistic-cultural capital that defines the L1 group and its members” (p. 560). Along the same line, Pölzl (2003) argues that English, when used in lingua franca situations, is a “native-culture-free” code. By that she means that in ELF situations the language is not used in reference to some native English speakers’ culture but yet it is not bereft of cultural references that signal identity. She notes: “ELF users have the freedom to either create their own temporary culture, to partly ‘export’ their individual primary culture into ELF or to reinvent their cultural identities by blending into other lingua-
cultural groups” (p. 5). Primary culture according to Pölzl (2003) is a culture which the speakers sense they belong to, that they share an ethnic origin with. The language spoken in that primary culture then serves as a language for identification. However, she also notes that the languages spoken by groups of people that come together through special shared interests or knowledge can also function as languages of identification. She calls this “situational culture”, but we can also refer to it as “communities of practice”.

Pölzl’s study from 2003 supports her line of argument. In that study, she analysed a small corpus of naturally occurring discourse in an ELF setting in order to investigate the idea of keeping one’s voice in ELF situations. Her findings show that ELF speakers activate their cultural identity and group membership by inserting words and expressions from their L1 or their co-participants’ L1 into the conversation. Further, in those ELF interactions, according to Pölzl, the English used is bereft of its native English cultural and symbolic functions and is merely used as a communicative tool. Pölzl concludes that ELF users can indeed keep their voice (primary cultural identity) in ELF situations.

More recently Fiedler (2011) has contested the notion of English lingua franca being a “native-culture-free code”. She raises the question whether English, that pervades people’s lives in the expanding circle in so many aspects of their daily life (education, work and leisure time), can possibly be used without reference to its cultural roots. She notes that it is odd to state that English can be used without any reference to its origin to construct identity because of how heavily German lives are influenced by Anglo-American culture through, for instance, popular culture, the school system (English is taught as a language of identification in schools through books produced in the inner circle) and because people often incorporate English catchphrases in their L1 talk to signal identity. Fiedler studied the use of phraseological units in ELF communication which she notes are generally thought to be bound to the culture from which they originate (Sabban, 2007, cited in Fiedler, 2011). Fiedler found that in ELF communication speakers signal identity in three ways through the use of phraseological units; by drawing on English native cultures’ specific phraseological units, by inserting phraseological units from their own native culture and by the use of ELF-specific phraseological units. Furthermore, the use and origin of phraseology at any time depends on the speakers’ communicative needs. Thus, Fiedler’s study suggests that ELF is not a “native-culture-free code” but that identity construction for ELF speakers is a more complex and mixed process that can include English native cultural references.

Fiedler’s argument is in line with what Pennycook (2007) has called “transcultural flow”. In Pennycook’s (2007) view the relationship between language and culture is always in...
constant tension, that is, “caught between fluidity and fixity” and that “cultural and linguistic forms are always in a state of flux, always changing, always part of a process of the refashioning of identity” (p. 8). Similarly, Baker (2011) notes that the cultural references that surge in ELF communication “are dynamic, fluid and emergent and move between the local, national and global in complex and liminal ways” (p. 42). Baker’s (2011) research on seven proficient speakers of English in Thailand that investigated when and how cultures and identities are expressed through ELF in an expanding circle setting supports that view. The research is qualitative and ethnographic and includes recordings of intercultural communication with both non-native and native speakers as well as interviews with the participants where they discuss that intercultural communication in which they had engaged on the recordings. Further, the data included the participants’ general discussion of their experiences of learning and using English. The findings show that the participants “demonstrate using ELF to express and construct individual, local, national and global cultures and identities in dynamic, hybrid and emergent ways” (p. 46). Thus, Baker notes that ELF communication is not culturally impoverished, as he found that the participants of the study made use of both local and more global cultural references. Nor, he notes, is it identity neutral for the extent to which the participants reported English to be a part of their identity formation, which suggests that English plays just as big a role in their linguistic identity as it would for speakers of English in the outer circle. As Baker rightly points out, the findings show that the already hazy line between the outer and expanding circle becomes further obscured. That supports the argument made by scholars such as Pennycook (2008) that language knowledge and use should not be looked at in terms of borders (as in Kashru’s model) but in terms of contextual use. Baker further argues that the re-conception he presents in his paper of the relationship between language, culture and identity calls for new approaches to English language instruction that replaces the native speaker model with the more relevant one of the multilingual and multicultural speaker.

As previously discussed the present study has taken a view on identity as ever changing which suggests that there is no stable core identity but that identities are constantly refashioned and constructed throughout a person’s life. In a study conducted by Phan (2007), this view on identity is both challenged and reaffirmed. Phan (2007), in her study on Vietnamese-English teachers, found that her participants as users of English can take on multiple identities through the language, that are dynamic and ever-changing but are held together with and negotiated in reference to their more stable L1 identity or place-based identity. This place-based identity, she notes, is the participants’ shared cultural and national
identity which is asserted through mobilisation. Phan’s findings therefore suggest that with language of identification, which, as Pölzl (2003) argues, is the language used in the speakers’ primary culture to which the speakers have a sense of belonging to, also comes a more stable identity that to a degree dictates and holds together identities that a speaker may construct through their use of other languages.

Although an important defining factor for a language to function as a “language of identification” has been seen to be the language’s connection to the user’s primary culture, Pölzl (2003) also argues that the languages used in what she calls “situational cultures” can take the role of “language of identification”. With “situational culture” she refers to contexts where people come together because of shared interests or knowledge. These contexts can involve people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds and the chosen language is then potentially used as a lingua franca but can also function as a language to identify with that group or community. This context of language use can also be called “communities of practice”. Wenger (2004, cited in Hülmbauer, et al. 2008) identified three features that characterize “communities of practice”: “(1) mutual engagement in shared practices, (2) taking part in some jointly negotiated enterprise, and (3) making use of members’ shared repertoire” (p. 28). If those defining factors of “communities of practice” are applied to the practice of lyrics writing in English by international musicians (both native and non-native speakers) it could loosely be perceived as a “community of practice” as the lyrics writers are participating in a global shared practice of lyrics writing in English that, although not so easily negotiated globally, can possibly be negotiated in smaller localized or online communities. Further, the extensive body of lyrics that has been and is currently being produced can be seen as a shared linguistic repertoire that they can draw from. Thus, it may be that for non-native musicians/lyricists, if they identify with the international English speaking music “community”, English can possibly serve as a “language of identification” when it comes to writing lyrics and performing.

2.4.3 Identity construction in ELF, ideology and ownership of the language

Other studies that focus on ELF contexts and touch upon identity construction have mainly focused on the relationship between identity and language ideologies and the questions of the legitimate speaker and ownership of the language. According to Jenkins (2007) language ideologies in relation to language attitudes and linguistic identity are closely connected phenomena. She argues that even in ELF setting, where there is no native speaker around,
ELF speakers seem to be influenced by native speaker ideologies. She describes this linguistic power that native speakers have over non-natives as “an ideological undercurrent that quietly pervades most aspects of ELT […] acts as a constraint on learner/teacher choice, and is realized in practice as (often) voluntary deference to a supposedly superior NS linguistic competence” (p. 194). This native speaker ideology that pervades the English teaching classrooms then seems to continue to have an effect on speakers in ELF contexts even though there is no native speaker present.

Silverstein (1979) defines “ideology” as a “set of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193, cited in Cogo, 2012b, p. 238). The beliefs Silverstein talks about are the products of the history of the language variety in question, the history which makes it a legitimate standard (Cogo, 2012b). Cogo (2012b) explains that “[t]he history of a certain nation and certain people legitimises the creation, of fixation, of a standard from which, therefore, needs to be preserved and protected by those same people, i.e. the native speaker” (p. 237). She goes on to say that the native speakers are then those “who alone have the authority to change it” (Cogo, 2012b, p. 252). But the prominence given to homogenization, uniformity and stability inherent in the ideology of standardisation does have its downsides as Cogo (2012b) points out because it “contributes to creating difference, as it stigmatises certain speakers, [and] increases separation and otherization” (p. 252). Further, it “limits creativity or confines creativity within the boundaries of standard (and monolingual) speakers” (Cogo, 2012b, p. 252).

The non-standard use of forms in ELF settings goes counter to native English norms or ideology. These negative attitudes toward the use of “incorrect” forms are also very present and apparent in a lot of the teaching material that is available in the Expanding Circle countries (Jenkins, 2009). Jenkins (2009) argues that the native English speaker ideology both in teaching material and from the supporters of the ideology is influencing both teachers and learners in the Expanding Circle.

Important in relation to this discussion is the notion of ownership of the language and the legitimate speaker. Norton (1997) argues that the question of ownership of the language is very much relevant to language and identity. Using Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of the legitimate speaker in relation to second language learning of English he notes that learners may not be able to consider themselves legitimate speakers of English if they cannot claim ownership of the language. Brumfit, (2001, cited in Seidlhofer, 2007, loc. 256) takes the notion of ownership to mean “the power to adapt and change” a language and that this power
lies in the hands of those who use it irrespective of whether they are native or non-native speakers. In that sense, in order to take ownership of a language, non-native speakers must consider themselves to have authority to appropriate the language as according to their communicative needs and desires which then may include to deviate from norms that are dictated by native speaker ideologies. Phan (2009) explains that appropriation “opens up spaces for the Other to develop positively and equally in relation to the Self” (p. 204). She further notes that in contexts where English is used as an international language (or a lingua franca) “appropriation is specifically related to how the Other actively and comfortably use English as their tongue” (p. 204). Thus, non-native speakers who appropriate English also tend to construct a positive identity as users of English. Through appropriation, they have taken ownership of the language.

In this view, if Icelandic lyrics writers cannot consider themselves to be legitimate speakers/users of English, they may prefer not to use English or strive to have their lyrics as close to what would be called native-like (influenced by native speaker language ideology) because they may feel they lack the authority to appropriate the language for their own purposes, needs or artistic expression.

In Jenkins’s (2007) study the issue of the legitimate speaker and identity is addressed. In her study on mostly young English language teachers of different L1 backgrounds in the expanding circle and their attitudes towards English accents she found that identity construction is an important factor for non-native speakers of English. Even though many of the study participants felt that they needed to attain “near-native” accents in order to see themselves, and to be seen by others, as successful learners or teachers of English (Jenkins, 2009), thus ascribing to the native speaker standard ideology, they also felt the need to project their own personal and national identity through their English accent (Jenkins, 2007). Jenkins suggests that in order to overcome these inner identity struggles the teachers would have to change their mindsets and look at themselves as successful multilingual speakers that are instructors of English as an international language (EIL) and not as failed natives teaching a certain English variety that they haven’t been able to master.

Another study that shows how ideology can influence attitudes towards English accents was conducted in Norway. Rindal (2014) studied Norwegian teenagers’ attitudes towards English accents in an EFL setting and found that the largest part of the students aimed towards an American English accent although Standard Southern British English was deemed to be the most prestigious and kept its seat as the teaching standard of formal English.
Interestingly, some students were aiming for a “neutral” accent, neither American nor British, an accent that did not convey the social meanings of a certain culture or people of a particular native English variety. Rindal suggests that the reason that some of the teenagers preferred to avoid using Standard English accents may be due to the prevalent language ideology in Norway that questions standard language norms. She notes that “Norwegians are accustomed to considerable dialectal variation, and there is no explicit standard spoken variety in the form of a determined socially accepted linguistic variety” (p. 330). Because there is no self-evident language standard in Norway, Rindal notes that the teenagers might not feel that there is much need for a standard in their L2 either. Her findings also suggest that English is in a way personal to the Norwegian teenagers and that there are social considerations both in their target language as well as in their first language. She further points out that the native speaker language model for accents that is used in EFL is problematic and focus should be put on teaching students about language variation and the different values placed on language varieties at different times and in different places. This, she argues, “would encourage the development of L2 confidence and ownership, and ultimately lead to increased language proficiency” (p. 332). Rindal’s argument resonates with that of Jenkins (2007) in the way it stresses the importance of acceptance of variation in English language instruction and use as well as that users do not need to succumb to standard language ideologies to become successful users of English.

A third study that also supports this argument was conducted by Virkkula and Nikula (2010) who found that a stay in an ELF environment removed from English educational context can have positive effect on learners of English and their perception of themselves as foreign language speakers. Virkkula and Nikula studied identity construction amongst seven Finnish engineering students and users of English before and after a period spent in Germany (4-6 months). In Finland, the students’ use of English was strictly bound to educational contexts while in Germany the students used English as a lingua franca with other students of various origins. The purpose of the study was to investigate how a stay abroad would affect the students’ perception of themselves as users of foreign languages and English in particular. The students were interviewed before and after their stay, and great changes were found in their perception of themselves between the interviews. In the former interviews the students were concerned about the correct use of language and pronunciation and lacked courage to speak, they tended to express a negative learner identity that focused on inadequacies and shortcomings. Conversely, after their stay their confidence had grown and they could see themselves as legitimate speakers of lingua franca English taking on ELF users’ identities.
that were distanced from the norms of native speakers. They had in their way taken ownership of the language which they had found impossible within the educational context in Finland, and their identity had shifted from a learner to a user. The findings suggest that there does exist a complex relationship between identity and ELF. The authors note that the implications of the findings are that in educational settings students need to be offered the chance to see themselves as multicompetent speakers instead of failed natives as well as to develop their own identities as international users of English.

From these studies it can be seen that language ideology seems to influence users’ attitudes towards English and also to affect how they see themselves and want to be seen by others; that is their identity. However, as Cogo (2012a) points out, “[o]pinions towards ELF or other different ways of speaking English are already changing, and though still heavily influenced by identity and ideology […], they seem to be moving towards appreciation of diversity and feelings of ownership of English” (p. 103).

2.4.4 Musicians, ELF and identity construction

Very little research is available on identity construction amongst non-native speakers of English in the music industry except for research that focuses on rap music and the hip-hop culture. Rap music forms a part of a cultural movement (hip-hop) that originates in African-American culture which has become global. Local rap scenes (e.g. Japan, Germany, and Iceland) have their distinctive features that are influenced by the American hip-hop scene as well as the local realities. Further, in rap lyrics the English is particular to that used in hip-hop culture and is often refashioned and mixed with the speakers’ native languages. According to Pennycook (2003), in these kinds of situations where languages and cultures are being mixed and refashioned, the simple view of English as merely a language for international communication and the local languages as the languages for identification cannot account for the complexity of what is going on in these contexts of English use. He further introduces the concept of performativity that “questions the notion of prior, pre-given identities. It is not that people use language varieties because of who they are, but rather that we perform who we are by (amongst other things) using varieties of language […] English is used to perform, invent and (re) fashion identities across borders” (Pennycook, 2003, p. 528). In this view, all uses of language are acts of identity.

Hilgendorf (2007) and Grau (2009) discuss shortly and outline the language environment in the field focusing on German artists, but no attention is given to identity. Hilgendorf notes
that a probable reason for non-native pop musicians choosing to use English in their lyrics is because of the history of its use in that field in the same way as Italian, French or German are commonly more used in operas than English. She quotes a German singer and songwriter who says she uses English because it is more flexible and it is easier to express oneself in English; reasons which Hilgendorf judges to be more due to the genre-specific use of English in the field "rather than any intrinsic linguistic qualities" (p. 140). Grau (2009) notes that German music groups are increasingly switching to German instead of English despite the obvious benefit of being able to reach a global audience when singing in English. She takes an example from an interview with a German band that states that the reasons for their switching to German were that they believed that they could write better songs in German than English because they lacked English proficiency and did not want to write more lyrics "based on school-English and formulaic language" (p. 163). The reason for the lack of research on English use amongst non-native musicians may be due to the apparent "obvious" reasons for their language choice, that is, as Hilgendorf mentions, that it is the genre-specific language and English is simply used for international communication, to reach a global audience. Further, because of how diverse these musicians are it makes it difficult to pinpoint them to a certain culture or ideals that they may be identifying with (unlike rap music).

The focus of the present study is on musicians that choose to use English instead of their native language and do not form a part of a particular cultural movement. This is a wide and ill-definable group but it would seem that the dichotomy of English as a language for communication and local languages for identification might be helpful precisely because the English language seems to be taken up as a mere tool for communication to reach a global audience and not used in a particular fashion as according to a specific cultural movement. The goal of this study is to get a deeper understanding of the various reasons Icelandic musicians/lyricists choose to use English over their native tongue and to provide some insight into how their language choice affects or is affected by their identity. For that purpose these three research questions were developed:

- Has English become the language Icelandic lyricists and musicians prefer?
- What are the underlying reasons for their choice of language?
- How is their linguistic identity affected and constructed through their choice of language?
3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to answer the question whether English is becoming the language Icelandic lyricists and musicians prefer, to identify the underlying reasons for their choice of language and to get an insight into how their linguistic identity is affected and constructed through their choice of language. To attain information and data Icelandic lyricists were contacted and interviewed.

This is a qualitative study with nine musicians and lyricists who write lyrics in Icelandic, English or both languages. The participants were interviewed and asked various questions regarding their background, their language proficiency, their attitudes towards English and Icelandic as well as their reasons for choosing one language over the other (or both). All interviews were analysed, coded, and common themes identified. Implications of the findings are discussed.

In this chapter the sampling, the participants, the question framework and the interviews are described. Further, the analysis and theme identification are described.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 Participant population

The participants for this study had to meet certain criteria. They had to be Icelandic and living in Iceland as well as to work as a musician/lyricist writing lyrics for their own projects. The reason they had to be writing for their own projects is that the goal was to get insight into personal reasons for the choice of language and if the lyricist were writing for someone else, their personal choice may not have been the same. That is, the lyricist would have had to comply with the wishes of the musician and perhaps not have had a say in which language to use.

At the outset the participants were to represent different age groups or generations of lyricists. However when considering how few interviews were to be conducted in this research I decided that it would be beneficial for the study to narrow the focus to the younger generations. The age criterion thus became lyricists younger than 40. However, in order to get some insight from the lyricists they needed to have considerable experience and a produced record with their own lyrics, thus the participants needed to have written lyrics for
at least two records to be considered for the pool. This narrowed the potential participant group further down and left out the youngest lyricists who are starting out.

One last criterion was that the pool of participants had to have representatives of three different categories: those who write only in Icelandic; those who write only in English; and those who write in both languages. At the outset the study was to include six interviews with two representatives, a man and a woman, from each group. In the end nine interviews were conducted (five men, four women) and during the interviews it became clear that most often the participants had had some experience with writing in both languages.

3.2.2 Access to the community – finding participants

The first step was to make a list from memory of potential bands and solo artists that might come into consideration as participants. Further ideas arose from discussion with friends and searches on musical websites such as Tónlist.is and by searching on Facebook. The making of the list was intertwined with and helped by Gegnir.is, which gives access to the Icelandic national catalogue of library information. Icelandic publishers are required by law to hand in copies of all material they produce to the National and University Library of Iceland (Jónsdóttir, 2009). Therefore, the library has the greater part of CD’s and records produced in Iceland listed in their catalogue. The information given on the CD covers and accompanying booklets is listed in the catalogue and most often this includes information about the lyricists. The access to this information made the search for potential participants for the study much easier, for it helped determine who the main lyricist of a band or a solo artist was. Other websites such as artists’ Facebook sites, official websites, Tónlist.is and other websites with music and information about the lyricists’ projects were looked at with the objective to find more information about language choice and use in order to determine which languages he/she used in their writing in case not all was included on Gegnir.is. The lyricists were then listed according to which language or languages they used. However, it often became clear in the interviews that this background investigation had not yielded sufficient information and most often, as before mentioned, the lyricists had written in both languages.

Contact information such as e-mail addresses and phone numbers were acquired through Facebook, official artists’ websites and from family and friends. In the end it was my personal decision who should be contacted from that list and that decision was based on the criteria discussed above.
3.2.3 Participants in the study

The participants’ pool consisted of five men and four women. All are Icelandic, live in Iceland and have years of experience working as musicians and writing lyrics for their own projects. Two had written lyrics in English, six in both English and Icelandic and one in Icelandic. Thus, they all met the criteria developed for the study.

The participants were given the pseudonyms Gunna, Kristín, Helgi, Kalli, Hrefna, Anna, Kristján and Fannar. Their age range was eleven years, the youngest participant was 28 years old and the oldest 39 years old. The average age was 34. In order to better hide the participants’ identity the age of each participant is not revealed. See table 1 below for individual details.

### Table 1 Characteristics of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Language of lyrics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunna (pilot)</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristín</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Icelandic (bilingual; English)</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helgi</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalli</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrefna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Icelandic (bilingual; English)</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristján</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannar</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jónas</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English &amp; Icelandic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.4 Making contact with participants

Participants were reached by various routes. Two were reached through personal contacts (third party) and after that contacted by me through e-mail and by phone. Two were first contacted by phone, one through Facebook and others were reached by e-mail. Contact
information was found on Facebook sites, artists’ websites or given by family and friends. None of the participants were personally known by me.

All who were contacted were willing to participate and in most cases it proved simple to arrange the time and to meet for the interview. Two of the participants contacted who had agreed to participate in the study were not interviewed due to their failure to answer my e-mails when trying to find time to do the interview. Therefore, other participants from the list were sought out and interviewed.

3.3 Interviews

A total of 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted with five men and four women. Interviews were guided by a set of prepared open-ended guiding questions. The questions touched upon different issues including language proficiency (How proficient do you believe yourself to be in these languages (English and Icelandic)?), and identity (In what language do you think you can best be yourself when writing lyrics?). The interviews were transcribed verbatim shortly after the interview, in most cases the same day or the following day, which was then followed by an analysis and common themes were identified. The interviews were conducted in Icelandic and parts of them have been translated to English for the purpose of giving examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 Length of interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunna (Pilot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristín</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helgi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrefna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristján</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jónas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All interviews were conducted in the fall of 2015 from 11 September – 29 October and range in length from 29 minutes to 53 minutes. The average length of interviews is 42 minutes.

### 3.3.1 Interview question framework

The interview question framework that was developed had four main parts:

- background questions;
- questions regarding language and language choice and the various factors that can possibly influence that choice;
- questions regarding identity in relation to language and the importance of the languages to the participants;
- general questions regarding Icelandic lyricists’ language choices.

The question framework can be found in Appendix A, in Icelandic, and Appendix B, in English.

The main focus of the background questions was on language, language education and the participants’ perceived knowledge of the languages they knew. They were for example asked what language was their first language (question 2), how old they were when they first began learning English (question 6), and how many English courses they took at secondary school (question 7). These questions were intended to give an insight into how much English the participants had learnt and where they had learnt it, in Iceland or abroad, and how proficient they believed themselves to be in the languages they knew, particularly English.

Next collection of questions explored issues related to writing lyrics and factors that could influence language choice. The participants were asked which language they wrote lyrics in and why (questions 11 and 12). To shed a further light on their reasons for language choice the participants were also asked if they wrote for a particular market or audience (question 16).

A number of questions were intended to give insight into identity issues related to language choice such as in which language they thought they could best be themselves and best express their thoughts when writing lyrics (question 13 and 15) and if they thought knowing English had become part of being Icelandic. Two questions were intended to elucidate the importance the participants gave the two languages, and if and how that value or significance differed (question 8 and 9): One question was added to the question framework relating to identity after the first two interviews had been taken. The question was: Someone
said to me that writing in English gave oneself more peace or one was not quite oneself. What do you think of that assertion (question 14)? Another question was asked that is also relates to identity as well as to language proficiency: Are there any topics that you find more difficult or easier to write about in English or Icelandic (question 20)? Two questions were asked to get an insight into where from they draw their inspiration and ideas, and the main topics of their lyrics. This was to shed a light on the cultures or language/s they take their inspiration from and whether their choice of topics was more local or global. A further question was asked about which culture they thought they reflected in their lyrics, to give insight into what culture they considered themselves to be part of or represent, whether it be local, western, global or something else.

The interview closed with two questions of a more general nature, asking about the future of lyrics writing in Iceland in relation to language choice and their attitude towards increased use of English amongst Icelandic lyricists.

The question framework deliberately touched on various issues as to give a holistic insight into the different factors and reasons for language choice amongst the participants.

When designing the questions I took care to have them open-ended to avoid yes and no answers although one of the questions was a closed question. Despite the question being a closed question the participants’ answers were most often extensive as they were given time to consider their answer or probed for more detailed answer. The question framework was not revealed to participants before the interview.

3.3.2 Characteristics of interviews

The interviews were all conducted one-on-one in Icelandic, my first language as well as all of the participants’. The interviews took place at various locations such as at private homes, in secluded areas of coffee houses and restaurants as well as through skype. All face-to-face interviews were recorded with a voice recorder app on a smartphone and the Skype interviews were recorded with the voice recorder application Pamela as well as with the smartphone app in case the other recording would fail. All participants were given pseudonyms, for I assumed the participants, who are all known in Iceland, would be more likely to express themselves freely under a pseudonym, free from concerns about being judged for their opinions or reasons.

The interviews ranged from 29 minutes to 53 minutes in length. The shortest interview was so because the first few questions, for some reason or other, were not recorded. The
answers to those questions where written up according to memory the same day and the participant was asked to confirm one point of uncertainty that was of importance to the research. The shortest interview besides that one was 36 minutes. See table 2 above for a breakdown of the interviews’ duration.

All interviews followed the same pattern, beginning with small talk, moving on to a short presentation of myself and the study/research and the reasons for it. I mentioned that the interview would take about 40 minutes and then asked for permission to record the interview which was a request already known to the participants for it had also been mentioned in prior communication. Lastly, before the interview began, all participants were given the chance to choose a pseudonym which most chose not to do.

In all interviews the questions were asked in the same order. When it came to questions that participants had already given answers to in prior questions the questions were usually asked again, in some interviews questions were inadvertently skipped and in some cases when the researcher and the participant agreed that the answer to the question had been given we moved on to the next one. Sometimes the questions needed to be reworded depending on which language the participant used in his/her writing. Perhaps it would have been better if the questions would have been designed slightly differently for the participants that wrote only in English or only in Icelandic. The fact is that it was not possible to know whether the participants had only written in one language or not before the interview but the question framework could have been designed to have a variation of each question to be prepared for the unexpected. Occasionally the participants had difficulty understanding what was being asked and in those cases the questions were reworded or explained more explicitly. One question was added to the question framework after the first two interviews had been taken. That question arose from answers and observations made by the first two participants that touched on areas of interest and could deepen the understanding of the issues being investigated. Usually the answers given by participants also opened for new questions that were intended to clarify or further explore the meaning of their answers. Those questions varied between interviews.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

All participants were aware of the purpose of the interviews and gave their consent to use the material for the study. They chose to participate in the study. The interviews were recorded with voice recorders and all participants had been notified of the use of a recorder in
the interview and asked permission. This had also been noted in prior communication through e-mail or phone. Confidentiality and the use of pseudonyms was also noted in both e-mail and phone communication as well as before the recorder was turned on.

3.4 Analysis

After each interview had been taken they were transcribed verbatim. The analysis is based in Grounded Theory by using a thematic coding analysis approach (Glaser, 1992). Before the analysis began few potential categories or codes were listed. They included *audience*, *market*, *importance of English*, *identity* and *knowledge of English*. The first interview was read through and coded into the previously listed codes or new codes were created. The analysis of the following interviews was conducted the same way. After all interviews had been coded, common codes were identified and listed under different themes/categories. As the analysis proceeded, codes and categories were refitted and developed further as new relationships within the data emerged. Connections were made between common themes and relevant and interesting themes were selected for the discussion.

Alongside the coding, memos with reflections, ideas and questions relating to the data findings were written down and later revisited and further developed or discarded. For the final interpretation of the data the memos were useful for giving meaning to the data and to explain and discuss the findings.

Following themes were identified and selected for further discussion:

- **English background and perceived competency**
- **Reasons behind language choice**
  - *Market and audience*
  - *Language proficiency and exposure to English*
  - *The pull of the mother tongue*
- **Identity**
  - *Importance of English and Icelandic*
  - *Multiple identities*
  - *Lyrics translation and identity*
  - *Culture, language and identity*
  - *Has knowing English become a part of being Icelandic?*
- **The future of lyrics writing in Iceland**
Answers to a few of the questions from the question framework were not included in the analysis for those questions were irrelevant to the main discussion. Those questions regarded the process of writing lyrics, inspiration and topics. However, in those cases where the participants’ comments were in any way relevant to the main discussion, their answers were included under other themes in the analysis. In the following chapter relevant themes will be analysed.
4 Results

In this chapter the results of the analysis of the most relevant themes that were identified in the interviews will be presented. All the interviews were taken in Icelandic but the quotes in this chapter have all been translated to English. For free-standing quotes the Icelandic version is given in footnotes. The themes will be analysed in the same order as they appeared in the previous chapter.

4.1 English background and perceived competency

First, several questions were asked about the participants’ backgrounds. The questions were intended to give insight into the participants’ language studies and to verify which language they considered to be their mother tongue. The majority of participants had received all their English education in Iceland. Most of the participants were both unsure of when they had begun learning English as children as well as how many courses they had taken in secondary school.

The participants of the study are between the age of 28 and 39, four women and five men, and all speak Icelandic as a first language. Two participants note that they are bilingual and have English speaking families. Two participants have always lived in Iceland. Three participants have lived abroad but never in an English speaking country except for a short period of time and traveling. Helgi lived abroad for three and a half years and went to an English medium school. Two participants have lived in an English speaking country: Jónas for two and a half years and Hrefna as a young child. A breakdown of participants’ characteristics and English education can be found in table 3 below.

The majority of participants began learning English in primary school between the ages of 10-12. For Hrefna English was her first language until she moved to Iceland, when Icelandic became her primary language, but she attended English group meetings (classes) for bilingual children to maintain her English. Both Hrefna and Kristín note that they were ahead of their peers in English.

Participants were uncertain of how many English courses they took in secondary school. Six participants say they took four to five courses. One participant, Gunna, took three courses. Kristín took five to six courses and Hrefna took all the courses available but could not remember how many they were.
Table 3 Participants’ English background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant name (pseudonym)</th>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Began learning English</th>
<th>English courses in secondary school</th>
<th>Lived in an English speaking country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gunna</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
<td>3 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristín</td>
<td>Icelandic (bilingual; English)</td>
<td>12 years old (already knew English)</td>
<td>5-6 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helgi</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>11 years old</td>
<td>5 courses</td>
<td>No. Went to an English medium school in a foreign country for about 3 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalli</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>4-5 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hrefna (bilingual; English)</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>English was her first language as a young child before she moved to Iceland. She attended English classes for bilingual children.</td>
<td>All courses available</td>
<td>Lived in England as a young child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>8 years old</td>
<td>4 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristján</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>Not sure, was speaking English as a tourist at the age of 11 or 12.</td>
<td>5 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fannar</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>5 courses</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jónas</td>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>12 years old</td>
<td>4-5 courses</td>
<td>Lived in England for 2 ½ years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that all participants have had many years of English education through the Icelandic school system and have surely developed some of their English skills there but we need to keep in mind that English is also learnt outside of educational institutions in Iceland. The English language is very present in Iceland particularly through radio and TV broadcast.
and the internet which is widely used in Iceland and is also dominated by English. In that kind of environment it is likely that the participants have also developed their language skills in their leisure time.

To get a better insight into the participants’ knowledge of English they were asked to evaluate their level of proficiency in the language. Although the participants’ experience with the English language varied substantially, the majority of the participants said their English proficiency was average and two said they were fluent.

Describing their English competency, Helgi and Kristín say they are “fluent” in English. Kristín says that her English is almost on par with her Icelandic and Helgi explains:

I also enjoy speaking English. And I’m, you know, if I can say so myself, I’m like, articulate, you know, it comes easily and, and, just because after my, my time and my years in, in, with English as, as a spoken language I have always practiced it and, therefore been very, been able to express myself very clear and crisply in English. (Helgi)

Other participants say their English is average to rather good and some of them note that they would like to improve their English.

I would like to be able to express myself better. [...] I can speak it [English], but I, you know, I only learnt it, you know, to a certain extent, you know, in secondary school [...] I can write and work in English, but, you know, I often feel like, I often lack, like good, like some business words, or you know like, academic words. (Gunna)

I think my vocabulary is just fine and, my feeling for the language is just fine also. But, but I don’t feel like I’m, I don’t think I’m super good at English, you know, not like those, like those who have lived there [in an English speaking country] their whole life. (Kristján)
Average maybe, or just above average compared to, if one compares oneself to one’s contemporaries. But I’m probably rather poor compared to today’s generation [young Icelanders].

(Jónas)

Hrefna, who is bilingual, notes in regards to her English proficiency that during her upbringing she always had English at the back of her mind, she explains: “though I didn’t know, wasn’t particularly good at, at writing English, or the usage wasn’t, didn’t develop much beyond everyday talk,” and she adds: “I don’t think I’m any better at English than most Icelanders”.

These examples show that they realize that their English abilities are not on par with native speakers and that there is room for improvement. Importantly, even though most do not consider themselves to be fluent or “super good” at English they still seem to be confident enough to write lyrics in English. Two participants note that they had received help with their lyrics from a native speaker. Anna remarks: “He [a native English speaker] helped me with taking my emotions, what I wanted to say, and making it somehow more fluid in English”. These two participants also say that they prefer writing in Icelandic because they know the language better and it is more natural to them. Although only two of the participants mention that they had received help from native speakers with their lyrics it is well possible that other participants also receive help even though they do not mention that.

To sum up, the majority of participants have only learned English in Icelandic schools through secondary school, taking 3-5 courses. Two are bilingual and two attended English medium schools for a few years, one in a European country and the other in England. All participants have Icelandic as their mother tongue in common but their English background and education varies considerably. What is clear though is that all participants have gone through many years of traditional English instruction in Icelandic schools and because they have grown up in Iceland they have probably also been exposed to much English in their free time.

The participants’ own perceived English proficiency varies somewhat; most participants believe their English is average while two say they are fluent. Those who feel they lack proficiency express desire to learn more. Despite that, most of them choose to write in English rather than Icelandic which suggests that they are

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4 Svona miðlungs kannski, eða rétt fyrir ofan miðlung miðað við, ef maður miðar við jafnaldra sina kannski. En er örugglega bara frekar slappur miðað við kynslöðina sem er núna. (Jónas)
comfortable with writing in English although some report that they have received help from native speakers with their lyrics. The participants’ English knowledge is a big part of their linguistic repertoire and it is clear that they cannot be seen as mere foreign or second language learners but need to be considered as successful multicompetent users of the language.

4.2 Reasons behind language choice

To get information on the factors that influence language choice the participants were asked in which language they usually write lyrics and the reasons behind their choice. The participants were also asked what audience and market they were writing for in order to get greater insight into how much influence audience and markets had on their language choice.

Six participants have had some experience with writing lyrics in both languages and three have only written lyrics in either English or Icelandic. The reasons they give for writing in English are various, such as exposure to English, to reach a wider audience and to increase their chances of success. Some write in Icelandic because it is easier while two are insecure about their Icelandic writing skills and therefore prefer to use English. Some of the participants that had previously written in English have turned to writing in Icelandic because they long to write in their first language. Further, translating lyrics is seen as a possible option to suit different markets.

The most salient factors influencing the participants’ language choices have been divided into three subthemes, which are writing for a specific market and audience, language proficiency and exposure to English, and the pull of the mother tongue. The subthemes will be analysed respectively.

4.2.1 Market and audience

The participants were asked if they were writing for any particular audience or were aiming at any particular market. Their general answers to the question about their reasons for language choice are also addressed.

From the participants’ answers it became clear that none of them are trying to reach a certain target audience. However, their language choice is to some extent governed by the target markets. Those markets are the local Icelandic market and the international markets.
Getting into international markets is important for the participants because the Icelandic market is considered to be too small to be able to make a living as a musician.

You know, the market is so small that somehow one can’t, one just can’t make it in Iceland. (Gunna)

It’s difficult to claim that one is thinking about something other than the Icelandic market if one sings in Icelandic, but naturally, of course one longs to do more and one longs to take the music further but how far one can get is very limited when you sing in Icelandic. (Kalli)

Icelandic is considered by the participants to limit their chances of success if they want to get into the international markets while using English will offer them much greater chances.

I want to be able to speak to more people besides Icelanders, it matters to me. I sometimes go abroad to perform, I haven’t done very much of it but I still cling to the hope of, that one can make a real career of making music and, on one’s own terms. (Kristján)

And then some balls started rolling and then I consciously kept on writing in English, you know, so I would have more chance of success abroad. (Anna)

It’s easy to be just like ‘I just find it disgustingly enjoyable to write in English’, but you know, then there’s the fact that if I want to get any airplay abroad then the song can’t be in Icelandic. [...] and if I, in my work abroad then, or you know, it’s practical [to use English]. (Kristín)

As we can see from those comments, Icelandic is considered to be limiting and for those who want to be able to live off of their art the Icelandic market is too small. Therefore, the participants who want to make a living of being musicians will need to take their music further and reach a wider audience and the best way for them to do that is to use English.

5 Þú veist, þetta er samt svo litill markaður að það einhvern veginn maður getur einhvern veginn ekkert, maður meikar það ekkert á Íslandi. (Gunna)

6 það er erfitt að segja að maður sé að hugga um annað en íslenskan markað af maður er að syngja á íslensku, en náttúrulegum auðvitað, auðvitað langar mann að gera meira og mann langar að fara lengra með músíkina þarna, en það er rosa takmarkað hvað maður kemst þegar maður syngur á íslensku. (Kalli)

7 Ëg vil geta talað við fleiri heldur en bara islendinga, það skiptir mig máli. Ëg fer stundum út og spila, það hefur nú ekkert verið eitthvað gríðarlega mikið en Ëg held emþá í vonina að hérma, að maður geti svona gert svona alvöru starfsframa í því að gera tónlist og þá soldið á sínnum eigin forsendum. (Kristján)

8 Svo fóru svona einhverjir boltar að rúlla og þá meðvitað hét eg áfram að skrifaf á ensku, þu veist, til þess að eg ætti meiri móгуleika erlendis. (Anna)

9 það er auðvelt að vera bara, eitthvað svona „mér finnst bara ógeðslega gaman að skrifaf á ensku“, en þu veist, en svo er lika bara staðreyndin sú að ef eg ætla að fá einhverja útvargarppilun í útlöndum það getur lagið ekki verið á íslensku. [...] og ef ég, við mina atvinnu svona úti að þa, eða þu veist, það er svona praktískt. (Kristín)
Icelandic is, however, seen to be better suited for the Icelandic market and to write in Icelandic will open up more doors in Iceland:

Then I feel that now there is so much emphasis on it [to sing in Icelandic] on the radio and you get better opportunities if you sing in Icelandic. (Anna)

After I started singing so much in English my Icelandic audience sort of turned their back on me. I think they may have been offended by me [...] I do admit that, I naturally am maybe writing less for Icelanders if I’m not writing in Icelandic. (Kristín)

Thus, it seems that Icelandic is seen to be better suited for the Icelandic market and give more opportunities locally while English is preferable when the focus is set on foreign markets. Therefore some participants are writing in English because they want to get into foreign markets and some that began writing in English unintentionally kept at it for market reasons. Those who write in Icelandic seem to be focused on the Icelandic market. Icelandic is seen to be limiting and the Icelandic market too small while English is seen as practical and to give greater opportunities.

4.2.2 Language proficiency and exposure to English

Language proficiency and exposure to English are noticeable factors that influence the participants’ language choices. Some participants prefer to write in Icelandic because they feel their English language skills are lacking and surprisingly some write in English because they lack confidence in their Icelandic writing skills.

Most of the participants mention in the interviews that writing in Icelandic comes more naturally to them and is easier for them than English. None of them, however, claims to be very good in Icelandic and feel that they can improve. Fannar says: “I’m probably better [in Icelandic] than many but definitely not good enough”. Despite that for most of them their English is not as good as their Icelandic many of them still prefer to write their lyrics in English which is mostly due to reasons related to market discussed above. Two of the participants however also note that they prefer writing in English because of their lack of

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10 En svo finnst mér bara núna það er verið að leggja svo mikla áherslu á það í útvarpi og þú færð meiri möguleika ef þú eftir aust syndja á íslensku. (Anna)

11 Eftir að ég fór að leggja svo mikla áherslu á það í útvarpi og þú færð meiri möguleika ef þú eftir aust syndja á íslensku. (Kristín)
proficiency or the insecurities they feel when writing in Icelandic as the following excerpts show:

I sometimes feel as if I have a hard time with my Icelandic. I have always been, found it a bit difficult to express myself properly in Icelandic. […] I always find myself to be, often like, insecure about my Icelandic. Still. Just always had some feelings of inferiority in relation to speaking beautiful Icelandic and like, and particularly when I’m composing lyrics and such. (Hrefna)

I wouldn’t even think of starting to write in Icelandic, for example. Often when I’m writing e-mails and such, then it’s like, then I don’t write it quite well enough. I do write better than I did, but I’m often afraid of not being using the language correctly. (Helgi)

Despite having lived in Iceland for the greater parts of their lives these two participants lack confidence when using Icelandic, particularly in their writing. Both of them have gone through the Icelandic education system up through secondary school but Helgi missed out on some years when he was living abroad. They both write their lyrics in English and Helgi says he feels safer when writing in English and that he will never write in Icelandic because of his insecurity when writing Icelandic. Why they are insecure about their Icelandic writing skills leaves one to wonder what the underlying reasons may be. Is it possible that their Icelandic language education was somehow wanting? Or is this perhaps a sign of stage fright caused by society’s demands for good and correct language use? Fannar suggests that the reason for so many Icelandic musicians choose to write in English may be because the pressure of writing well in Icelandic is so high.

And perhaps there’s also another thing to it, in order to write in Icelandic then maybe, maybe you, perhaps you experience feelings of inferiority towards Icelandic, that you need to be very good in Icelandic to be able to write in it. Perhaps some think that way, yes, that they have to be very good in Icelandic. Need to be like Megas in order to be able to write in Icelandic, and therefore do not dare to write in Icelandic, because the requirements are too high. There surely is a certain snobbery within the society and, and yes, so these, these artists perhaps think to themselves ‘yes okay, I don’t think I’m good enough in Icelandic to write in it, even though it’s my mother tongue, so I might just, I’ll write in English

12 Mér líður stundum eins og ég eigi erfitt með íslenskuna. Ég svona hef alltaf verið, átt soldið erfitt með að tjá mig almennilega á íslensku. […] mér finnst ég alltaf soldið, oft svona óörugg með íslenskuna mina. Emmþá sko. Bara alltaf verið með svona minnimáttarkennd gagnvart því að tala fælegt íslenskt mál og svona og sérstaklega þegar ég er að semja texta og svona. (Hrefna)

13 Mér myndi ekki detta í hug að fara að skrifa á íslensku til dæmis. Ég oft þegar ég skrifa e-mail og svona, þá er það svona, þá skrifa ég hana ekki alveg nógu vel. Ég skrifa betur en ég gerði, en ég er oft hræddur um að ég sé ekki að tala rétt mál. (Helgi)
instead and, because I can perhaps be worse there, yes, can perhaps cut me some slack’. So, there isn’t the same snobbery in English as in Icelandic. (Fannar)  

These speculations about the underlying reasons for their language insecurities will be taken up and discussed further in the discussion chapter.

The great exposure to English the participants have experienced is mentioned by four of them as the reason for why they first began writing in English. Because of how present English is and has been in the participants’ lives they note that they began writing their lyrics in English without giving it a second thought. Anna explains it as follows:

It wasn’t a conscious [decision], it was just a teenager expressing herself, and always listening very much to English lyrics and such. It just happened somehow incredibly unintentionally. It wasn’t like I decided to write lyrics in English so everybody could understand because, yes, so this just happened somehow unintentionally. (Anna)  

Helgi, similarly, says:

I don’t exactly choose it [to write in English; ...]. You know I just, I just write better in English. I, I, maybe also one is so much, you know, just everything I read is in English, everything I watch is in English, the majority of, the lion’s share of it you know. It is English and, movies and TV programs and music naturally, music that one grows up with. (Helgi)  

The participants have become so accustomed to listening to music in English that it seems natural to them to write their lyrics in English even though their Icelandic language skills may exceed their English skills. Possibly due to the exposure they also find that the English
language has many qualities over Icelandic when it comes to lyrics writing, the most often mentioned being that the English is more melodious and softer to sing, that English has much more single syllable words and a bigger vocabulary to work from. Icelandic on the other hand is found to be easier because it is their first language and their personal vocabulary much bigger. Despite the fact that Icelandic is their first language, a language reported to come more naturally to them, for many of the participants to begin writing lyrics in Icelandic would need to be a decision they take and an effort they make. Gunnar remarks:

If I would have done it in Icelandic [begun writing lyrics] I would have had to do it incredibly consciously. (Gunna)

The Icelandic is more like an effort which I want, I long to sing in Icelandic. (Anna)

For those participants it would seem that they have become so accustomed to music in English that they feel as they must be proficient enough themselves to write in English. Many of them seem to be and continue writing in English while others find writing in English not rewarding enough because of their lack of proficiency and connection to the language and because of that they turn to writing in Icelandic. This was the case with Anna. She enjoys playing with languages which is easier for her when using Icelandic, she remarks:

I find it very entertaining to play with languages, take out of context and use some metaphors or something like that. I find it, [there are] much greater possibilities for that, or you know, [to] avoid clichés [when writing in Icelandic]. (Anna)

Similarly, Fannar, after having been writing in English, turned to Icelandic because he found it easier and also because he felt that he had more authority to bend the rules of the language because it is his mother tongue:

You have much more authority in Icelandic to do this because you are yourself a part of this language and this history, and you have much more authority to, you are allowed much more. It is somehow, and one feels one is allowed to do whatever. I feel as one needs much

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17 Ef ég ætlaði að gera það á íslensku [skrifa texta] þá hefði ég þurft að gera það ótrúlega meðvitað. (Gunna)
18 Íslenskan er svona meira átak sem ég vil, míg langar að syngja á íslensku. (Anna)
19 Mér finnst [...] mjög skemmtilegt að leika mér með tungumálið (eða tungumál), taka úr samhengi. Og hérna, nota einhverjar svona myndlíkingar eða eitt hvaða svoleiðir. Mér finnst það hérna, lang mestu möguleikarnir í því, eða þú veist einmitt vera ekki í klisjumum. (Anna)
more permission from native English speakers to, to distort, for example, English. But I
don’t need any permission to distort Icelandic because it is my mother tongue. (Fannar) 

Both Anna and Fannar note that they got help from native English speakers with
their lyrics. Anna remarks: “He [a native English speaker] helped me with taking my
emotions, what I wanted to say and make it somehow more fluid in English”. She
further notes that she wants her lyrics to be correct, that is, as according to prescriptive
rules and conventions. For them reaching out to a native speaker for help with their
lyrics shows that they may lack confidence in their ability to write English but it also
shows that they want to follow native speakers’ norms and conventions when using
English and need to have their language use sanctioned by a native speaker’s authority.
As Fannar’s comment above clearly shows, they have not taken ownership (Norton,
1997) of the language as they do not feel they have the authority to bend the rules in
their artistic creations.

As we have seen, language proficiency plays a considerable role when it comes to the
participants’ choices of language. Perhaps most surprisingly, two participants express
insecurities when writing lyrics in Icelandic and therefore prefer to write in English. Another
two participants have turned to writing in Icelandic because that is easier for them. For many
of the participants, to begin writing in Icelandic takes a conscious decision while to begin
writing in English is often done unconsciously. The participants note that this may be due to
the great exposure they have had to music in English. Of those who begun unintentionally to
write lyrics in English most of them have continued writing in English which suggests that
they feel comfortable and proficient enough to use the language. Even though most of the
participants say that writing in Icelandic is easier for them and more natural to them their
English proficiency is at a high enough level for many so they feel comfortable using the
language for their artistic expression.

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20 Þú hefur miklu meira leyfi í íslensku til að gera þetta af því að þú er sjálfur hluti af þessu
tungumáli og þessari sögu, og þú hefur mikð leyfi til þess að, þú mátt miklu meira. Þetta er
einhvern veginn, og manni finnst maður mega gera hvað sem er. Mér finnst maður þurfa miklu
meira leyfi frá enskumælandi fólikí til þess að, til þess að skrumskæla til dæmis ensku. En ég þarf
ekkert leyfi til að skrumskæla íslensku því hún er mitt mðöurnál. (Fannar)
4.2.3 The pull of the mother tongue

When discussing language choice it became clear that many of the participants have tried their hands at writing in both languages and are now either considering to write, or currently writing, in Icelandic. The participants seem to either feel more at home when writing in Icelandic or feel a need or longing to also write in their mother tongue.

Of the six participants who have written in both languages, four are currently writing or want to write in Icelandic. They give different reasons for switching to Icelandic. Jónas says: “I just had so many Ice[landic] texts that I thought were good and worth finishing and I felt that making an Icelandic record was long overdue”. Fannar on the other hand remarks: “Then I went through a period of writing English lyrics and then gave that up and began writing in Icelandic again. It suits me better to write in Icelandic.” For Anna writing in Icelandic is an “effort”: “More recently I just wanted to stop focusing on foreign countries and just concentrate on this, this place [Iceland] and I feel that one connects more strongly with people if one sings in Icelandic”. Hrefna notes: “recently I have, I have longed increasingly to write more in Icelandic”. Gunna, who has only written lyrics in English, notes: “I have written poems in Icelandic and I’m always, you know, the goal is always to, you know, to write a few songs in Icelandic, but, but, you know, I haven’t gotten to it”.

Although the reasons the participants give for switching to Icelandic are various, the common feeling seems to be that writing in Icelandic is something they need to do. They seem to be drawn to their origins and long to write at least some lyrics in Icelandic, or, as for Fannar and Anna, find that Icelandic suits them better. For those writing in Icelandic that still want their music to be heard and their lyrics understood abroad the practice of lyrics translation is an option they consider.

The majority of the participants speak about translating lyrics or writing parallel lyrics for both markets as a possibility for those who are writing in Icelandic and want to take their music abroad as Anna remarks: “So I, then last time I thought, I mean, if I take this record somewhere abroad then I’ll just translate it to English”. Through the years many Icelandic bands have done exactly that, the most recent examples being Ásgeir Trausti and Mammút. In fact, five of the participants have some experience with translating their lyrics either from Icelandic to English or vice versa. Their experience with translating their lyrics and performing the songs is both positive and negative (this will be discussed further in the identity chapter). What is clear is that the participants long and, some prefer, to write in Icelandic, their first language, but they realize that by doing that they are diminishing their chances of being able to live off of their work. But partly because they see it as a possibility
to translate their lyrics to English when and if they want to take their music abroad they allow themselves to write in their mother tongue.

4.2.4 Summary

Language choice seems to be predominantly driven by market considerations. Although the participants are not focusing on any particular market the participants realize that English is the language that will open doors for them internationally and increase their chances of making a living from their art. The participants find that Icelandic will not get them far internationally and is therefore best suited for the Icelandic market. However, the Icelandic market is considered to be too small for them to be able to live from their art alone. Although English is not found to be as suitable for the Icelandic market as Icelandic we need to bear in mind that the larger part of music broadcast in Iceland is in fact in English. Thus, writing in Icelandic may, in a way, exclude international markets from the equation while writing in English includes both local and international markets.

Language proficiency is also an important factor in the participants’ language choices. Although most participants note that writing in Icelandic is easier or more natural to them most still chose to write in English. This is probably due to market reasons but it also suggests that their English proficiency and their confidence in the language is high. Curiously, two participants feel they lack competence in writing in Icelandic. For the same reasons, two participants also chose to write in Icelandic; they feel they have a stronger connection with the language as well as their audience when using their L1. Much exposure to English caused some of the participants to begin writing in English unintentionally; most of them have continued writing in English while one has turned to writing in Icelandic because that suits her better.

The possibility of translating lyrics from Icelandic to English also seems to be a factor in the reason why many of the participants have turned to writing in Icelandic. The participants seem to long to write in Icelandic but because it is limiting, particularly when it comes to access to international markets, many chose to write in English instead. However, the possibility of translating their Icelandic lyrics in a way “allows” them to write in their L1.
4.3 Identity

Various questions in the question framework were intended to explore identity issues related to language choice. The participants were asked how important English and Icelandic was to them, in which language they could best be themselves when writing lyrics and in which language they could best express their thoughts when writing lyrics. One question was added after the first two interviews had been conducted and asked what the participants thought about the statement “someone told me that one found more peace or was not quite oneself when using English”.

4.3.1 Importance of English and Icelandic

To get an insight into the role of English and Icelandic in the participants’ lives they were asked how important English and Icelandic are to them. The participants’ responses show that there is an obvious difference in the importance the participants assign the two languages. Icelandic seems to be the language that is closer to their hearts, the language they identify more strongly with, while English is more as an additional language.

While discussing the importance of English all participants say that English is very important to them. They note that they need English for a wide variety of things in their daily lives other than writing lyrics as can be seen in the following extracts:

English is very important to me, I just, for, naturally, I write lyrics in English but also, besides that, I communicate so much, for all sorts of things, in English. It’s naturally just, just like, tech support for some things one is using is in English, I mean, that’s just one example. (Kristján)

I watch American and British TV programs and one listens to American and British music, or, you see, from various, from all over, which is in English. One connects, one relates, naturally, more to music one understands, or like, when one can understand the lyrics. So one listens very much to music that is sung in English. (Kalli)

21 Hún er mér mjög mikilvæg, ég bara, í hérna, náttúrulega ég skrifa texta á ensku en lika bara fyrir utan það er ég í svo miklum samskiptum við allskonar á ensku. Það er náttúrulega bara, bara svona „teck support“ fyrir eithvað dót sem maður er að nota er á ensku, ég meina, það er bara svona eitt dæmi. (Kristján)

22 Ég horfi á bandarískt og breskt sjónvarpsefni og maður er að hlusta á bandariska og breska músík eða, eða skilurðu frá ýmsum, allstadaðar að sko sem er á ensku, maður tengir, maður tengir náttúrulega meira við músík sem maður skilur, eða svona þar sem maður skilur textann sko, þannig að maður hlusta rosalega mikið á tónlist sem er hérna, sungin á ensku. (Kalli)
Although only two of the participants mention that they need English for entertainment such as movies, TV shows, reading and listening to podcasts and music, it is probable that this is the case for all participants, given the language environment in Iceland, even though they did not mention it on this occasion.

Further, knowing English is found particularly important for communication with people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds be it through the internet, abroad or in Iceland. English is seen to offer a way out of the small and isolated language environment Icelandic offers; a key to modern society.

English is, naturally, just very important, somehow, for being able to connect with modern society, it [the language] is naturally, in a way international, like, international language, it appears to be so at least in the western world. [...] English is naturally very, like, a uniting language really. It’s important to know it really if one intends to be somewhere else than just like, just in Iceland, an isolated Icelander. (Kalli)

I associate rather much with English speakers, or very much. And, actually, maybe even more than with Icelanders just now. We have a lot of staff and assistants from, who speak English. So I actually sometimes speak more English than I do Icelandic over the course of a day. [...] it’s, naturally, the only way to communicate with these people. Both the people here [...] and also the people one communicates with through the computer. So, yes, so it’s [English] simply, it’s very important. (Fannar)

As these examples illustrate, the participants view English as an international language, a lingua franca that they can use to communicate with all who know English and no mention is made of native English speakers in particular. It is an additional language, a tool they have at their disposal and as such an important one for them to function in today’s globalized world.

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23 Enskan er náttúrulega bara mjög mikilvæg til þess að vera í sambandi við nútilma samfélág einhvern veginn, þetta er bara náttúrulega er einhvern veginn svona allðjóðlega svona, svona allðjóðleg tungumálíð einhvern veginn víðist vera allavega í vestránum heimi. [...] enska er náttúrulega bara mjög þarna, svona sameinandi tungumál í rauninni sko. Það er svo mikilvægt að kunna hana í rauninni ef maður ættar að vera eitthvað annað en bara eitthvað, bara á Íslandi, einangraður Íslendingur sko. (Kalli)

24 Ég umgengst frekar mikið af enskumælandi fólki, eða mjög mikið. Og eiginlega kanski bara meira heldur en Íslandina allavega núna sem að nú stendur sko. Við erum með mikið af starfsfólk og aðstoðarfólk frá, sem talar ensku. þannig að ég í rauninni tala stundum ensku bara meira heldur en íslensku yfir daginn [...] það væri gaman að vera sterkari í ensku til þess að þurfa ekki að hafa eins mikið fyrir því að tala hana. Þannig að og, ég er mjög þakklátur fyrir það að geta talað ensku vegna þess að það er náttúrulega eina svona þá tjaskiptaleiðin við þetta fólk. Bæði þetta fólk sem er hérna [...] og svo lika bara fólk sem maður er í tölvusambandi við. Þannig að já, þannig að það er hérna, hún er alveg bara, hún er mjög mikilvæg. (Fannar)

25 Þú veist, að samstarfsfólk manns úti náttúrulega talar við mann ensku hvaðan sem, hvort sem þeir eru þjóðverjar eða, þú veist. Þannig að enskan er mjög mikilvæg sko. (Kristján)
Three of the participants have a more intimate relationship with the language; two of them have an English speaking family and see themselves as bilinguals. One of them, and the only participant in the study, speaks about her fondness of the language: “I’m very fond of English like [...] just like Icelandic”. A third participant, Helgi, has also developed a strong bond with English as this example illustrates:

In everyday life it is, it is inwrought with my work, basically. I sing and write and compose everything in English. So I sing for [...] my audience is somewhat international. [...] it is [English], it is my way to express myself. [...] it is very close to me. [...] I would very much like to live in an English speaking area because I enjoy, I also enjoy speaking English. (Helgi)

Although he performs for an international audience and in that sense is using English as a lingua franca he also seems to identify strongly with English and would like to live in an area where English is spoken as a native language. For these three participants that have stronger ties to the English language and its native culture, the language is more than a tool or an additional language for communication; it is a language they identify with.

When speaking about the importance of English the participants are mainly focused on the benefits of knowing English for communication, information gathering, and entertainment. Conversely, when discussing the importance of Icelandic, the participants are more emotional in their responses. This can be seen, for example, by the way the participants speak about the Icelandic language, how beautiful they think Icelandic is and how fond they are of the language.

I find the Icelandic language fabulously, fabulously beautiful, just an incredibly beautiful language. (Kristín)

I feel that I have been incredibly lucky to have taken this route and to have been allowed to grow up in Iceland and learn Icelandic. [...] it [Icelandic] is tremendously precious to me. (Hrefna)
Further, Icelandic is of importance to the participants because it is their L1 and as such comes naturally to them. It is easier to write in for most of them and some note that it is the language they think in.

Then it’s, naturally, one’s mother tongue, which is, naturally, very relaxing, relaxing and pleasant to, to speak to people in one’s mother tongue, to express oneself that way. (Kristján)

To me Icelandic is fun, particularly because, because it is somehow natural to me. (Jónas)

It’s very important because it is in Icelandic one thinks and expresses oneself and can communicate at a deeper level. (Anna)

The participants are more relaxed and intimate with the Icelandic language than they are with English and it comes more naturally to them because it is their first language. As Anna mentions, communicating in Icelandic somehow cuts deeper and is more intimate. One of the participants describes this intimacy as follows:

It’s easier for me to write in Icelandic, for example lyrics. They just come like tjuhh, they come really fast. While when writing in English, it’s like, it’s more, it’s a bit steeper curve, because it’s, it [the language] is not as intimate to you, you know. “Blóm” [flower] has a very different meaning to me than “flower”. You know, “blóm” is something like, it’s a certain flower on a mountain in Iceland and one can just, one just senses, you know the aroma of its surroundings. But “flower” can be, almost just, you know, just something, just some picture in some book. (Kristín)

The emotional memory Kristín talks about is the result of having grown up in Iceland which provides her with an extended meaning for Icelandic words that includes sensory and emotional experiences that, when using English words, are largely absent. Thus the participants’ lived experiences with one culture and language makes them more meaningful to them.

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29 Svo er það náttúrulega bara möðurmálið manns, sem er náttúrulega mjög aðslappað, aðslappað og þægilegt að, að tala sitt eigið möðurmál við fólk, tjá sig þannig. (Kristján)
30 Mér finnst islenskan skemmtileg sérstaklega af, af því að hún er manni einhvern veginn náttúruleg. (Jónas)
31 Hún er mjög mikilvæg af því að það er á íslenskunni sem maður hugsar og tjáir sig og getur átt svona dýpri samskipti. (Anna)
32 Ég á miklu auðveldara með að skrifa á íslensku, til dæmis texta. Þeir koma bara alveg tjhuu, þeir koma rosa hratt. Meðan ef ég er að skrifa á ensku, þá er það svona, það er aðeins, það er aðeins brattari kúrva, af því að það er, hún er ekki eins náin manni, þú veist, „Blóm” hefur allt aðra merkingu fyrir mér heldur en „flower.” Þú veist blóm er eitthvað svona, það er eitthvað blóm í fjallí á íslandi og maður finnur bara alveg, maður finnur bara alveg, þú veist lyktina bara af umhverfinu. En „flower” það getur verið bara, næstum því bara, þú veist, bara eitthvað svona, bara einhver svona mynd í einhverri bók. (Kristín)
Curiously, one participant shows some mixed emotions towards Icelandic and is not quite sure about his feelings towards the language.

I’m not even sure whether I’m fond of it [Icelandic; ...] it can be very symbolic and like, beautiful and strong and, naturally, has a kind of an antique feel to it which is naturally incredibly beautiful, glorious, extremely beautiful. And I really can speak good Icelandic, [...] I was raised to speak, to speak well. Uhm, but, I don’t know, maybe I’m just a bit scared, scared of the language. (Helgi)

Helgi is not sure if he is fond of the language and although he says in this extract that he can speak good Icelandic he finds his writing skills to be lacking, as we saw in the section about reasons for language choice. As he notes, using Icelandic well and correctly was a part of his upbringing and his perceived lack of good skills are likely the reason for him to be scared of the language, which in turn may cause his mixed feelings towards the language. Notably, he is the participant that seems to identify most strongly with English of the participants that do not have an English speaking family.

The different importance the two languages play in the participants’ lives is also noticeable in how some of them report to put more pressure on themselves when they write in Icelandic as the following example illustrates:

One is perhaps more shy about writing Icelandic lyrics, because it’s one’s mother tongue. [...] one wants to do it well, you know, I often find that with English, I know that often I’m, often I’m doing something that possibly isn’t grammatically correct. But I don’t care because it isn’t my mother tongue, you know. (Gunna)

Gunna is the only participant who does not seem to care if she follows the prescriptive rules of English or not. She seems to consider herself to be a legitimate user of English in her own right that is not influenced by native speaker ideology but uses the language for her own purposes and to reach her goals. Because English is her second language she allows herself to be less than “perfect” in her writing but if she were to write in Icelandic she would be more careful with her grammar because it is her mother tongue. This illustrates that Gunna places
Icelandic higher in the hierarchical line than English. Similarly, Kristín, who is a confident writer of both Icelandic and English, also notes that she places more pressure on herself when she writes in Icelandic and when writing in English she is somehow freer because “I take it [Icelandic] much more seriously than, than English. It’s like, I find English to be, in a manner, inferior. Which is naturally just hilarious.”

The findings suggest that Icelandic is the language the participants are more emotionally attached to and the language they put more pressure on themselves to write well. Thus, writing good lyrics in Icelandic seems to be of greater importance than it is to write good lyrics in English. However, that does not mean that they do not write good lyrics in English or want to write good lyrics in English, only that because Icelandic is their first language, their mother tongue, they may have a feeling of obligation as native speakers of the language to do Icelandic justice by writing well. Furthermore, good knowledge and use of Icelandic is highly valued in Iceland and the language is an important factor in the Icelandic national identity (Hálfdánarson, 2005), therefore it is of importance for their identity as Icelanders to be able to write well and correct in their native language. This feeling of responsibility and loyalty to the language seems to be less salient when it comes to English precisely because they are not as emotionally connected to the language for it being their second or additional language which they do not identify as strongly with and to whose history and culture they are not as close.

The participants’ discussions about the importance of English and Icelandic shows that there is a great difference between the roles of these two languages in their lives. English is for the majority of the participants an additional language important for cross-cultural and linguistic communication; a tool used as a lingua franca over the internet, abroad and in Iceland. It is also important for accessing information and entertainment. Knowing English gives them access to the world at large and breaks the isolation that the small Icelandic language imposes on them. The focus is mainly on using English as a tool.

Conversely, when they discuss the importance of the Icelandic language their focus shifts and their emotional bond with the language becomes the main issue. They mention how beautiful the language is, how fond they are of the language and how natural it is to them. They are emotionally closer to the language and using it is relaxing and more meaningful. This shows that the languages play fundamentally different roles in their lives, English being a language they need for communication with little emotions attached to it while their bond with the Icelandic language is emotionally strong and rewarding.
4.3.2 Multiple identities

For a further insight into the participants’ identity construction in relation to the two languages they were asked in what language they thought they could best express their thoughts and be themselves in their lyrics and were asked to comment on the assertion: *Someone said to me that one found more peace or was not quite oneself when using English.*

The majority of the participants seem to be unsure of which language they can best be themselves in, or the line between the languages is very thin. Kristján says that he can probably best be himself in Icelandic but then explains that he has found his voice in English which indicates that he feels at home writing in English. He also notes that he wants to write simple lyrics in a natural language and that is easier for him in English, but then adds: “But still, of course, speaking Icelandic is somehow natural for oneself. It’s my mother tongue.”

Three of the participants say they can best be themselves and best express their thoughts when writing lyrics in Icelandic. Anna notes: “I’m somehow better connected, have more depth”, and Fannar says: “Just absolutely in Icelandic”, and explains: “Then I’m just telling a story, saying this. But if I’m speaking English I’m an actor”. Thus, they identify more strongly with Icelandic. Further, for Fannar, writing in English means that he is taking on an identity that he does not relate to and because of that he prefers to write in Icelandic.

For Gunna, using English is also a site of new identity construction that does not blend well with her Icelandic identity. However, unlike Fannar, she feels comfortable in that new identity.

As myself, the musician Gunna, the English is just somehow, you know, much more, also during concerts, I don’t know how to, if I’m performing in Iceland, then I’m just, because one goes into a certain routine. One maybe says similar things during concerts. Speaks English. I just have a real hard time speaking Icelandic during concerts in Iceland. [...] on this project I find it incredibly odd to speak Icelandic, or write Icelandic. (Gunna)

As her response and her reactions to my probing indicate, Gunna separates her Icelandic-speaking self and the musician Gunna. For her these are two different identities that, as her remarks above show, enter into a zone of struggle when she performs in Iceland for an

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35 Svona sem ég, sem tónlistarkonan Gunna, þá er enskan bara einhver veginn, þú veist, miklu meira, lika bara á tónleikum sko, ég kann eikki, ef ég er að spila á Íslandi, þá er ég bara, því maður bara fer í svona rútinu. Maður segir kannski svona svipaða hluti á tónleikum. Tala ensku. Ég á bara rosa erfitt með að tala íslensku á Íslandi á tónleikum. [...] við þetta project þá finnst mér bara ótrúlega skrítið að tala íslensku, eða skrifa íslensku. (Gunna)
Icelandic audience. Thus, singing in English in a way distances her from her Icelandic identity.

Other participants also mention how using English in their lyrics somehow creates distance. Hrefna says: “I feel that singing in English gives you certain distance”. Later, when asked if there was any topic she felt was easier or more difficult to write about in English or Icelandic, she remarks that writing about personal experience, such as violence and difficult matters is easier in English:

Then I’m probably keeping myself at a certain distance. I have experimented with writing a few lyrics in Icelandic and it was just, I felt it was just, it was just completely open. (Hrefna)

Kristín similarly notes:

When it comes to encoding emotions, or encoding what I’m saying, the song’s or the poem’s undertone, then I feel it’s easier to do in English because then, there I have the distance in a way, it’s like one is more exposed in Icelandic.

Kristín also notes in relation to culture that: “If I’m writing in English then I’m like, yes, the meaning isn’t, it’s not as meaning laden, I’m somehow kind of looser and freer”. For these participants, using English seems to be similar to going through a proxy that creates distance from their Icelandic experiences and by using language that is not as meaning laden leaves them less exposed or vulnerable.

I feel as if maybe, maybe, maybe one can, in a way, hide oneself behind English, one is expressing oneself but still it is somehow not quite directly. (Hrefna)

One isn’t as much oneself when writing in English, and at the same time something misses, its mark. There’s some, some power that decreases at the same time. [...] one gets better through to people by singing in one’s mother tongue. (Fannar)

36 På er ég sennilega að halda mig í vissri fjarlægð. Ég hef einhvern tíma pruðað að skrifa einhvern texta á íslensku og það var bara, mér fannst bara, það var bara svona alveg opið. (Hrefna)

37 Þegar kemur að því að dulkóða tilfinningar, eða dulkóða hvað það er sem að ég er að segja, hver undirtónninn er, sko í laginu eða ljóðinu, þá finnst mér það auðveldara á ensku af því að þá, þar hef ég fjarlaegðina soldið, það er eins og maður sé berskjaldaðri á íslensku. (Kristín)

38 Mér finnst það kannski að, kannski, kannski maður nái að fela sig á bak við aðeins enskuna, að maður er að tjá sig en það er samt svona eitt hvaða, ekki alveg beint. (Hrefna)

39 Maður er ekki eins mikið maður sjálfur þegar maður skrifar á ensku, og þá um leið missir eitt hvaða marks, það dvína einhver, eitt hvaða hérna, einhver kraftur um leið. [...] Maður nær meira inn til eyrna fólks með því að syngja á móðurmálinu. (Fannar)
The participants’ comments suggest they do not identify as strongly with the lyrics when they sing in English. They are less themselves and can somehow hide what they seem to see as their true self behind the mask of English. English provides them with some kind of a front and its words are in a way void of the emotional memory that comes with Icelandic as was expressed by one participant. Thus, by using English they distance themselves from their Icelandic experiences by performing identities that they seem to negotiate in reference to their Icelandic identity. This again shows the different status the two languages have in the participants’ lives, Icelandic being a language they identify very strongly with while English, although also a site of identity construction, holds mostly the place of language for communication.

4.3.3 Lyrics translation and identity

A number of participants have had experience with rendering their lyrics to English or to Icelandic. As we saw in the section about the participants’ reasons for language choice many of the participants see the option of translating their Icelandic lyrics to English as a way that will allow them to write in Icelandic but still keep the option of taking their music abroad open. Some of the participants that have translated their lyrics from Icelandic to English report their experience to have been negative as the following example shows.

I felt a bit as if I was betraying, betraying the song. To be like, to have actually published a song that you are disgustedly pleased with in Icelandic and then to do completely the same, exactly the same version but just sing in English I felt was just very odd. (Hrefna)

Jónas has translated a few of his Icelandic songs and similarly remarks that he felt as if he was lying when he performed them in English:

It was just a lie […]. Because how I write is very personal […] it was like to translate something, even though I tried to keep the spirit of the song, did my best, it still was like, I’m lying. So I was just like, I gave it up straight away. (Jónas)

40 Mér fannst ég soldið að svíkja, svíkja lagið sko. Að vera eitthvað, í rauninni vera þúin að gefa út lag sem þú ert ógeðslega ánægð með á íslensku og svo gera alveg sama, nákvæmlega sömu útgáfu en bara syngja yfir á ensku fannst mér alveg bara mjög skritið. (Hrefna)

41 Það var bara lygi […]. Áf því ég sem svona persónulega […] þetta var svona að þýða eitthvað þótt ég reyndi að halda andanum, gerði mitt besta þá var samt svona, ég er að ljúga. Þannig að ég var bara, ég hætti því strax. (Jónas)
And he explains:

My writing process is so much of an interplay, you know, I change songs and it’s, that is, the songs are a long process so, or you know, just like editing oneself and thus, and thus the lyric and the song are somehow tied together in the end. (Jónas)

The comments above suggest that after each song with its accompanying lyrics has been created, the musician has also constructed an identity that goes with it. By translating the lyrics to another language the former unison between sound and text is broken which affects the identity that was created with the original version. These participants could not identify with the new version and therefore found it odd and unnatural to perform the song. Translating song lyrics is not a simple task and includes the challenges of keeping the meaning of the original version and the need to fit the new lyric to the rhythm of the song. The participants’ remarks suggest the process can also cause identity struggles for the participants who have trouble identifying with the new version. Both the participants that could not identify with the translated lyrics of their songs were translating from Icelandic to English. The only participants that had translated lyrics from English to Icelandic did not make mention of any difficulties relating to the process. Can it be that such identity struggles in relation to translation are likelier to surge when lyrics are translated from the lyricist’s language of identification to a language of communication than vice versa? This is a question worthy of further investigation.

4.3.4 Culture, language, and identity

When investigating identity issues related to language use it is important to also include culture because these phenomena are generally considered to be very closely related (Jenkins, 2007). Thus the participants were asked what culture they felt they were mirroring in their lyrics. The majority of the participants do not think that their lyrics had any particular references to culture. Yet many feel that their Icelandic lyrics represent Icelandic culture and their experiences in Iceland. The following examples illustrate how two of the participants view the difference between using English and Icelandic in relation to culture:

Í ferlinu hjá mér þegar ég er að semja þá er þetta svo mikið samspil, þú veist, ég breyti lögum og þetta er sem sagt, lögum eru mjög lóngr ferli þannig að, eða þú veist, eins og bara að editera sig og þannig, og þannig að texti og lag er einhvern veginn bundið saman á endanum. (Jónas)
I’m naturally working with, like, more local culture and naturally, and motifs in the language that I know better. […] But, like, if I’m writing in English then I’m like, yes, the meaning isn’t, it isn’t as meaning laden. (Kristín)

When I’m writing in English then I feel like I’m, like, in a way on a neutral zone, or I don’t find that I have any strong, any strong connections with anything, be it Icelandic or English or British. (Hrefna)

Writing in English for these participants therefore does not seem to be as connected to a particular culture as writing in Icelandic. This does not come as a surprise seeing that all participants grew up in Iceland, however, that does not mean that they have only experienced Icelandic culture. Through Western popular culture and English language education in Iceland the participants surely have gotten to know and in a sense be a part of (predominantly) British and North American cultures and therefore have likely taken in cultural influence from various culture zones. This is reflected in how some of the participants see themselves as in relation to culture. Kristján remarks: “I think I’m just very much, you know, the beginning of the twenty-first century kind of guy, and I just create that kind of art.” And Helgi says that the culture, as it plays out in his lyrics is “just, the culture of a young man that is growing up” and then adds: “just Western, Western civilization”. Jónas describes himself as a mixture of cultural influences, foreign and Icelandic, that come together and “form a part of some kind of Icelandic culture because [he is; …] Icelandic”. These participants see themselves as modern-day citizens that draw on different cultures which they appropriate and make their own and this is, in turn, reflected in their lyrics. What is important in this respect is that even though the cultural influences may be of different origin, when taken up by them as Icelanders they in a way become part of Icelandic culture and their lived experiences in the Icelandic environment. In addition, because the cultural influences are of varied origin it is difficult for the participants to say that their lyrics represent a particular culture except for when writing in Icelandic because that is the culture they know best and they grew up in it using Icelandic. Thus, when writing in English,
because of lack of connection to a certain English native speaking culture zone, and because English is not the language they use to express their Icelandic identity and culture, the relationship between culture and language that they have when writing in English may feel to them to be weak or as Hrefna experiences it, neutral.

This suggests that in relation to culture and language the place where you grow up and the language and culture associated with that place are of great importance when it comes to what culture the participants think they reflect in their lyrics. Many of the participants feel they represent Icelandic culture when writing in Icelandic but if they are writing in English some of them do not think their lyrics have any particular cultural references. As we saw before, Icelandic is the language the participants identify more strongly with and that has probably much to do with the fact that they grew up in Iceland and have lived within the Icelandic culture (which again can be a mixture of cultural influences from foreign nations but has been localized) all their lives. Furthermore, although some of the participants see themselves to be part of some Western culture, the Western popular culture must also be seen to have become a part of Icelandic culture because of how big a part it forms of Icelanders’ daily lives (e.g. through radio and TV broadcast in Iceland).

4.3.5 Has knowing English become a part of being Icelandic?

The last question in the question framework that touches on the issue of identity was: Can it be that knowing and being able to speak English has become a part of being Icelandic? From the participants’ answers it became clear that knowing English has become an important part of being Icelandic. Hrefna says: “One thinks it’s so natural that people know English. One thinks it a bit strange to meet someone who doesn’t speak English”. Anna remarks: “Yes, absolutely, I think so. When compared to other nations, this [English] has become a part of us, particularly the younger people”. And Kristín says: “Absolutely, a hundred percent”. Some of the participants were not sure if knowing English has become a part of being Icelandic and only one did not think so; he says:

Naturally, we Icelanders are on an island and are keeping this language which is our own. I think that will always be what defines our nation. I think that, maybe English does not form a part of our self-image, I don’t think so. (Helgi)45

45 Við náttúrulega Íslendingar erum á eyju sem erum að geyma þetta tungumál sem er okkar eigið. Held ég að það […] muni alltaf verða það sem definerar okkar þjóð. Ég held að kannski enska sé ekkert neinn partur af okkar sjálfsmynd, ég held ekki. (Helgi)
Although the majority of the participants say that English has become a part of being Icelandic it is difficult to say whether they mean that English has become a part of the Icelandic identity or whether they only mean that English has become a big part of Icelanders’ lives in general because the question did not include the word identity. Helgi alone makes particular mention of identity or self-image in his reply and he is also the only one that very clearly is of the opinion that English is not a part of the Icelandic identity. Because of this, it cannot be said that the majority of the participants say that English has become a part of the Icelandic identity but what is clear is that English is an important part of Icelanders’ linguistic repertoires. As one participant notes it is uncommon and odd to meet an Icelandic person that cannot participate in conversation in English and thus, knowing English and to be able to converse in English is normal while not knowing English is unusual.

4.3.6 Summary

The participants assign fundamentally different importance to the role of Icelandic and English in their lives. The role of English is for the most part as a lingua franca for intercultural communication and for accessing information. English is a language they need to have a good command of to function in today’s globalized world and to escape isolation and as such is for the participants a language of communication. Conversely, when speaking about the importance of Icelandic the focus is on their feelings towards the language rather than the use the participants have for Icelandic. Further, the participants put more pressure on themselves when writing in Icelandic than in English because it is their mother tongue. The Icelandic language is much closer to them, and they seem to feel that they have responsibilities towards the language. Icelandic seems to be predominantly their language of identification.

Furthermore, the participants seem to construct different identities with each language but for some of them using English seems to be less meaning laden and a front they can hide behind. This indicates that there may be a more stable identity that is connected to the Icelandic language and the Icelandic cultural environment they grew up in and their sense of belonging to that community. The identities they construct when using English appear to be negotiated in relation to their Icelandic identities. Not all participants identify positively with
singing in English and choose to use only Icelandic while others seem to be able to move between languages and identities. Some participants find it odd and unnatural to perform songs that they have translated because they do not seem to be able to identify with the new version. This indicates that the participants construct identities with each song and by changing the language through translation may negatively affect the identity the participants assigned the original. When using English most of the participants say their lyrics are largely without cultural references while lyrics in Icelandic are more often seen as to represent Icelandic culture. This difference is likely the result of them having grown up in Iceland, immersed in Icelandic culture and using the language as native speakers while their English knowledge is likely a fusion of cultural influences that they cannot directly connect to any specific cultural zone and is therefore regarded as more culturally neutral. Lastly, the majority of the participants think that knowing English has become a part of being Icelandic as it is seen as uncommon to meet an Icelandic person who cannot speak English. It, however, remains unclear whether they think English has become a part of Icelanders’ identity.

4.4 The future of lyrics writing in Iceland

Two questions in the question framework were of a more general nature. The participants were asked about how they saw the future of lyrics writing in Iceland and their opinion on increased use of English among Icelandic lyricists. The participants were found to predict different language futures but all agree that Icelandic lyricist will not stop writing lyrics in Icelandic. The participants are generally very positive about Icelandic lyricists writing in English and feel that it is a natural thing.

The majority of the participants said that Icelandic and English would both be used among Icelandic lyricists, with the balance between the two languages changing at different times. English is foreseen to be the language used for foreign markets while those who are writing for the local scene will keep on using Icelandic. The use of English is predicted to increase, especially among the younger generations; however, writing lyrics in Icelandic does not seem to be considered to be in any danger of disappearing.

Six participants say that language choice comes in waves or that there will always be a good mixture of the two languages. Depending on the scenes they are following, the use of Icelandic is thought to be either gaining ground or losing ground.
It [the rap scene] is naturally mainly writing in Icelandic […] from what I can hear Icelandic is gaining ground rather than the opposite. (Fannar)\textsuperscript{46}

I felt, for example, like after the banks collapsed [2008] then, then there was almost like, not far from narcissism going on, I felt or like, one had to sing in Icelandic […] Songs in English didn’t get as much attention and Icelandic was favoured. But now English is drifting in again. (Jónas)\textsuperscript{47}

Most of the participants believe that Icelandic and English will both be used by Icelandic lyricists but younger musicians are thought to be likelier to take up English. Helgi remarks: “The youth naturally has a weakness for choosing to sing and play in English”, and Gunna notes that younger musicians realize that “there isn’t necessarily a market for musicians in Iceland, they, you have to go somewhere [abroad] to do something”.

Two participants believe that writing lyrics in English will increase. Kristján remarks: “It has become so much easier to produce by yourself and publish by yourself, you know, worldwide […] I believed that people will increasingly sing in English”.

Importantly, the participants do not think that lyrics writing in Icelandic will disappear and be replaced by English. However, Icelandic is foreseen to be used mainly for the Icelandic market. Kristín notes: “I think that those who are only making music for Iceland will just make music in Icelandic and only for this market and, I think that will always continue, it’s just […] like, local culture”. She continues:

Of those I have been following, who have gone abroad to perform, then it is like, the tendency seems to be to rather, to sing in English. […] if people are mostly performing abroad and play maybe one in fifty gigs […] in Iceland then, why always be singing in a language no one understands? It’s like, it’s a no-brainer to me. (Kristín)\textsuperscript{48}

Thus, the majority of the participants do not think that Icelandic lyrics writing is in any danger, nor are they anxious about the future of the Icelandic language in general. Many of the participants talk about the future of the Icelandic language and their comments show that

\textsuperscript{46} Hún er náttúrulegast mest að semja á íslensku […] mér heyrist íslenskan vera að sækja í sig veðrið frekar en hitt. (Fannar)

\textsuperscript{47} Mér fannst til dæmis eins og í hruninu þá var, þá var nærri því svona hálfgar nasisismi í gangi fannst mér eða svona, menn urðu að syngja á íslensku […] lög á ensku fengu alls ekki eins mikla athygli og það var svona hyltt undir íslenskuna. Ein svo er aftur núna komin smá enskuslæða inn. (Jónas)

\textsuperscript{48} Af þeim svona sem ég hef fylgst með, sko sem hafta farið og spila úti og þá er svona, virðist vera svona tilheyringin frekar að fara út í að, að syngja á ensku. […] ef að fólki spilar mest úti og spilar kannski eina tónleika af fimmtiú […] á íslandi þá, afþverju að vera alftaf að syngja á tungumáli sem enginn skilir, það er svona, mér finnst það soldil svona ”no-brainer” sko. (Kristín)
they are more curious than anxious about the future and do not seem to worry about the language.

We don’t feel as much that we are an island any more, it will be interesting to see what, what will happen to the language, you know, the Icelandic in the future, whether it will stay the same for long, [...] really how the internet will change the language. (Kristján)

There seems to be a good balance, of course English is being mixed a lot into [Icelandic, ...] but, nonetheless, I think the Icelandic is so strong, so I don’t feel like English will be taking over. (Hrefna)

I can’t see that we need to protect or, you know, buy some kind of “Icelandic-guns”. (Jónas)

Gunna is the only one that is slightly worried about the future of Icelandic in general: “How will it be possible to preserve this [the language] with all this internet, you know? How is it possible for oneself to stick to Icelandic?” She is also the only one that is a bit saddened by the prospects of increased use of English amongst Icelandic lyricist while the majority express neutral or positive views. Kristín and Kristján say they do not think anything of it and Kristín adds: “I just think it’s very natural, just normal”. And Anna says “I don’t see anything wrong with it, I just think it’s great”. Thus English seems to have become an accepted language for Icelandic lyricists to use and a natural choice.

The participants do not agree on how future language choice will be among Icelandic lyrics writers but the majority believes that preferred language choices come in waves or that there will always be a good mixture of both languages. Thus, writing in Icelandic is not predicted to be in danger or to disappear although some mention that writing in English will increase in the coming years, especially among younger lyricists. Furthermore, English is seen as an obvious choice if you are focusing on foreign markets and the use of Icelandic will be mostly bound to the Icelandic market.

Furthermore, the lyricists are generally very positive or do not have a strong opinion on the increased use of English among Icelandic lyricist. Choosing to use English is considered

49 Við finnum ekki eins mikið fyrir því að við séum eyja lengur, það er nefnilega fróðlegt að sjá hvað, hvað á eðir að koma fyrir tungumál, þú veist, íslenskuna í kjölfarið, hvort hún eigi eðir að verða svona, svona lengi, [...] hvað í rauninni internetið að eðir að breyta tungumálinni. (Kristján)

50 Það virðist nú samt vera ágetis jafnhægt sko, það er auðvitað mikið verið að, að blanda enskunni inn í og, og svona en þegund samt að, mér finnst íslenskan samt svo sterk sko að mér líður ekki eins og enskan sé að fara eitt hvað að taka yfir sko. (Hrefna)

51 Ëg sé ekki að við þurlem að standa vörð eða, þú veist, kaupa einhverjar svona „íslenskubbyssur“. (Jónas)
to be natural and a matter of course and English has become an accepted language to use. Their positive view may be influenced by the fact that most of them write or have written in English, nonetheless, part of the reason for their positive views may also be that most of them do not seem to think that Icelandic lyrics writing nor the Icelandic language in general are threatened by English.
5 Discussion

5.1 English background and perceived competency

The English language has been a part of all of the participants’ lives since they were children. Although their relationship and live trajectories with the language differ considerably they have in common to have learnt English as a foreign language for many years as they went through the Icelandic educational system and were exposed to the language through Icelandic TV and radio stations and the internet. They are non-native speakers from the Expanding Circle (Kaschru, 1985; cited in Clyne & Sharifia, 2008) who are likely to use English as a lingua franca in various contexts which includes their lyrics writing, where they use English to reach a wider audience and gain access to international markets. Although the participants’ perceived proficiency varies considerably, from average to fluent, and many note that they want to or need to improve and learn more they cannot be seen as mere learners of the language because they are first and foremost users as we can see by the simple fact that most of the participants seem to be proficient and confident enough to write their lyrics in English. As non-native speakers it is possible that they are not using an established variety of English but what some scholars would call a learnt English or a “franchised copy of” native English based on native speakers’ norms (Seidlhofer, 2011, loc. 602) which may deviate from the norms or not, depending on the lyrics writers’ proficiency and/or how they position themselves in relation to the language (see ELF and EFL distinction in chapter 2). Either way, their use of English (according to norms or not) should be seen as legitimate uses of the language and they as successful multilingual users of the language.

5.2 Reasons behind language choice

The reasons behind the participants’ language choices are varied but market forces and chances of making a living exclusively as musicians were found to be the largest driving forces in their choosing English over Icelandic. English has been the dominant language of the international music industry since the 1950s (Hilgendorf, 2007). The dominance of the English language is very apparent in Iceland where it is likelier that you hear music sung in English than Icelandic when you turn on the radio. The musicians, although using English, are often non-native speakers who, like many of the participants in this study, write lyrics in English to reach a wider audience. Globally, English is used by a far greater number of non-
native speakers than native speakers (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008, p. 28.1) and is commonly used as a lingua franca between people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds. Therefore, by using English, the participants are not only making their message heard to native speakers of English but also a much greater number of people worldwide who use English as a Lingua Franca. When it comes to the Icelandic market the participants say that it is too small for them to be able to make a living as full-time musicians and therefore many of them are taking their music abroad and when they do they prefer to use English. The participants note that if they were to write in Icelandic for foreign markets their chances of success would be much diminished because, for example, as some participants note, it would make it harder for them to get airplay. However, those who are focusing on the Icelandic market prefer to use Icelandic and Icelandic is seen as to be better suited than English for that market. In this respect, what we need to consider is that in Iceland people generally understand and can speak English and the Icelandic market, however small it may be, is also a part of the international market. Therefore, by using English the participants, although perhaps writing less for the Icelandic audience, are not excluding the Icelandic market but greatly increasing their chances on foreign markets. Seen in that light it is very understandable that many of the participants and so many of Icelandic lyricists in general choose to write in English.

Language proficiency, as was to be expected, is also an influential factor when it comes to language choice. Most of the participants are proficient enough in English to be comfortable with writing their lyrics in English. Although most of the participants judged their English proficiency to be average, only two of the participants noted that they preferred to write in Icelandic because it was easier for them and they could play more with the language. Both of them had written lyrics in English and both noted that they had had help from native speakers with their English lyrics. That indicates that they may lack proficiency in the language but it also indicates their need to have their work sanctoned by a native speaker’s authority and that they cannot see themselves as legitimate users that have taken ownership of the language. As the issue of ownership and the legitimate user is very much connected to identity (Norton, 1997) this point will be discussed further in the identity section below.

Surprisingly, two participants were insecure about their Icelandic writing skills and preferred to write in English. This is surprising because Icelandic is their first language, the language they have grown up using and which they have learnt for many years in Icelandic schools. In that light I must ask what the underlying reasons can possibly be? Since the participants did not specify any particular reasons for why they were too insecure about their
Icelandic language skills (other than poor grammar) to write in Icelandic I am left to speculate.

I suggest that the insecurity or negative writer’s identity (linguistic identity) may be the result of three factors: language ideologies in Iceland, native speaker ideology and lack of experience in and knowledge of creative writing in Icelandic.

Firstly, the language ideologies in Iceland, where good language use and the preservation of the language is of great importance (Hilmarsson-Funn & Kristinsson, 2009), may be a factor. The Icelandic language is an important pillar in the national identity; a defining marker for what it is to be an Icelander (Hálfdánarson, 2005). Icelanders are proud of their language and often hard critics when it comes to its “misuse”. This can often be seen in online communication were people point out other people’s grammar and syntax errors rather than comment on the content of the message. For the participants, generally speaking and writing good Icelandic seems to be of importance. One of the participants notes that he was raised to speak good Icelandic and another says that he judges people by the way they speak and because of that he wants to speak good Icelandic. What is meant by “good” language use is to use the language according to norms and prescriptive rules that have been decided by authorities and are enforced by, for example, educational institutions. Icelandic is therefore a synonym with educated and proper Icelandic. With that said it is possible that because of the general attitude or language ideologies in Iceland that value good language use, the participants may feel they cannot perform to the standards that they may feel that society (and themselves) asks of them. If this is the case and language ideologies in Iceland are having the effect that lyricists are afraid to use the language, it can be said that the ideologies are having negative effect on the creative use of the language (Cogo, 2012b).

Secondly, because Icelandic is the lyricists’ first language they may feel as if they should have perfect command of the language in its various forms and registers. That is, they may be influenced by native speaker ideology. Importantly, when it comes to proficiency in any language, be it a L1, L2, L3 or even L4, the user’s knowledge is always “partial, ‘truncated’, specialized to a differing degree” dynamic and this includes the speaker’s first language (mother tongue) (Blommaert & Backus, 2013, 29). That is, no one knows a language in its entirety, all its complexities and registers; not even their L1. Thus these participants may feel disillusioned and insecure when they find that they have not got an innate talent in writing lyrics in Icelandic.

This leads us to the third possible reason for their insecurities and the last one that I will discuss here. The knowledge speakers have in any language, however little or extensive it
may be, forms a part of the speakers’ linguistic repertoire (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011). The knowledge of a language that speakers acquire goes hand in hand with their experiences with the language, what they have had to use it for and what they have been taught. Thus if the participants have had much experience in writing formal essays in their first language and little or no experience with writing poetry or prose they may be more comfortable with writing in the former style than the latter. The participants’ insecurities may thus possibly stem from their lack of knowledge and experience in creative writing. Yet they may feel like they should possess these skills because Icelandic is their mother tongue (native speaker ideology). If this is the reason behind the participants’ insecurities perhaps instruction in creative writing in Icelandic within Icelandic schools needs to be strengthened, just as the Icelandic Language Committee has suggested, in order to get more lyricists to write in Icelandic (Ministry of Education, 2008).

A third theme related to reasons for language choice was the pull of the mother tongue. Although two of the participants were insecure about their Icelandic language skills most of them said that they were better at Icelandic than English in general. They noted that Icelandic somehow came naturally to them and many longed to write, or had already turned to writing, in Icelandic instead of English. Importantly, even though English is some of the participants’ primary language for lyrics writing, that does not mean that they will never write in Icelandic; it only means that at this time in their lives and in the projects they are currently working on, English is the language they use and at some other time in the future they might (and some wanted to) write lyrics in Icelandic as well. Thus the participants are likely to move between the two languages according to their needs and desires and juggle languages depending on the projects they are working on. As will be discussed in further detail below, Icelandic is a language that is much closer to them than English and despite the obvious benefits of using English (to reach wider audience and gain access to international markets) some have switched from English to Icelandic. Some of the participants seem to be drawn to writing in Icelandic even though they are comfortable with writing in English because they have an emotional and cultural connection with their first language that English does not offer and this strong relationship pulls them towards the language. The first reason (market and wider audience) mentioned above as a reason for language choice, however, sometimes seems to overrule the pull of the mother tongue simply because it is more practical to use English to gain access to international markets. As a way to get around this, most of the participants mention the option of lyrics translation which is a popular practice amongst lyricists that choose to write in Icelandic and later want to take their music abroad. Those who are writing
in Icelandic realize that that is an option available to them and it seems to be a part of the reason they “allow” themselves to write in their L1 even though it may not open as many doors or allow them to live solely off of their art.

5.3 Identity

Language and identity are closely connected phenomenon and can hardly be separated. Because of that, it is vital to look at the roles English and Icelandic play in the participants’ linguistic identity construction. From the participants’ answers about the importance of English and Icelandic in their lives, it became clear that the two languages play fundamentally different roles in their lives. For the participants, English is a language they can hardly function without in their daily lives but its importance is mainly bound to pragmatic functions such as communicating with people of different lingua-cultural backgrounds, to access information and for leisure time activities. Further, as we saw above, their reasons for choosing to write their lyrics in English are also mostly pragmatic. Thus, they do not use English to integrate into or identify with a particular speech community but to function in today’s globalized world, to communicate with the world (use it as a lingua franca) and to reach their own personal goals as musicians. Conversely, Icelandic, their L1, is much closer to the participants. They are fond of and proud of their language which they find beautiful and it comes naturally to them. Further, because Icelandic is the language they grew up with and in whose accompanying culture they have been immersed for the largest part of their lives, it is for many of the participants a language that is more meaning laden than English. That is, the language, as their L1, carries much greater linguistic-cultural capital (House, 2003) than English. Furthermore, the Icelandic language forms an important part of the Icelandic national identity (Hálfdánarson, 2005) and is therefore a vital part of their identity as Icelanders. From that it would seem that English holds the place of a language for communication, because it is mainly “used for practical communicative purposes” (Knapp, 1992, cited in Fiedler, 2011, p. 82) while Icelandic, whose speakers and culture the participants experience a sense of belonging with and they “share an ethnic origin with” (Pölz, 2003), holds the place of a language for identification.

Even though there seems to be a clear difference of importance that the two languages have in the participants’ lives, it cannot be ignored that English may also function as a language of identification. Pölzl (2003) notes that languages spoken by groups of people that come together through special shared interests or knowledge can also function as languages
of identification. She calls this ‘situational culture’. Seen from that perspective the participants may have a sense of group membership when using English, that is, they may feel that they belong to the English speaking music world in general and use English as a language of identification on the international scene. Although this may be so for some musicians/lyricists there is little in the data that suggests that this is the case with the participants of this study.

It has been debated whether English as a language of communication in ELF communication is a “native culture-free code” (see Fiedler, 2011), that is, bereft of native speakers’ cultural references. In the case of the participants of this study it would have to be considered rather unlikely that English be used without any references to native speakers’ culture because the participants have been taught the English language in Icelandic schools as a ‘language of identification’ and the English language and its various accompanying cultures (predominantly Anglo-American) have been very present in Iceland in the media, in music and on the internet (similar to the situation in Germany as was described by Fiedler (2011)). Yet when asked about what culture the participants thought they represented in their lyrics the majority of the participants did not think their lyrics (Icelandic or English) carried any particular cultural references. However, some noted that when they use Icelandic the connection to the Icelandic culture is strong but when using English the connection to a particular culture becomes more blurred or the texts are even seen as culturally neutral. Why that is may be because the participants did not grow up in any particular native English speaking area and culture and therefore do not connect their English language use to a particular culture. But they are still influences by foreign cultures, as some of the participants' comments show; although they first and foremost see themselves as Icelanders they also see themselves as a part of Western culture. They draw from both Icelandic and foreign cultures that then get transferred into the kind of art they create. Baker (2015) notes that cultural references that surge in ELF communication “are dynamic, fluid and emergent and move between the local, national and global in complex and liminal ways” (42). Precisely because of that dynamic nature of cultural references in ELF contexts they may be hard to point out and connect to a particular cultural origin which to a certain extent explains why the participants see their English lyrics as not having any cultural references or to be neutral, while Icelandic, being their language of identification and primary culture, is more strongly related to their life experiences and is thus seen to be more connected to its originating culture.
The different importance the participants place on the two languages is also reflected in how many of the participants place Icelandic higher than English in the hierarchy. Because Icelandic is their mother tongue and, as such, more important to them, many put more pressure on themselves when writing in Icelandic; they want to write well. As we saw in the section about reasons for language choice, two participants even prefer to write in English because they lack confidence in their Icelandic writing skills, that is, the language standards and pressure to perform well that they place on themselves are so high that they are afraid of using their mother tongue. The reason for the participants putting more pressure on themselves when writing in Icelandic than in English may possibly be connected to (as was discussed in more detail in a previous section) the language ideology they have grown up with that emphasizes correct language use and the preservation of the mother tongue and native speaker ideology, that is, as native speakers they may feel they should be able to write good lyrics in Icelandic as according to norms and conventions even though they have no experience in that genre.

When it comes to writing in English, the pressure of writing well is somehow not as great. This may be because English is not their mother tongue and they, as non-native speakers, are not expected (by themselves and society) to have native-like command of the language. The participants’ status (or identity) as non-native speakers of English and native speakers of Icelandic and the different importance they give the two languages thus seems to influence how much pressure they place on themselves when it comes to language use.

I have suggested that some of the participants may put more pressure on themselves when writing in Icelandic because they are influenced by native speaker ideology which seems to imply that the participants are not affected by such ideology when writing in English but that does not seem to be the case. Jenkins (2007) argues that in ELF contexts even when there is non-native speaker around, ELF speakers are affected by native speaker ideology and that seems to be true for at least some of the participants in this study. Just as in their L1, the participants want to write well, use good and correct language and avoid clichés in their L2. Two participants note that they got help from native speakers with their English lyrics which indicates that they feel they are not proficient enough to write lyrics that are up to native speakers’ standards and therefore turn to a native speaker that can “correct” their lyrics according to native speakers’ norms and conventions (language ideology). These two participants have not taken ownership of the English language and by turning to a native speaker to “approve” their lyrics this suggests that they cannot see themselves as legitimate users of the language. One of them confirms this when he particularly mentions that as a non-
native speaker he has less authority to play with the language than native speakers because the language is not his. Both these participants seem to have been unable to construct positive identities as non-native lyrics writers in English and have turned to writing in Icelandic. In contexts were English is used as an international language (or a lingua franca) “appropriation is specifically related to how the Other actively and comfortably use English as their tongue” (Phan, 2009, 204) and tends to have positive effect on non-native speakers’ identity construction as users of English (Phan, 2009). Only one participant, Gunna, does not seem to care if her English language use follows norms and conventions and allows herself to bend the rules of the language to her needs. Her attitude towards English language use, in a way, frees her from native speaker ideology and the idea that native speakers are those alone who have the authority to change the language. She seems to have been able to construct a positive non-native speaker identity by taking ownership (Norton, 1997) of the language through appropriation and seems to see herself as a legitimate speaker of the language.

For the three participants discussed above the question of ownership of the language and their attitude towards language norms and ideologies appears to be closely connected to whether participants are able to construct positive identities as non-native lyrics writers or not. The fact that many of the participants of this study seem to be comfortable writers of English and continue using the language for their own purposes indicates that they consider themselves to be legitimate users of the language. However, because the participants were not asked particularly whether they felt they were legitimate users of the language and whether they did receive help from native speakers with their lyrics to make them more “native like” it is in fact difficult to argue that they have taken ownership of the language. This is an angle that is worthy of further investigation, that is, to try and determine to what degree Icelandic lyricists feel they are “borrowing” other people’s native language or whether they feel that the language belongs to all who use it.

5.3.1 Multiple identities

The two participants that could not take ownership of the English language or construct positive identities as non-native English lyrics writers both gave up writing in English and switched to Icelandic which they also said was the language they could best be themselves in. The other participants (except Kalli, who has only written lyrics in Icelandic) were unsure of in which language they could best express themselves or be themselves. This comes as a surprise since English is their second language and most of them note that because Icelandic
is their mother tongue it is easier for them to write in and it comes more naturally to them. It would seem that even though they may possibly not be as proficient in English as Icelandic their years of working with the language in their lyrics writing has resulted in them finding their voice, as one participant puts it, and been able to construct positive identities as non-native lyrics writers of English.

Interestingly though, for some of the participants there is a slight difference between how they connect to the lyrics they write in Icelandic on the one hand and English on the other, which seems to stem from the different relationships they have with the languages (language of identification or language of communication). Those participants say that when writing in Icelandic the connection between themselves, their experiences and the essence of what they are saying is stronger and that connection or feeling dwindles when they use English as a medium. For them the English language seems to create a distance from the original feeling or experience that leaves them less exposed or as one participant says, the lyrics lose power. It would seem that when using English they are, in a way, mentally translating their Icelandic experiences and because the English language is not as close to them, and not as socio-culturally meaningful, the power of the words and their mental connection to the experiences or ideas lose strength. This suggests that when using English these participants are constructing identities that may be distancing them from their perhaps more stable (still dynamic and ever-changing) and dominating place-based identity or national identity (Phan, 2007). This further supports that Icelandic is their language of identification while English is primarily their language of communication.

Another interesting insight into the participants’ linguistic identity in relation to lyrics writing surged in their discussion about lyrics translation. Some of the participants noted that when they translated their lyrics from Icelandic to English they felt it was odd and unnatural to perform the song in another language. They seem to have been unable to identify positively with the song and its new lyrics. This indicates that with each song and its accompanying lyrics an identity is constructed and if the lyrics are translated into another language a new identity must be constructed to go along with the new version. That this process proved to be a site of identity struggle for some of the participants (that had had experience with translating their lyrics) shows that the process of lyrics translation does not only demand good proficiency in two languages but is also a site where new identities are negotiated in reference to the previous or original identity construct. This further suggests that the participants may construct different identities as musicians for the two languages, that is, an English speaking musician’s self and an Icelandic speaking musician’s self and that
these identities cannot always be easily changed after a song and its lyrics have been created and an identity constructed alongside it.

Although not all that had had experience with translating their lyrics from Icelandic to English made mention of such identity struggles it is interesting to note that the only participant that had translated her lyrics from English to Icelandic did not mention any identity struggles caused by the process. Can it be that these kind of identity struggles only appear when lyricist translate from their mother tongue (language of identification) to a second language? That is a question that cannot be answered by this study but is worthy of further investigation.

From the above discussion about the participants’ linguistic identity there is substantial evidence that suggests that the two languages play a fundamentally different role in the participants’ lives with Icelandic being the language they identify very strongly with as persons while English is mostly an additional language that is pragmatic for them to know and use. To what extent knowing English has become a part of their identity as Icelanders is difficult to assess but the findings suggest that Icelandic is the language that they predominantly define themselves by. Even though a large part of the participants thought that knowing English had become a part of being Icelandic it is still unclear if they believe that knowing English has become a part of the Icelandic identity. What can be said is that the participants think that English is an important language for Icelanders to know and a language that most Icelanders can command to a varying degree. For the participants of this study when they use the English language it is a site of identity construction but as their national identity is strong, and because of how proud and fond they are of their language, the Icelandic language seems to be a much greater defining factor for who they are than English. Even though they take on or construct other identities when using English, their Icelandic linguistic identity is stronger and more important to them and how they see themselves.

5.4 The future of lyrics writing in Iceland

In today’s Iceland, English can neither be said to be a foreign language (the language’s official status in Iceland) nor a second language, but to be somewhere in between (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvars dóttir, 2012b). Because of the growing presence of English in Iceland some feel that English can be a threat to the Icelandic language and fears about domain losses have been expressed (Hilmarsson-Dunn & Kristinsson, 2009). The Icelandic Language Committee (Íslensk málnefnd) has expressed grave concerns about the increased
use of English amongst Icelandic lyricists and seems to see it as a threat to the domain of
lyrics writing in Icelandic (Ministry of Education, 2008). Most of the participants of this
study do not share the committee’s concerns and do not think that the use of English by
Icelandic lyricists is a threat to the domain. They believe that there will always be a good
mixture of lyrics writing in both languages and that there will always be artists that choose to
write in Icelandic and then particularly for the Icelandic market. The participants, like the
participants in Jeeves’s study (2015), express positive views towards English and as we have
seen, the language has great relevance to them both in their daily lives as well as for their
future prospects as musicians on the international stage. Their positive attitude towards
English can also be explained by the fact that most of them do not see English as a threat to
the Icelandic language in general; although they realize the influences the language is having
on Icelandic language they are more curious than concerned about its future.

With this study the main aim was to get an insight into the reasons behind Icelandic
lyricists’ language choices and how their choices affect, or are influenced by, their identities
through the analysis of interview data. I set out to answer these questions:

- Has English become the language Icelandic lyricists and musicians prefer?
- What are the underlying reasons for their choice of language?
- How is their linguistic identity affected and constructed through their choice of
  language?

From the analysis it became apparent that English is not always the language preferred by the
participants. Which of the two languages they preferred to use depended on the different
underlying reasons and varied between participants.

The dominance of the English language on the international music market was found to be
the main reason for the participants to choose to use English. English can be said to be the
lingua franca of the international music industry and because of the language’s dominance
the participants note that it will open more doors internationally and they can reach wider
audiences (native and non-native English speakers) than they can by using Icelandic.
Consequently, the English language offers greater chances for the participants of being able
to live off of their art. Icelandic is, however, preferred by those who are focusing on the
Icelandic market. The participants’ language proficiency is also a factor that influences their
choice of language and surprisingly this runs both ways; some believe they can write better lyrics in Icelandic while others say their English is better. The participants’ perceived proficiency is possibly influenced by language ideologies and in the case of English, the question of ownership of the language. The third major factor that influences language choice is the pull of the mother tongue. Some of the participants have switched from writing in English to writing in Icelandic and some want to write in Icelandic in the future, at least partly. This is not only due to the fact that most of them are more proficient in Icelandic but also that their emotional bond with the language is strong. The participants tend to move between languages depending on the objectives, aims and their personal desires for different projects and at different times in their lives. Thus language choice is largely governed by the market the participants are writing for but the participants’ own perceived language proficiency (in both Icelandic and English) and the pull of the mother tongue are influential. Those latter two factors are very much connected to the participants’ linguistic identity (negative and positive) and the connection they have with the languages.

In relation to identity it varies between participants how their linguistic identity is affected and constructed through their choice of language. The findings indicate that the roles and status of the languages in the participants’ lives are very different, with Icelandic being their “language of identification” and English their “language of communication” as according to Hüllén’s (1992) dichotomy. Although Icelandic may be the language by which they primarily define themselves, both languages are sources of identity construction when it comes to their lyrics writing and identities as musicians. Some of the participants seemed to be able to move between languages without it causing any identity struggles, constructing positive linguistic identities in both languages. Others are unable to construct positive writer identities in English or Icelandic. This is partly due to the fact that they believe themselves not to be proficient enough in the language but as in the case of English the question of the legitimate speaker and ownership of the language seem to play a role in whether the lyrics writers are able to construct positive L2 user identities. This is in line with Phan’s (2007) argument that there is a relationship between taking ownership of the language and being able to construct positive L2 user identities. Similarly, the participants that were insecure about writing in Icelandic have not been able to construct positive writer identities, which again may be because their Icelandic writing skills are truly very poor but they may also be influenced by other factors such as the strong language ideologies in Iceland that favour good language use (Hálfdánarson, 2005) and native speaker ideologies (Blommaert and Rampton, 2011). Reconstructing identities by changing languages through translation of lyrics can also be a
site of identity struggle where the lyricist is sometimes unable to construct a positive identity with the new version of the song. Language choice is thus closely connected to identity (or linguistic identity) which is again closely connected to how “people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (Norton, 1997, 410; Norton, 2000).
6 Conclusion

This study investigated whether English has become a preferred language to use amongst Icelandic lyricists, sought to identify the reasons behind the lyricists’ language choices and how their choices affect or are influenced by their identity. The participants’ preferred languages depend on various underlying reasons and may change over time and contexts. The main factors affecting the participants’ choices of languages are market and audience (local or international), their perceived proficiency in the languages and the pull of the mother tongue. The two latter factors are connected to their linguistic identity construction and being able to construct (or not) positive writer identities in the languages. The participants that were unable to construct positive writer identities in a language (either English or Icelandic) preferred to use the other language. There seems to be a relationship between taking ownership of the language and being able to construct positive L2 user identities (Phan, 2007). Both languages are sources of identity construction (both positive and negative) for the participants but their Icelandic linguistic identity seems to be much stronger than their English linguistic identities because the language is closer to them personally and culturally. Thus Icelandic is their primary language of identification while English is a second language used mostly for pragmatic reasons.

This is a small study and therefore no generalizations can be drawn from the findings but they can only be seen as to reflect the realities of these particular participants. Furthermore, the scope of inquiry of this study is too wide for it to be able to offer anything else than an idea of what is going on in this context. The relationship between language, culture and identity is close and complex and the participants’ very variable answers and experiences reflect that, since they often introduced unexpected angles on the issue at hand that gave rise to more questions than could be answered by this study. Therefore, more in-depth research is needed to get a more detailed picture of what is going on in this context of English use and particularly when it comes to issues of identity construction. To that end I suggest that future research focus on the relationship between identity and the process of lyrics translation and delve deeper into the issue related to the notion of the legitimate speaker and the ownership of the language. Furthermore, and particularly in relation to the Icelandic language, an investigation into musicians attitudes and possible insecurities about writing in Icelandic
could give a better understanding of the underlying reasons so many choose English over Icelandic, that could be of value for teachers of Icelandic and language authorities in Iceland.

Although this is a small study it gives a valuable insight into the realities of today’s Icelandic musicians/lyricists in relation to their reasons for language choice and their linguistic identity construction. As this has been an under-investigated area within the field of ELF, this study both contributes to the growing body of ELF research and may draw scholars’ attention to this context of ELF use and inspire more research in the area.
Bibliography


Appendix A

Viðtal
Nafn viðmælanda: _______________________

Spurningar
1. Getur þú sagt mér aðeins frá sjálfum/ri þér?
   • Aldur, menntun, avtakna.
2. Hvert er þitt móðurmál?
3. Talar þú og skrifar einhver önnur önnur mál fyrir utan þitt móðurmál? Hver?
4. Hversu fær/a telur þú þig vera í þessum tungumállum?
6. Hvað varst þú gómul/gamall þegar þú hófst að læra ensku?
7. Hversu marga áfanga tókst þú í ensku í framhaldsskóla?
8. Hversu mikilvæg er Íslenskan þér? Hvers vegna?
9. Hversu mikilvæg er Íslenskan þér? Hvers vegna?
10. Gæturðu sagt mér aðeins frá ferlinu þegar þú semur lagatexta?
11. Á hvaða tungumáli skrifar þú venjulega lagatexta?
12. Hvers vegna velur þú að skrifa á þessu tungumáli?
13. Á hvaða tungumáli finnst þér þú best geta verið þú sjálf/sjálfur þegar þú skrifar texta.
14. Einhver sagði það við mig að maður fengi meiri frið eða væri ekki alveg maður sjálfur þegar maður notar enskuna. Hvað finnst þér um þá fullyrðingu?
15. Á hvaða tungumáli finnst þér þú best geta komið hugsunum þínun til skila í textaskrifum?
   • Hvað er það sem er auðveldara eða erfðara við að skrifa á ensku?
   • Hvað er það sem er auðveldara eða erfðara við að skrifa á íslensku?
16. Fyrir hvaða áheyrendahóp skrifar þú? Ert þú að sækja á einhverja ákveðna markaði?
17. Hvaðan sækir þú innbliðstur og efni við í þína texta?
    Menningu eða einhverskonar blöndu)
19. Hver eru þín aðal umfjöllumannafni í þínnum textasmiðum? (Persónuleg eða annað)
20. Eru einhver umræðuefni sem þér finnst erfiðara eða auðveldara að fjalla um á ensku eða íslensku?

21. Hvernig telur þú að þróunin í textasmíðum og tungumálavali hjá íslenskum textasmíðum muni verða á næstu árum? Hvers vegna?

22. Getur verið að það að tala/kunna ensku sé orðið hluti af því að vera íslendingur?

23. Hvað finnst þér um að sifellt fleiri tónlistamenn og textasmiðir ákveða að nota ensku í stað íslensku? Hverjar telur þú ástæðurnar vera?
Appendix B

Interview
Interviewee’s name: ____________________

Questions
1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
   • Age, education, work.
2. What is your first language/mother tongue?
3. Do you write or speak any other languages beside your mother tongue? Which?
4. How proficient do you believe yourself to be in these languages?
5. Have you lived in another country? Where? For how long? What language did you use/learn?
6. How old where you when you first began learning English?
7. How many English courses did you take at secondary school?
8. How important is English to you and why?
9. How important is Icelandic to you and why?
10. Can you tell me a little bit about the process when you write lyrics?
11. In which language do you usually write lyrics?
12. Why do you choose to write in that language (English, Icelandic or both)?
13. In what language do you think you can best be yourself when writing lyrics?
14. Someone said to me that one found more peace or was not quite oneself when using English. What do you think about that assertion?
15. In what language do you think you can best express your thoughts in your lyrics?
   • What, in your opinion is easier or more difficult when writing in English?
   • What, in your opinion is easier or more difficult when writing in Icelandic?
16. For what audience do you write? Are you aiming at a certain market?
17. Where do you get your inspiration and topics for your lyrics from?
18. What culture do you think you mirror in your lyrics? (Icelandic, some English culture or something else)
19. What are the main topics in your lyrics? (Personal or other)
20. Are there any topics you feel are easier or more difficult to write about in English or Icelandic?

21. How do you believe lyrics writing and language choice amongst Icelandic lyrics writers will development in the coming years? Why?

22. Can it be that knowing and being able to speak English has become a part of being Icelandic?

23. How do you feel about that more and more musicians and lyrics writers decide to use English instead of Icelandic? Why do you think that is?