



Regional pronunciation, attitudes and real-time change: Latest developments

Ásgrímur Angantýsson & Finnur Friðriksson
University of Iceland / University of Akureyri

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Structure of the talk

1. Background
2. Outline and aims of the project
3. Pilot studies
4. Current data and some preliminary results
5. Conclusions and next steps



Background

- **The RÍN project** (Rannsókn á íslensku nútímamáli / Study of present-day Icelandic), which was conducted in the 1980s showed that the regional and social varieties that **Guðfinnsson** (1946) mapped around 40 years earlier had developed in different ways (see Thráinsson and Árnason 1992, and Árnason and Thráinsson 2003).
- Furthermore, Thráinsson et al.'s study of real-time language change (**RAUN**) in the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century showed that moving from one place to another can greatly affect the development of regional phonological features on an individual level (see Thráinsson 2011; on real-time language change see also Sundgren 2002, 2009, Sankoff 2005, Sankoff and Blondeau 2007, Guðmundsdóttir 2008, and Stefánsdóttir and Ingason 2018).
- See Guðmundsdóttir following our talk.



Background

- Those who move away from the core areas of particular dialectal characteristics are e.g. much more likely to change their pronunciation than are those who stay put in their home area (see Höskuldsdóttir 2013 and Thráinsson et al. 2013b).
- **So far, however, the development and fate of regional phonological features in Iceland has not been examined directly in relation to language attitudes and their possible impact, and no overarching data has been gathered regarding the use of the relevant features amongst generations born around 1975 and later.**
- Therefore, **one of the main emphasis of the present study is to include these younger generations** and thus set up a real-time trend study that compares present day teenagers with the teenagers studied in the RÍN project in the 1980s.



Outline and aims of the project

The proposed project aims to investigate:

- **how individuals change their pronunciation** through the lifespan.
- **the extent to which** conscious and subconscious **language attitudes play a role in explaining such real-time linguistic changes**, using the uniquely documented development of local phonological variation in Iceland as a test case.
- the main empirical goal of the project is to **map the current status of the regional pronunciation in Iceland** in such a way that the results can be used for a systematic comparison to those of the three major previous overview studies, i.e. Thráinsson et al. (2013b), Árnason and Thráinsson (2003) and Guðfinnsson (1946).
- the main theoretical impact of the project will be to **integrate attitudinal factors into models of phonological change**.



Summary of phases and tasks by quarters 2023–2025

PHASE	TASK	2023-1	2023-2	2023-3	2023-4	2024-1	2024-2	2024-3	2024-4	2025-1	2025-2	2025-3	2025-4
Preparation	Permissions	█											
	Web tools for data collection	█	█										
First phase	Design of questionnaires	█											
	Pilot study	█	█										
	Recruiting informants	█	█										
	Data collection			█									
	Data analysis			█	█	█	█						
Second phase	Structuring of interviews					█	█						
	Pilot study						█						
	Data collection (interviews)						█	█					
	Processing and analysis of interviews							█	█	█			
	Combining results from first and second phase									█	█		
Deliverables	Writing of articles and conference presentations							█	█	█	█	█	█
	Writing of master's theses 1 and 2			█	█	█	█						
	Writing of master's theses 3 and 4							█	█	█	█		
	Writing of doctoral thesis			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█



The first phase of data collection

Three main types of data will be collected, from 3000 informants aged 12-95 from all around the country (including participants from the RÍN project and BG's study, see section A), in order to get an overview of the current status of the regional dialects in Iceland, including the extent to which they have been passed on to and maintained by new generations, and people's attitudes towards them. These types of data are the following:

- (a) All participants were asked to **take part in a pronunciation test** designed to determine the extent of their use of the relevant variables, both previously established ones and new. The Elan software is used to process and analyse the recordings.
- (b) All participants were asked to **listen to a set of recorded examples**, so-called verbal guises, **of regional dialect or pronunciation from areas other than their home area** (or the dialect area they originate from). Note that these recordings are not taken from the pronunciation test described in (a) above, but specially prepared with selected speakers exhibiting the relevant features.



The first phase of data collection

- (c) All participants were **asked to answer a questionnaire regarding their conscious attitudes towards and general view of their own dialect**. The questionnaire e.g. included questions on
- whether or not they believe themselves to have maintained their original dialect, to what extent this was a conscious decision
 - whether or not it was based on their own attitudes towards the dialect in comparison to the majority dialect.
 - whether they see their dialect as an integral part of their self-identity and whether they use it to varying degrees depending on the social situation. Questions that directly regard their attitudes towards their dialect were also asked.

In addition to this online data collection, **face-to-face interviews** (including a, b, c above) have been conducted **with participants from Guðfinnsson's (1946) study** (see Tómasdóttir and Sigurðardóttir later today).



The main regional variables

- North-East:
 - Post-aspiration of /p, t, k/ after long vowels: *tapa* [tʰa:pʰa] ('lose'), *líka*, [li:kʰa] ('like'), *bíta*, [pi:tʰa] ('bite') as opposed to lack of such post-aspiration.
 - Voiced pronunciation ("raddaður framburður") with voiced sonorants before an aspirated stop: *hempa*, [hempʰa] ('cassock'), *mennta*, [mentʰa] ('educate'), *hjálpa*, [çaulpʰa] ('help') as opposed to voiceless sonorants in this position.
- South-East:
 - *hv*-pronunciation in words like *hvalur*, [xa:lʏr] ('whale') has a voiceless velar fricative [x] in initial position, as opposed to the general *kv*-pronunciation ("kv-framburður") with [kʰv] in this position.
 - monophthongal pronunciation ("skaftfellskur einhljóðaframburður"): *bogi*, [pɔ:ji] ('bow'), *magi*, [ma:ji] ('stomach'), as opposed to the more common diphthongal pronunciation ("tvíhljóðaframburður").
- Westfjords:
 - monophthongal pronunciation ("vestfirskur einhljóðaframburður"): *banki*, [paŋɕi] ('bank') as opposed to the general diphthongal pronunciation [pauŋɕi].



Some additional variables and research topics

- *höggmæli*, i.e. glottalization and/or debuccalisation of plosives preceding nasals: [pjaʔnɪ] *Bjarni* as opposed to [pjatnɪ] (see Sigurjónsdóttir later today).
- affrication of /tj/ clusters in initial position: [tʃʰjalt] ‘tent’ as opposed to [tʰjalt].
- the tendency in Icelandic towards diphthongization of long monophthongs in words like *gömul* [ɣœ:] ‘old’ and *net* [eɛ:] ‘net’.
- monophthongization of short diphthongs in Icelandic words like *grøent* ([ai] > [a]) ‘green’ and *haust* ([œi] > [œ]).
- (lack of) palatalization (*fangelsi* ‘prison’: [faʊŋçɛlsɪ] / [faʊŋkɛlsɪ]).
- regional variation in intonation (see Dehé later today).



Pilot study 1

Guðnadóttir (2021) – real-time changes and attitudes in the southeast

- 7 participants (aged 50-64) from RÍN, who then showed high scores for the southeastern variables
- All born in Skaftafellssýsla
- Same pronunciation tests as were used in RÍN, with updates from RAUN + interviews regarding attitudes
- *Hv*-pronunciation in decline; only 1 participant retains a high score
- Monophthongal pronunciation maintained to a larger degree; 4 participants retain a high score – 1 appears to have dropped it
- No statistical analysis of attitudes but signs in interviews of positive attitudes towards own dialect, and that where it is in decline it can be traced to external pressures and attitudes outside the local area.



Pilot study 2

Sigurjónsdóttir (2022) – real-time changes and attitudes in the north

- Participants (18 of 59) who originally took part in Gunnþórsdóttir's (1991) BA-project
- All from Dalvík and neighbouring areas; 7 still live in Dalvík, 4 in Akureyri and 7 in the capital region
- Same pronunciation tests as were used in RÍN + questionnaire on attitudes. 30 years between tests; participants 15-16 years of age in 1991, mid-forties in this study.
- Clear decline of northern voicing (raddaður framburður), particularly amongst those who have moved away
- Post-aspiration of /p,t,k/ (harðmæli) maintained to a larger degree, particularly amongst those who still live in the north
- Certain signs of attitudinal influence; the higher the level of positivity towards the northern „dialect“, the higher the level of usage
- Some have made conscious efforts to maintain the northern variables, even with the aim of carrying them on to the next generation.



Initial steps of second phase

Research team 2023:

Ása Bergný Tómasdóttir

Dagbjört Guðmundsdóttir

Eva Hrund Sigurjónsdóttir

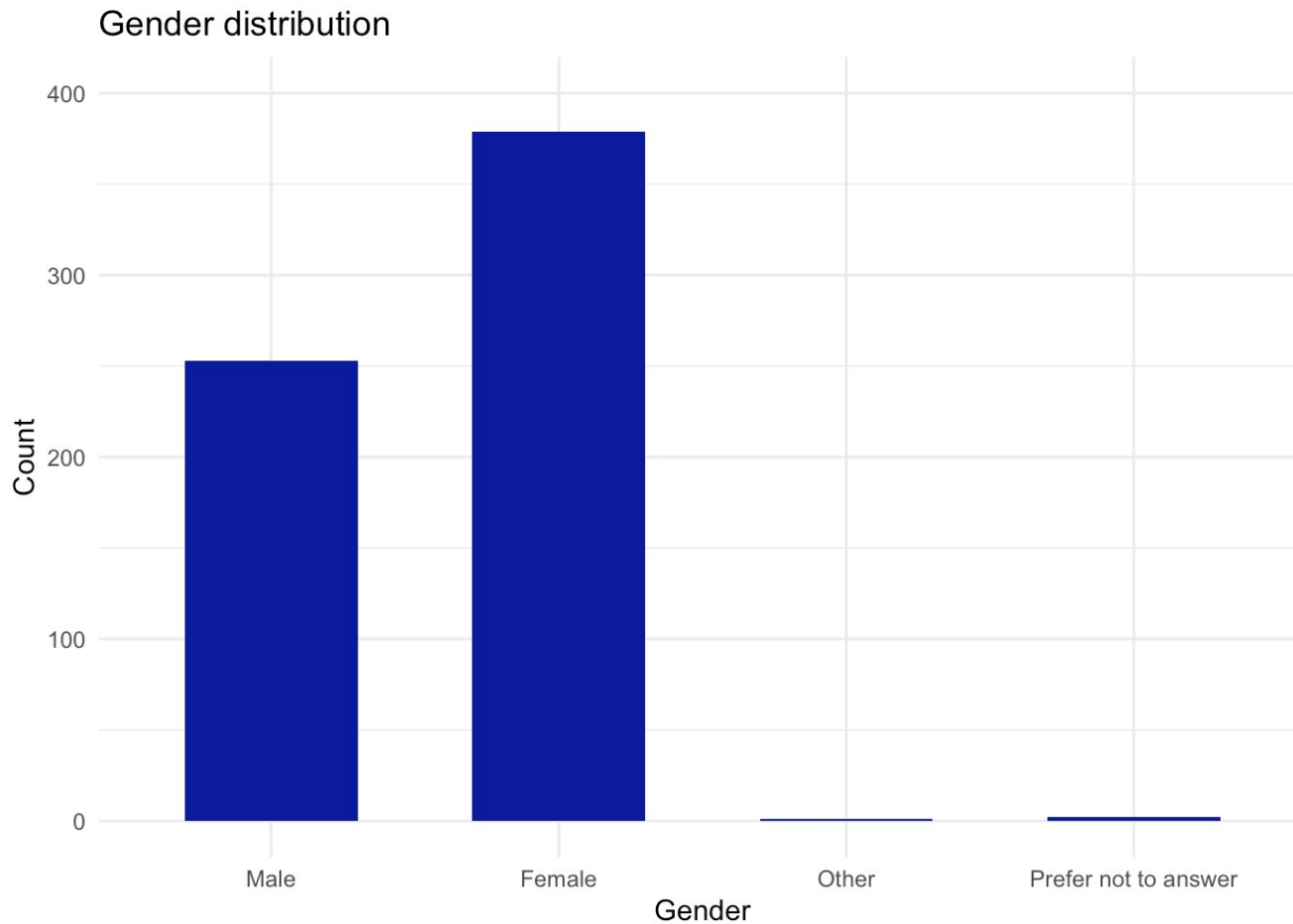
Kolbeinn Héðinn Friðriksson

Salome Lilja Sigurðardóttir

See presentations later today!

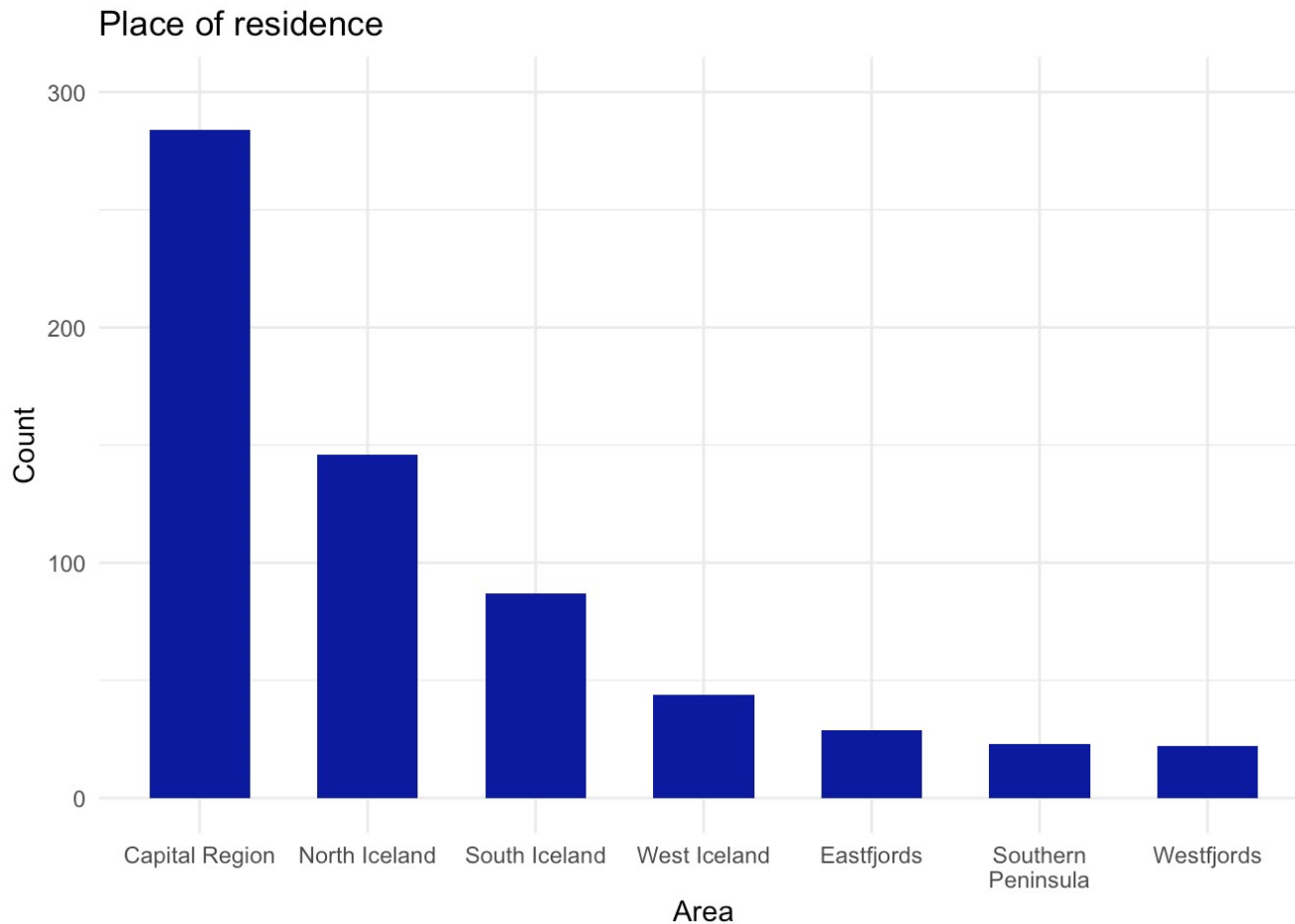


Current data set w.r.t. gender



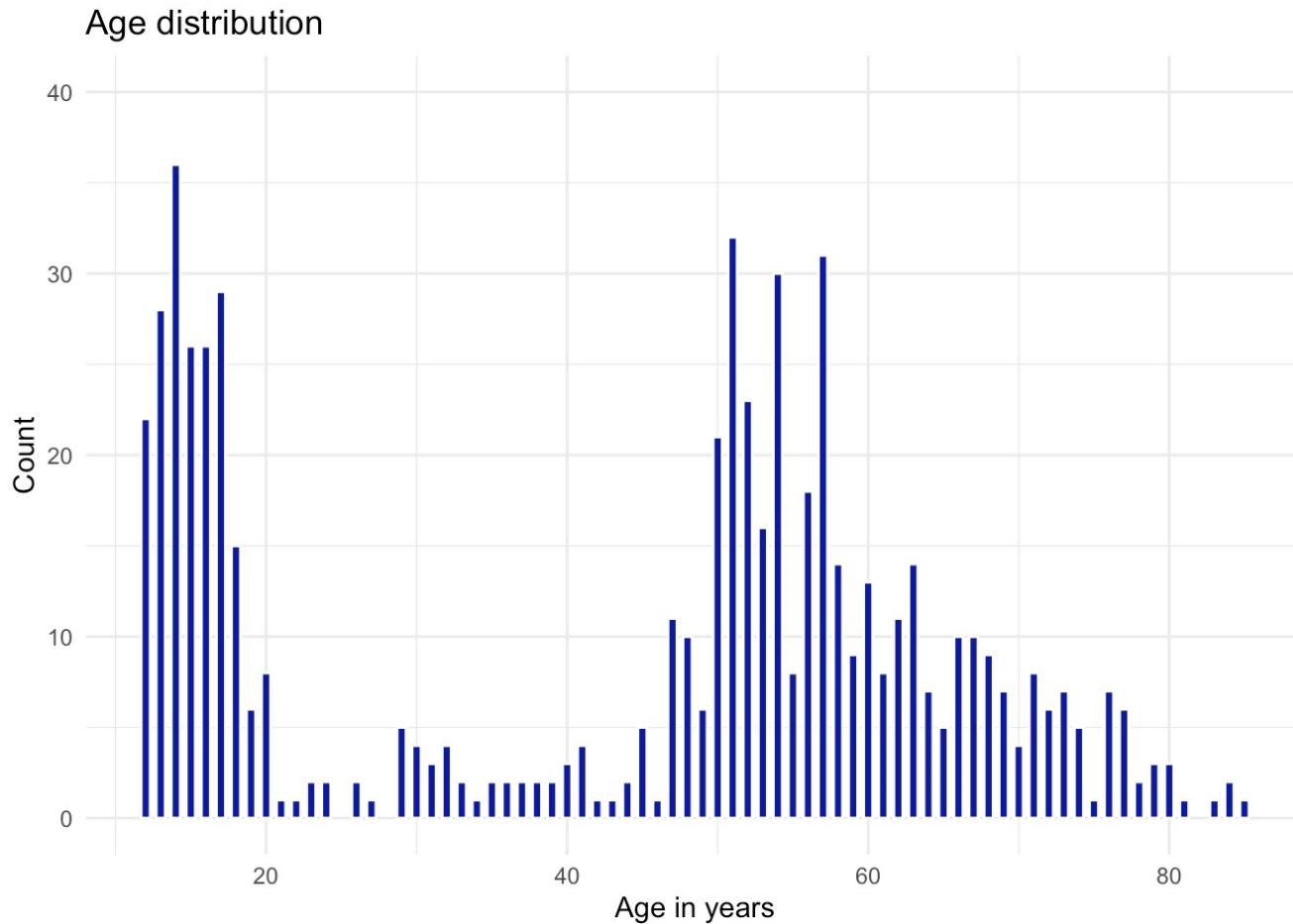


Current data set w.r.t. location





Current data set w.r.t. age





First step of analysis

- The youngest generation (born 2000 and later)
- North-East: 25 participants
- South-East: 25 participants
- “Neutral” area: 25 participants
- The relevant regional variables analysed
- Each participant was given an average grade according to their usage of the variables:
100 = no use, 200 = fully consistent use



Northern variants

Voiced pron.	Hard speech	Postal code
100	114,2857143	565
100	123,8095238	550
114,2857143	169,5652174	606
100	165,2173913	650
100	113,0434783	641
100	147,826087	680
100	152,173913	616
100	113,6363636	603
100	108,6956522	550
100	140,9090909	660
100	104,3478261	603
100	100	550
100	147,826087	640
100	113,0434783	600
100	125	610
171,4285714	186,9565217	625
100	145,4545455	604
100	152,173913	600
100	169,5652174	640
100	104,3478261	530
100	104,7619048	580
100	108,6956522	530
100	181,8181818	600
100	136,3636364	600
100	109,0909091	600
103,43	133,54	



Southern variants

Monophthongal pron.	Hv-pron.	Postal code
100	100	850
100	100	803
133	100	900
100	100	840
100	100	801
100	100	815
100	100	803
100	100	825
100	100	845
133	100	820
100	100	803
100	100	780
100	100	780
100	100	845
100	100	806
133	100	900
100	100	806
100	100	840
100	100	805
150	100	780
100	100	861
150	100	780
100	100	804
100	100	881
100	100	801
108	100	



Preliminary conclusions and next steps

- Pilot studies and first results indicate the continuance of trends established in other studies
 - further weakening of *hv*-pronunciation and voiced pronunciation
 - some maintenance of monophthongization and post-aspiration
 - possible links between attitudes and use of variables
 - preservation of variables stronger among those who remain in the home community
- Next steps:
 - full phonological analysis of the data collected online in 2023
 - link data on attitudes on data on variables (see Bade later today)
 - completion of second phase in the summer of 2024 (in-depth interviews regarding attitudes)



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