

(My) current issues in the study of the phonology of Icelandic

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In this talk I will present aspects of ongoing research on variation in the phonology of Icelandic, including varieties of **Modern Icelandic** as spoken in Iceland as well as **North American Heritage Icelandic** spoken in Manitoba, Canada.

I will discuss results from studies on intonation, word stress, preaspiration and segmental variation, their implications, and future research questions.

The **intonation** of Icelandic has been studied using read speech as well as map task dialogues. ModIcel and American English have similar nuclear contours in declaratives but different contours in, for example, polar questions ($L^* H-H\%$ in English, $L^*+H/L+H L-L\%$ in ModIcel). Results show that NAMIcel speakers use tonal categories present in the tonal inventories of both ModIcel and English, but they employ them in different ways, suggesting maintenance, transfer from English, and also innovative strategies. We are currently analyzing data targeting regional differences in Icelandic intonation. Results will also help interpret the NAMIcel findings by relating the differences to the origin of the immigrants.

While English is a free word stress language, ModIcel has fixed primary **word stress** on the initial syllable of a word, with very few exceptions. We study word stress in ModIcel and NAMIcel using a picture-naming task, identifying word stress positions in NAMIcel that are deviant from ModIcel, suggesting transfer effects from the majority language English.

Preaspiration is a salient phenomenon of ModIcel. The fact that it is a late acquired phenomenon in first language acquisition as well as its near absence in English could make it vulnerable to cross-linguistic influence, while its contrastive function could have the opposite effect. We show that NAMIcel speakers are aware of the distribution of preaspiration and realize it, but vary in its realization as compared to ModIcel speakers. The results suggest that typologically marked structures, if phonemically relevant, may be phonologically retained in extreme language contact settings.

Finally, regarding **segmental variation**, specific variants have been associated with different regions in Iceland. For Modern Icelandic, recent research indicates that some of the specific features (e.g., voiced pronunciation of sonorants before voiceless stops in the North as opposed to devoiced sonorants elsewhere) are fading out, while others (e.g., *hard speech*, i.e., post-aspiration of /p t k/ after long vowels, also a feature of the North) are maintained. In NAMIcel, similar developments can be observed, despite the lack of contact between ModIcel and NAMIcel. At least in the case of *hard speech*, this cannot be due to transfer assuming that there is no such devoicing in English. Instead, regional features that immigrated to Manitoba, despite not being phonemically relevant, are retained. (This part of the talk is thematically closely related to Ásgrímur & Finnur's presentation and I very much look forward to exchanging results and ideas.)

All in all, the results will hopefully be relevant to (1) the study of the phonology of Icelandic in particular, as well as (2) more generally, the phonological development of languages and their varieties in contact situations.