

**MODERN ICELANDIC PHONOLOGY
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
A BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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Modern Icelandic attracted the attention of theoretical linguists quite early on, but it was only in the last decades of the 20th century that its voice became distinctly audible. The complexities of the language, particularly its syntax, have led some linguists to pose the facetious question of whether Icelandic is a natural language. The phonological system, or actually chunks of the system, have been analysed using the different models – structuralism, generative phonology, post-generative phonology but a comprehensive account of the language has yet to be attempted. It frequently happened that theoretical models underwent significant changes or collapsed altogether before a reasonably complete description could be produced using their guidelines. The time has come for a comprehensive presentation of the Icelandic phonological system which would be relatively unaffected by the vagaries that hastily produced theoretical frameworks are prone to develop. The conviction that the time is ripe for a synthesis has prompted the idea of compiling a listing of theoretically-oriented studies of Icelandic phonology. The following pages attempt to meet this need. A few words are in order about the content and the limitations of such a compilation.

As indicated by the title, this is a bibliography of Modern Icelandic phonology. Hence, it excludes primarily phonetic studies, including dialectal investigations, of which there have been quite a few in the period in focus. The difference between a purely phonetic description and a phonetic description with a phonological tilt is not always easy to draw, hence certain decisions have been made both to include and exclude individual studies, decisions which might appear questionable. Purely experimental descriptions or articulatorily-based dialect studies have been excluded on principle. Readers interested in phonetic studies should consult Höskuldur Þráins-son's 1980 bibliography listed below.

Similarly, historical studies have been excluded, and for this reason some very prominent names in Icelandic historical scholarship are represented only marginally in the list below. As in the case of phonetic studies with a phonological twist, there were times when it was necessary to make a choice concerning analyses of historical

developments as revealed in the present-day language. The guide line followed was the focus of the contribution: if it was historical, the study was omitted even if some of the conclusions had synchronic implications. This explains why there are so few citations of Hreinn Benediktsson or Michail Steblin-Kamenskij, to mention just two examples. Additionally, traditional historical phonology draws heavily on assumed or reconstructed phonetic forms without concerning itself too much with the linguistic structure, hence it would also be disqualified on the phonetic criterion mentioned above.

Modern phonology developed as a response to the realisation of the insufficiency of phonetics and its tools; its major claim is that the sound structure of language is governed by principles not reducible to phonetic considerations. Some phonological trends explicitly affirmed the role of non-phonetic criteria in phonology, including morphological and lexical factors. For this reason it has been decided to include in the list below studies which might be termed morphophonemic or those where phonological generalisations are claimed to be influenced by grammatical factors. Purely morphological studies have been omitted, however.

Finally, the list includes only published materials. No mention is made of dissertations or otherwise unpublished studies and papers. Icelandic names are arranged by the patronymic, as outside Iceland, rather than the first names, as is the custom in Iceland, hence, for example, Kristján Árnason appears as Árnason. The cut-off line is the year 2000. Despite the limited scope of the bibliography, it is hoped that it will serve students and scholars interested in Icelandic phonology and phonological theory. The compiler welcomes information about overlooked contributions, and promises to rectify the omissions at the earliest opportunity.

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