

Hickey, T.M. (2012) 'ILARSP: A Grammatical Profile of Irish' In Martin Ball and Paul Fletcher (Eds). *The Languages of LARSP*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters., pp.149-166  
Chapter 9

## ***ILARSP: A grammatical profile of Irish<sup>1</sup>***

TINA HICKEY

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter explores the adaptation of LARSP to Irish<sup>1</sup>. The data are from typical L1 acquisition, but this work also contributes to the knowledge-base needed in the clinical assessment of Irish in atypical acquisition. At a wider level, the crosslinguistic study of language acquisition contributes to the discrimination of putative universals from language-specific strategies (Slobin, 2006), and the development of grammatical assessment instruments in a range of languages is a critical aspect of such crosslinguistic study. As Ball notes in this volume regarding the construction of a Welsh LARSP, the contrastive analysis possible as a result of the retention of the same basic framework allows the detection of features peculiar to particular languages, as well as those common to them. The successful adaptation of LARSP to a number of other languages such as Dutch, French, Welsh, Panjabi and Hebrew as detailed in other chapters of this book indicates that it is a valuable instrument both for intralinguistic and crosslinguistic analysis.

A profiling method such as LARSP is particularly attractive in examining the acquisition of languages such as Irish, since relatively little is still known about structural development in the language. Irish is designated by the EU both as a 'regional, minority

---

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter was published in the journal *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*. This revised and expanded version is published with the permission of Informa PLC.

language’ and, more recently, as an official language of the EU. It is described as ‘the first official language’ in the Constitution of the Republic of Ireland, although most citizens are English-speaking. While Irish has significant State support in terms of an established place in the primary school curriculum in the Republic of Ireland, it still lacks a body of research on fundamental aspects of the acquisition, teaching, and learning of the language to support it. The second-language acquisition of Irish has received some attention, such as in Owens’ (1992) case study of her daughter’s early L2 acquisition of Irish, Mhic Mhathúna’s (1995) study of early SLA, and Hickey’s (1997, 1999, 2001, 2007) studies of children’s acquisition of Irish in immersion preschools, while Ó Duibhir (2009) looked at older L2 learners aged 11-12 years. Looking specifically at L1 acquisition, McKenna & Wall (1986) carried out an early study of the acquisition of Irish syntax, and Hickey (1987, 1991) looked at the use of basic measures such as MLU in studies of Irish L1 acquisition, while Hickey (1990a) examined the issue of word order in children’s acquisition of this VSO language. Hickey (1993) examined the role of formulas in Irish acquisition data. Goodluck, Guilfoyle & Harrington (2001, 2006) have examined aspects of Irish syntax from a formal perspective, while Cameron & Hickey (2011) <sup>2011</sup> ~~(2008)~~ have taken a constructivist approach to a corpus of Irish L1 acquisition.

Phonological development in Irish has been examined by Brennan (2004). O’ Toole & Fletcher (2008, 2010) have examined lexical development in Irish-dominant children using an Irish adaptation of the Communicative Development Inventory (ICDI). Recent research such as Singleton, Harrington & Henry (2000), Hickey & Cameron-Faulkner (2009), Hickey (2009), and O’ Toole & Fletcher (2008, 2010) have given explicit consideration to issues of parental language background, language dominance,

bilingualism, and language mixing, given the now overwhelming influence of English even on young children acquiring Irish as L1.

Despite the modest increase in research on the L1 and L2 acquisition of Irish, the grammatical development in Irish first-language acquisition remains under-researched. A symposium entitled the *Assessment and Profiling of Irish Language Development* in July 2010 found that speech and language therapists who encounter children for whom Irish is the/a primary language of the home are still lacking norms and quick methods of assessment for Irish development (see O'Toole & Hickey, in preparation), though they were aware of the LARSP adaptation to Irish. This adaptation was developed in order to allow monitoring of typical development in samples of output from the same child over time, and between children. An earlier adaptation of LARSP to Irish was constructed by Hayden (1984), but the adaptation reported in this chapter is applied to data from an acquisition study. It was based on data collected in the mid-1980s from four children living in an Irish-speaking district (Gaeltacht) in the south-west of Ireland whose acquisition was studied between the ages of 1;4 and 3;6 years. These children were from Irish-speaking homes, and while they had varying levels of exposure to English on television and from visitors, they were Irish dominant, and in fact had very little English at the time of data collection, especially the two younger children.

In this discussion, the adaptation of LARSP to Irish will be referred to as Irish LARSP or ILARSP<sup>2</sup>. The question of whether to use Irish or English on the chart itself was problematic. As a profile of Irish, there is a strong case to be made for presenting the chart in Irish. However, it was thought that retaining the English terms would be helpful for potential users of the chart, since most of them would already be familiar with the

English LARSP. In addition, as Ball notes (this volume), there is at present a convention that theoretical labels such as NP are not translated. If it were considered advantageous to translate the chart and its categories into Irish at some time in the future, that would require a change from the single-letter abbreviation(s), since some Irish categories begin with the same letter. A chart with Irish labels might also be confusing to those accustomed to the English chart, since there would be a change in the function represented by some labels. For example, A on an Irish chart would represent the subject (*Ainmní*), and C the object (*Cuspoir*). 6

This adaptation of LARSP was mainly based on data from three Irish-speaking children at different stages of development (with some data from a fourth, older child included). The examples used here are from the children's data, are provided with a gloss and a translation, and are kept to a minimum in order to make the discussion accessible to non-Irish speakers. Following Ball (1988) there is no discussion here of the transcription or scanning of the data, as the methods used do not differ significantly from the procedure described by Crystal, Fletcher & Garman (1981). The samples on which ILARSP analyses were based were selected for their representativeness of a full session with each child. The percentage of utterances from Stage II or later was calculated for the transcript of an entire session, and the first 100 major Irish utterances after the 51st, which contained a similar percentage of such utterances (+/-5%), were selected for analysis. This ensured that the sample was representative, and was not, for example, depressed by a concentration of Stage I utterances. Before discussing the design of the ILARSP chart, a brief description of some of the salient characteristics of Irish is given.

## 2. Outline of features of Irish grammar

Irish is an almost paradigmatic example of a VSO language, according to Greenberg's (1966) universals. The basic order of elements is: Verb + Subject + X, where X can be object, indirect object, adverbial, prepositional phrase, verbal noun, etc. Negatives and interrogatives are marked by the appropriate particle in front of the verb. Stenson (1981:17) characterized Irish as an 'inflectional language, tending more towards isolating than polysynthetic in general'. There are some 14 irregular verbs in Irish, but apart from these the verb paradigm is highly regular, with tense and person forms based on the root.

The Irish alphabet has only 18 letters, extended by a length mark over vowels, but it has a high phoneme count. While this varies between the three main dialects (Ulster, Munster and Connacht Irish), Greene (1966:16) noted that it is not likely to be lower than 60 (the difficulties arising from Irish orthography's attempt to represent these are analysed in greater depth by Hickey & Stenson, 2011). A significant feature of Irish is the two series of consonants, traditionally referred to as 'broad' and 'slender'. Broad consonants include velar consonants and velarized labials and dentals. Slender consonants include palatal consonants and palatalized labials and dentals. Examples (1)-(4) show minimal pairs of broad and slender consonants in different word positions, with the palatalized consonant in the right column marked with a following /' according to the norms of Irish phonetic transcription.

	Broad (velar) consonant			Slender (palatalized) consonant		
(1)	<i>buí</i>	/bi:/	'yellow'	<i>bí</i>	/b'i:/	'be'
(2)	<i>bó</i>	/bo:/	'cow'	<i>beo</i>	/b'o:/	'alive'
(3)	<i>bád</i>	/ba:d/	'boat'	<i>báid</i>	/ba:d'/	'boats'
(4)	<i>teas</i>	/t'as/	'heat'	<i>tais</i>	/tas'/	'damp'

Note that the ‘i’ in *báid* and *tais* in examples (3) and (4) are not syllabified as /id/ or /is/ but signal palatalisation of the following /d/ and /f/ (= /s’/).

Another prominent feature of Irish is its initial mutations. The initial consonants of words may change when governed by various particles, among them the definite article, possessives, and question and negative particles. These initial mutations, a characteristic feature of Celtic languages, are pervasive in Irish. The initial consonant mutations of the dialect studied here, the Munster dialect, are lenition, eclipsis, and /h/ before initial-position vowels (Ó Sé, 2000). These mutations were originally phonetically conditioned, but now signal various morphological processes. With lenition, stops and the nasal [m] are replaced by fricatives usually at the same place of articulation, and fricatives are treated as follows: [f]→Ø, [s]→[h]. Orthographically this is marked by the letter ‘h’ following the lenited consonant (e.g. *cóta* ‘a coat’ *mo chóta* ‘my coat’). With eclipsis, a voiced segment becomes nasalized, a voiceless segment voiced, marked orthographically by writing the eclipsing consonant before the eclipsed one (e.g. *gort* ‘a field’ *in gort* ‘in a field’). Other features of the language that are notable are the existence of two verbs that correspond to the English copula. They are the copula *is* and the substantive verb *bí*. The copula generally predicates inherent qualities, while the substantive verb predicates more temporal qualities such as location or transient state (Stenson, 1981:94). There are parallels with *ser* and *estar* in Spanish, although there are also differences in usage.

### 3. Design

The LARSP profile is organized structurally as sentence, clause, phrase and word types. There was a precedent for applying this organisation to Irish also in Ward’s (1974) description of Munster Irish (also the dialect of this study), where the language was described at sentence, phrase, and word level. An exploratory attempt to analyse Irish data with LARSP categories showed that there are many categories common to both

languages, as Ball also found in his adaptation to Welsh (see Chapter 7). Of course, the order in many of these categories is inappropriate for Irish as for Welsh; for example, the SV of LARSP needs to be changed to VS on ILARSP, since Irish is a strong VSO language. However, it is not enough to find a general ‘fit’ between the English LARSP chart and Irish categories, since care must also be taken to ensure that the Irish chart is comprehensive and representative of the structures of the language. Thus, there was need for some adjustment of the chart in order to adapt it to the requirements of the language, and this will be shown below in the description of ILARSP.

Ball (1988) chose to restrict his LLARSP chart for Welsh to clause and phrase-level structures, with a separate comprehensive chart for morphological development (LLARSP-M) and another chart (LLARSP-T) for recording word-initial consonant mutations. In analysing the Irish data, a separate word-level chart was used, containing the maximum of information initially, but in the course of using this in data analysis, it was possible to whittle it down to a number of categories, now represented in the word-level column. In order to expedite analysis, it is suggested that users of the chart use these general categories in cases where this level is not the focus of assessment. Where this is the case, the most satisfactory method for an in-depth analysis of word-level phenomena is the use of particular subheadings under these general categories. It was considered that the advantage of having a fuller word-level representation on **a** separate chart was offset by the disadvantage of reducing the range of the language represented on the ILARSP chart and fragmenting the profile. In addition, it was felt that the detail required at this level was not great for about the first three stages, and that the best way to indicate the paucity of word-level phenomena in this period was to maintain the integrity of the chart.

At later stages, it is suggested that the user should note in detail the particular structures used at this level using sub-headings under the general headings given.

Ball (1988:56) noted that even without comprehensive developmental data on grammatical development in a language, ‘certain predictions can be made about language development . . .[such as that] the LARSP distinctions between one-word and two-element stages, for example, will also hold for Welsh’. This is also true in the case of Irish, but in addition to such broad predictions, the allocation of structures to particular stages in ILARSP is based on the acquisition of three participants for most of the stages. However, as the sample is so small, age ranges are not discussed here.

### 3.1 Clause division in ILARSP

The most striking difference between the Irish chart and the LARSP chart **is** the Roman notBOLD separation of the Negative column from Statement, and its placement between the Command and Question columns (see Fig. 1). Irish shows a regularity in the formation of the negative and interrogative which is not seen in English. Given the extreme regularity of the declarative, negative and interrogative systems in Irish, it seems that carrying over the practice in LARSP of treating negatives with statements (with questions separate) in the Irish chart would be to impose a framework on the language that ignores one of its basic structural features. In Irish the interrogative and negative are achieved by the presence of clitics before the verb of the positive declarative sentence, for example:

(5) *Tháinig Sean isteach go luath* 'Came John in early' > 'John came in early '

(6) *Ar tháinig Sean isteach go luath?* 'Q came John in early?' > 'Did John come in early?'



(7) *Níor tháinig Sean isteach go luath* 'Neg came John in early' > 'John did not come in early'

(8) *Nár tháinig Sean isteach go luath?* 'Neg-Q came John in early' > 'Didn't John come in early?'

It could, in fact, be argued that interrogation and negation should be treated at phrase level, since they are achieved in Irish by the presence of clitics in the verb group. There are, however, considerable advantages in treating negation at clause level. It allows representation of the similarity of negative questions and negative statements by collapsing the columns at the appropriate points to allow for this blending of function. Maintaining the communicative distinction drawn by LARSP between statements, questions, and commands is reasonable in functional terms, and the additional separation of negatives from statements allows the representation of the overlap not only in syntactic realization between questions and negative, but also the functional blending of interrogative and negative and command and negative. We know that children early on use utterances with the function of commands, negatives, and questions as well as statements, and it appears that the most insightful way to profile Irish acquisition is to display these functions separately.

#### 4. ILARSP

Sections A-D of the LARSP chart are reproduced on the Irish chart, since they are not language specific. The second part of section A, entitled *code-switching*, is based on Ball's LLARSP chart. While the children studied were from Irish-speaking homes in 's Gaeltacht such communities, they were nevertheless exposed to some English from television, or Gaeltacht tourists who stayed with the families in the summer months. The participant children had

some English words, such as *dirty*, *sweetie*, and *OK*. One child began to attend an Irish-medium pre-school at about 2;4 and quickly acquired some English phrases from monolingual English speakers in the group. In more recent years the extent of exposure to English has increased considerably, and there is significant concern about language attenuation and convergence (Hickey, 2009). Thus, it is important to have a place on the chart where such use of English can be marked. However, it is recommended that if the child's use of English is extensive, then it should be analysed on the LARSP chart. If his or her English use is limited to a number of phrases and words, then the tokens of words and phrase-types should be counted at the bottom of the chart, since this may also give an indication of formulaic use.

{Figure 1 about here}

Figure 1 ILARSP Chart

#### 4.1 Stage I

In analysing data from the ILARSP chart, only Major utterances in Irish were used. Utterances with English phrases or clauses were not included (although those with a commonly used English word, such as *Tahhair dom sweetie* 'Give me a sweet' were). Minor sentences such as *neó* (Ó Siadhail's (1973) spelling of the Irish pronunciation of the English negative using a palatalised 'n'), vocatives, social stereotypes, and 'huh'?' (included because of its high frequency in the children tested) were noted under Stage I Minor. The structures listed in LARSP Stage I are extremely simple, but ILARSP lists them in more detail, so that a more comprehensive picture of the one-word stage is

b Tabhair

gathered. This is particularly useful in studies of normal acquisition, but if this level of detail is not required, the user can simply ignore the categories Adj, Adv, and Dem. The structure Neg-V listed in the Negative column covers the use of *níl* (Neg-be-Pres), the negative of the present tense of the verb ‘to be’. This was sometimes used as a general negative reply, although it is only correct in reply to a question containing the present tense of the verb ‘to be’. There is no structure listed in the Question column, since it is not possible to use a question clitic alone, and this was never observed in the data.

However, children acquiring Irish bilingually in recent years have been noted to use

*ceard* ‘what’ as a one-word interrogative, possibly the result of convergence with English, and such use could be noted in the Stage I Question column. é céard

## 4.2 Stage II

There are more divergences between LARSP and ILARSP at Stage II. However, the Command column remains the same, with VX for utterances such as *Oscail é* ‘Open it’ and *Tabhair dom* ‘Give me’. A negative imperative is included in the collapsed column between Command and Negative, NegimpV, for utterances such as *Ná dein* ‘Don’t’. The déan new structures in the Negative column reflect developmental strategies of expressing negative in Irish. It was found that one of the children’s earliest and most frequent negatives was the English *no* (pronounced in Irish as *neó*, with a slender ‘n’).

Examination of input to the children revealed that adults often preceded a negative utterance to children with a stressed *neó*, before the correct Irish negative. In the children’s speech, it was combined with a range of word classes, as in *Neó bainne* ‘No milk’ or *Neó dul* ‘No going’. Neg V was used for the correct Irish negative in, for

example, *Ní raibh* ‘Not was’ or a fairly frequent negative form used by the children *Ní\* thit* ‘Not fell’ (using the general negative particle instead of the past-tense marked *níor*). The last category, Neg-VX, was a development from the Stage-I use of *níl*, the present tense negative of the verb ‘to be’, and usually occurred with nouns as in *Níl Bran* ‘Bran is-not’.

In the Question column, the structure QX represents many open questions in Irish. The children’s frequent *Cad é sin?* (‘What it that?’ > ‘What’s that?’) was analysed as Stage II, as a variant of *cad sin* (which is also well formed but very infrequent), and co-reference was marked at Transitional Stage II-III in the category C-R, because the pronoun *é* is co-referential with the subject (the demonstrative *sin* ‘that’) and the question word. The new structure in Stage-II questions was *(an) V*, which represented *yes/no*-questions such as *an raibh?* (be-Past Questions), or *an bhfuil?* (be-Present-question). The question clitic *an* should be marked as optional on the grounds that it is often elided in adult speech when the following verb is the dependent form of irregular verbs used in questions.

In Stage-II statements, one of the main differences from LARSP is the change in word order. SV has become VS, and this reversal is applied throughout the chart. Irish is a strong VSO language, and the unmarked word order in simple sentences is VSOX, where X includes adverbials of different kinds, prepositional phrases, etc. For example:

(9) *Cheannaigh Máire leabhar do Sheán*

'Bought Maire a-book Prep Seán' >

'Máire bought a book for Seán

No clause constituent may intervene between the verb and subject in a simple sentence. However, where aspect is marked by the combination of the verb ‘to be’ and the verbal noun (rather than by the habitual tenses), the order of such a sentence is:

(10) *Tá mé ag scríobh*

'Be I Prt write(Verbal N) '

'I am writing'

Example (10) would be analysed as VSVn at Stage III of the ILARSP chart. It was decided to analyse sentences with verbal nouns marking aspect separately from simple sentences, since there was perceived to be a developmental significance in the use of such utterances. In a study of word order in Irish acquisition (Hickey, 1990a), it was found that SVn marked the children's earliest frequent verb use, and analysing it as VS as on Ball's LLARSP chart would obscure both the omission of the auxiliary and the later introduction and comparatively lower frequency of simple verbs. Thus, VS at Stage II can stand for well-formed utterances with an intransitive verb such as *Thit baba* ('Fell baby' > 'Baby fell') or immature or elliptical utterances such as *Tá bó* 'Is cow'.

VSVn utterances are not treated as expansions of VS at the transitional level, in accordance with work by Stenson (1976) and McCloskey (1983), who did not treat this construction as a VP. However, McCloskey did argue convincingly that the progressive construction itself constitutes a surface VP, which he called a ProgP, with the head of this ProgP, the sequence *ag+ Vn* (PVn) being the smallest ProgP there is. The main difference between the LARSP procedure on this issue and the ILARSP one is that in the Irish chart there is no Aux category and, therefore, Aux cannot expand a VP. Instead, the Aux equivalent is included explicitly in such categories as VSVn. If we retain the expansions

**S, C, O, and A**, and restrict V expansion to PVn, VnV-part, or VnVn, calling it VGp (verb group rather than VP in order to underline the distinction), then no information is lost and comparability of a sort is retained with the English chart, while at the same time an essential feature of the language is fully represented on the chart.

Structures such as SC, SO, VC, and VO are retained. Subject-initial utterances were found to be frequent in the children's data (see Hickey, 1990a), mainly due to the omission of the verb 'to be'. Thus, many categories in Stage-II Clause represent reduced or elliptical utterances, with the exception of CopX (*is ea*, which is the reply to copular utterances) and Dem X such as *Seo píosa* 'Here's a piece' or *Sin é daidí* 'That's daddy', where the co-referentiality of *é* with the subject and complement is marked at Transitional Stage II-III. Dem X utterances are traditionally analysed as having an implicit copula (i.e. *is eo píosa*), but it was decided to mark them separately in profiling development in order not to overestimate control of the copula at an early stage when such Dem X utterances are common and may be formulaic (see Hickey, 1993).

It is often difficult to decide whether an utterance such as *Mamáí dána* 'Mammy naughty' should be analysed as SC or NAdj. Crystal, Fletcher & Garman (1981) noted that such utterances are often ambiguous even in English, where normal word order distinguishes them. In Irish this ambiguity is greater, since the normal word order of the full VSC utterance is *tá mamáí dána*. In the children's speech, the verb was often dropped from such utterances. Crystal *et al.* recommended the analysis of stress in attempting to resolve this ambiguity, but this is not helpful in Irish. A conservative policy was adopted here that all noun-adjective combinations occurring alone would be marked on the ILARSP chart as SC, while those which occur as expansions of an element in a 2+

element construction would be marked as NAdj. It is recognized that this is not ideal, but it appears to be preferable to making inconsistent and arbitrary decisions on this matter.

Other differences from the LARSP chart in the marking of Stage-II Phrase categories are the analysis of utterances such as *leaba \*mamai* as NN, but with the possibility of marking the absence of the lenition mutation under the asterisk column next to N + N at word level. The category NN(-c) is included because it was found to be relatively frequent at this stage for utterances such as *Mamái daidí* ‘Daddy [and] Mamaí daidí mammy’. Int-X was moved to Stage-III Phrase, because, on the basis of the data currently available, it was not used until other Stage-III constructions became frequent. PVn is introduced at Stage-II Phrase in order to indicate the use of the aspect marker *ag* before verbal nouns, as in *ag ithe* (‘at eating’ > ‘eating’). Thus, what McCloskey termed ProgP is marked as a V expansion and as PVn at Stage II Phrase so that its impact on VGp can be distinguished from other V expanders. There is a precedent for such a double marking in that Aux V is marked as a V expansion on LARSP, while Aux is also marked separately at phrase level.

### 4.3 Stage III

In Stage III Commands the only category is VXY since the *let* and *do* categories are not appropriate for Irish. The NegVX category marks utterances containing negation of verbs other than the verb ‘to be’ as well as the suppleted form *níl* of that verb. The negative question category NegQV marks utterances such as *Nach bhfuil?* (‘Not-QPresent is?’ > ‘Isn’t it?’) and *Nár tháinig?* (‘Not-Q-Pat come?’ > ‘Didn’t [he] come?’). It may be that Stage III is too early to place productive use of such structures, but some of them were

used, at least formulaically, at about this stage. Utterances that appeared to be formulaic were analysed at the stage appropriate to the construction, but were marked with a dagger so that their questionable productivity was clear. In fact, the use of a Stage-III structure by a child whose utterances are mainly Late Stage I/Early Stage II is a pointer that that utterance may not be productive.

The two question categories at this stage, QVX and QXY, distinguish the usual *wh*-questions of the type *Cá bhfuil baa?* ‘Where are baa (sheep)?’ and another, frequent type, *Cén rud é sin?* (‘What thing that?’ > ‘What’s that?’). This is an extended form (*Cad é an rud é sin?*) of *Cad é sin?* ‘What’s that?’, and the decision was made to mark it separately at a later stage (marking co-reference on the transitional line), since its use began later. *An VX* marks more complex *yes/no*-questions than those in Stage II, such as (*An gcionn tu?* ‘You see?’ and (*An bhfuil seacláid?* (‘Q is chocolate?’ > ‘Do [you] have chocolate?’) Such utterances may still be reduced or elliptical.

New categories at State-III clause level are mainly extensions of new categories introduced in the previous stage. The CopXY category represents utterances such as *Is liomsa é* (‘Cop with-me-emphatic it’ > ‘It’s mine’) as well as *\*Mise garsúinín maith* (‘[Be] I a-little-boy good’ > ‘I’m a good little boy’). It was decided to analyse the latter as CopXY rather than as the simpler SC at Stage II because there appeared to be evidence of a developmental split between the early SC pattern, already discussed, and the later copular SC pattern which is a copular identification sentence (the more normal order for such a sentence would be *garsúinín maith mise*). The CopXY category also covers identification sentences which are common in this dialect, such as:

(12) *Capall is ea é* ‘It’s a horse’



Ó Sé (personal communication) points out that in this case what he calls the indefinite ('neuter') pronoun *ea* refers not only to the Complement *capall* 'horse' but is also coreferential with the Subject *é*. The word order of such copular sentences warrants their representation by separate categories on the ILARSP chart.

New categories at Stage-III phrase level are Adv, which comprises static and dynamic adverbs such as *amuigh* 'outside--static' and *anuas* 'down from--dynamic'. It was found that such adverbs were used quite frequently by the children, and their use was obscured if they were marked only as an A component of a clause structure. Thus *Daidi amuigh* 'Daddy outside' was analysed as SA, with static/dynamic adverbs (Adv(s/d)) marked at Stage III Phrase level, while *Baby istigh sa chotai* 'baby inside in the cot' was marked as:

(13) *Baby istigh sa chotai* ('Baby inside in-the cot' > 'Baby in the cot')

S	A	<u>A</u>	Stage III Clause
		Adv Pr-D N	
		Stg III Phr Stg III Phr	

It was found useful to mark dynamic adverbs of this type as a subscript and static ones as a superscript after the Adv category. A similar method was used with the Pron category: Subject pronouns were marked as superscripts while object pronouns were marked as subscripts. PrPn represents the category of Prepositional Pronouns which are a feature of Irish.

#### 4.4 Stage IV

ORPHANED HEADING?

Stage-IV commands do not differ markedly from the LARSP chart. The question categories are extensions of those in the earlier stages. There is no tag category, since such questions are covered by the earlier question structures, and seem to appear earlier than Stage IV, although it is not clear if they are fully productive then. It may be necessary to add a separate tag category in Stage IV, so that such questions can be discriminated from earlier immature forms. NegQVX covers utterances such as *Nach bhfaca tu?* (Neg-Q V S) ‘Didn’t you see?’ Other Stage-IV clause structures are extensions of those discussed earlier. tú

Stage-IV phrase structures such as NP Pr NP (*cailín le mála mór* ‘a girl with a big bag), Pr D N Adj (*go dtí an siopa nua* ‘to the new shop’), and CX and XcX are the same as the English Stage-IV categories. However, the Neg and Aux categories on the English chart at this stage are omitted as inappropriate. ín

#### 4.5 Stage V

Stages V and VI in this version of the chart are not based on data from children acquiring the language, as the children studied did not reach these levels. Therefore they are provisional, and must await further data. The LARSP categories at Stage-V command level are appropriate to Irish, with the substitution of *agus* for *and*.

Stage V is the stage of recursion in LARSP, and this is marked similarly on ILARSP. Coordination and subordination are marked for statements, commands, negatives, and questions. Differences at Stage-V Phrase level are the omission of the category ‘Post-modifying phrase 1+’. Utterances of this type seem quite implausible in Irish (as well as extremely stilted in English) and thus the category is omitted.

#### 4.6 Stage VI

Stage VI in ILARSP, as in LARSP, looks at what the child cannot do, since at this point of development that is a more economical strategy than looking at what he or she can do. However, the ILARSP Stage VI is structured differently to LARSP's. It focuses mainly on the omission of, or incorrect use of, phrase or word-level structures. The most frequent errors noticed among the children are listed here, but need to be extended by data from children who are more than about 4 years old. \*W.O. under 'Clause' indicates incorrect word order, while '-Element' indicates the omission of a clause element. This convention, whereby \* indicates an incorrect form, and '-' its omission is used throughout the stage. It is suggested that using this stage (or an amplified version of it) might be a useful first strategy for SLTs dealing with Irish-dominant children referred for assessment in order to get a picture of the areas causing them difficulty.

#### 4.7 Stage VII

Stage VII ILARSP is almost identical with LARSP's, covering aspects of sentence connection, topicalization, syntactic comprehension, and style. The notation *empty tá* is used to clarify the function which in LARSP is marked as *it* and *there*. The other categories are suitable for Irish and are retained.

### 5. Word level

Crystal *et al.* (1981) consider that, in English, inflections are used systematically from about Stage III, and base the inflections at word level in their chart on Brown's 14 morphemes. Irish is far more complex at word level, and the first difficulty is in deciding

on the degree of comprehensiveness to be aimed at. It would be possible to compose a word level which would take up more space than clause and phrase, on the lines of Ball's LLARSP-M or -T charts. A similarly detailed word-level chart was initially used in the analysis of the acquisition of the three children studied by Hickey (1987), but it was found that this level of detail was unnecessary up to age 3 years at least. As already noted, such a separate chart has the disadvantage of fragmenting the profile, and this level of detail may not be required in every case. Instead, it seems preferable in the case of Irish to present a reasonably general word level which can then be elaborated upon if this level is to be focused on because the evidence indicates that this is warranted. The ILARSP word level has, however, been extended somewhat since the initial study, so that it is more easily interpretable alone, without the use of the detailed chart.

It must be pointed out that, while there is an attempt to represent a developmental order at word level, this will require further data on development later than Stage IV. The ILARSP word level begins with the three earliest tensed forms of the verb 'to be' used by the children studied. The development of this verb appears to have special significance in the acquisition of Irish, and thus it is presented in more detail than other verbs on the chart. Underneath it are the affirmative and negative response forms of the copula, which may be overgeneralized as general responses equivalent to 'yes' and 'no'. Vn and VAdj refer to verbal nouns and verbal adjectives, respectively, and these also begin to be used quite early, around Stage II. The singular article *an* and the plural article *na* follow next, although there appears to be a developmental lag between them, so that it may be preferable to place *na* later in the chart if further studies substantiate this.

Irregular verbs have ‘dependent forms’ when used in questions and negatives in some tenses, and this is marked as Dependent V. The irregular past and future tense categories are then given. Next to noun plural (N pl), two of the most common plural suffixes are listed, since these are the first to be used productively, and were overgeneralized by the older children. However, as the means of marking the plural in Irish are extremely varied (with up to 13 categories of plural formation as identified by Ó Sé, 1983), it is suggested that other plurals be noted down separately if further detail of this development is required. The regular past and future marking is listed next. *Dim*, *emph*, and *rlx* refer to diminutive and emphatic particles and to reflexive pronouns. These seem to appear quite early in the children’s speech, although they may not be fully productive until some time later.

It was necessary to represent the children’s development of the system of initial mutations as it applies to nouns and adjectives. This is represented in the next part of the chart under AL II (Allomorph) and AL III. Allomorph II is the notation for the lenition mutation, whereby consonants are systematically weakened. Orthographically this is marked by the insertion of an ‘h’ after the initial consonant. Allomorph III represents eclipsis, whereby a voice segment becomes nasalized or a voiceless segment voiced. This is marked orthographically by the addition of the appropriate item from the list: *b*, *m*, *d*, *n*, *q*, *g*, or *bh* to the eclipsed consonant. Strictly speaking, these mutations are phrasally determined, but it was thought that the most convenient place to represent them in some detail on the chart was at word level, though with some effort to indicate their dependence on their environment. The categories listed under each of these AL II and AL III headings are only a sample of the environments of these mutations, but they are

selected as being among the most likely to appear in child language. If this level of detail is not required, then the heading AL II or AL III only may be marked.

N + N indicates the lenition of the second noun in possessive constructions such as *Leaba mhamai* ‘Mammy’s bed’, and Poss + N covers the lenition that follows after first, second, and third masculine singular possessives such as *mo dhaidí* ‘my daddy’ or *a dhinnéar* ‘his dinner’. Pr + N indicates that lenition occurs after simple prepositions such as *do Sheán* ‘for Seán’. D + Nf refers to the lenition of feminine nouns following the article, e.g. *an bhean* ‘the woman’, while Nf + Adj indicates that adjectives following a feminine noun are also lenited, e.g. *bean mhór* ‘a big woman’. ND + Nm indicates that masculine nouns in the genitive are lenited, as in *hata an fhir* ‘the man’s hat’. N + Adjpl refers to the lenition of plural adjectives if they follow a masculine noun ending in a slender consonant, e.g. *fir mhóra*. The category ‘Other’ covers a range of other environments for lenition. Such is the complexity of the mutation system in Irish, it is suggested that the full acquisition of this system is not complete until after age 5 years and possibly even later into the school years, as has been shown with regard to aspects of Welsh (Thomas & Gathercole, 2007). They argue that children’s development of productive command of grammatical gender and mutations in Welsh point to item-based rather than rule-based learning.

The categories listed under Allomorph III or eclipsis begin with PrD + N. This is placed first in this section because eclipsis occurs in this environment in the Munster and Connacht dialects, whereas lenition is used instead in the Ulster dialect. Plural possessives (Posspl + N) eclipse the following noun, e.g. *ár bpáistí* ‘our children’. ND + Npl indicates that plural nouns in the genitive are eclipsed, as in *scoil na gcailíní* ‘the

girls' school'. The mutation which inserts a *t*- before masculine nouns beginning with a vowel, or before *sl*-, *sn*-, or *sr*- feminine nouns in the nominative and dative singular, and masculine nouns in the genitive singular, is indicated on the chart by 't- v/s'. The insertion of a *h*-mutation before singular feminine nouns in the genitive and plural masculine nouns in the nominative and dative is indicated by the category 'h- v'.

It was decided to have a special error column next to the initial mutation categories at word level in order to allow for the collection of information on this complex aspect of acquisition without having to develop a separate chart for the mutations. Errors in other categories are covered at Stage VI, but the notation of mutation errors at word level is a means of saving space on the chart, without forfeiting details. This mutations column allows for the marking of substitution (\*) or omission (-) of the correct mutation, but the same caution must be used in marking such errors as is urged by Crystal *et al.* concerning the marking of errors in LARSP Stage VI. It is suggested that this column should only be used when there is evidence that the child is using at least some of the environments for the mutations productively. An example of mutation error is the overgeneralization by one of the older children of an eclipsed form *an \*mbord* 'the table' as the base form of *bord* 'table'; such an error would be marked under \* at word level next to AL III.

The remaining categories at word level are Autonomous, which refers to an impersonal form of the verb which does not specify the subject. An example of this form is *Dúnadh an doras* '(Somebody) closed the door'. Genitive refers to the different marking of the genitive case on nouns, which varies between noun conjugations. Finally,

there is a category for comparative and superlative, which use the same adjective form, but preceded by a different particle.

## **6. Conclusion**

The use of this adaptation of LARSP in a study of the acquisition of Irish as mother-tongue by three children aged between 1;4 and 3 years shows that ILARSP can adequately and comprehensively represent the L1 acquisition of Irish, allowing useful comparisons between the same child's language at different ages, and between different children of the same age. Basing this adaptation of the LARSP chart on typical Irish acquisition and testing the adaptation against normal longitudinal data are important steps towards the development of an instrument which can be used both in crosslinguistic research and to assess language impairment. It is hoped to extend the base of information on normal development by using data collected more recently, so that the later stages of the chart can be fully tested, and so that age norms can be developed for Irish acquisition.

**Acknowledgements** The author wishes to thank Michael Garman, Paul Fletcher, Con Ó Cléirigh, Diarmuid Ó Sé, and Martin Ball for their help and comments.



## References

Ball, M. (1988). LARSP to LLARSP: the design of a grammatical profile for Welsh,

*Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, 2, 55-73.

Brennan, S. (2004). *First steps: early development of Irish as a primary language: focus on phonology*. Dublin: Comhdháil Náisiúnta na Gaeilge.

[http://d1375888.gdm64.gravitate.ie/downloads/Na\\_Chead\\_Cheimeanna\\_Leagan\\_Bearla.PDF](http://d1375888.gdm64.gravitate.ie/downloads/Na_Chead_Cheimeanna_Leagan_Bearla.PDF)



Cameron, T. & Hickey, T.M. (2008). ~~The role of function in children's early multiword~~

~~constructions: a cross-linguistic analysis. Paper given to the International conference on Language, Communication and Cognition. University of~~

~~Brighton, UK.~~ (2011) Form and function in Irish child directed speech. *Cognitive Linguistics* 22, 3 , 569-594

Crystal, D., Fletcher, P. & Garman, M. (1981). *The grammatical analysis of language*

*disability: a procedure for assessment and remediation*, 2nd edn (1989),

London: Cole & Whurr.

Greene, D. (1966). *The Irish language*, Dublin: The Three Candles.

Greenberg, J. (1966). *Universals of language*, 2nd edn, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Goodluck, H., Guilfoyle, E. & Harrington, S. (2001). Acquiring subject and object relatives: evidence from Irish, *Journal of Celtic Language Learning*, Vol. 6:

First Language Learning, 21-33.

----- (2006). Merge and binding in child relative clauses: the case of Irish, *Journal of Linguistics*, 42, 629-61.

- Hayden, C. (1984). An adaptation to Irish of LARSP. Unpublished MA thesis, University dissertation, Trinity College Dublin.
- Hickey, T. (1987). The early acquisition of Irish: grammatical patterns and the role of formulas. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Reading.
- (1990a). The acquisition of Irish: a study of word order development, *Journal of Child Language*, 17, 17-41.
- (1990b). ILARSP: a grammatical profile of Irish, *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics*, 4, 363-76.
- (1991). Mean length of utterance and the acquisition of Irish, *Journal of Child Language*, 18, 553-69.
- (1993). Identifying formulas in first language acquisition, *Journal of Child Language*, 20 (1), 27-42.
- <http://www.ucd.ie/psychology/staff/Publications/HickeyIdentifyingFormulasInFirstLanguageAcquisition1993.pdf>
- (1997). *Early immersion education in Ireland: Na Naíonraí/An Luath-Thumadh in Éirinn: Na Naíonraí Baile Átha Cliath*: ITÉ.
- [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/15/65/86.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/65/86.pdf)
- (1999). *Luathoideacheas trí Ghaeilge sa Ghaeltacht* ('Early education through Irish in the Gaeltacht), Baile Átha Cliath: Údarás na Gaeltachta & ITÉ.

----- (2001). Mixing beginners and native speakers in Irish immersion: who is immersing whom? *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 57 (3), 443-74.

<http://www.utpjournals.com/jour.ihtml?lp=product/cmlr/573/573-Hickey.html>

----- (2007). Children's language networks in minority language immersion: what goes in may not come out, *Language and Education*, 21 (1), 46-65.

<http://www.multilingual-matters.net/le/021/1/default.htm>

----- (2009). Codeswitching and borrowing in Irish, *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 13 (5), 670-88.

Hickey, T. M. & Cameron-Faulkner, T. (2009). Contact induced change in the Irish negation system: rebels without a clause? Paper presented at the *International Symposium on Bilingualism 7*, University of Utrecht.

2011

Hickey, T.M. & Stenson, M. (2010). Irish orthography: what do teachers and learners (2011) need to know about it, and why? *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, online 24, 1, 23-46  
~~publication November 2010.~~

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~db~all~content~g922241004>

McCloskey, J. (1983). A VP in the VSO language? In G. Gazdar, E. Klein & G. Pullum (eds), *Order, concord and constituency* (Dordrecht: Foris).

Dordrecht: Foris.

McKenna, A. & Wall, E. (1986). *Our first language*, Dublin: The Glendale Press.

Mhic Mhathúna, M. (1995). SLA before ABC: factors facilitating second language acquisition in Irish-medium playgroups, *Teanga*, 15, 127-36.

Ó Duibhir, P. (2009). The spoken Irish of sixth-class pupils in Irish immersion schools.

Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Trinity College Dublin.

Ó Sé, D. (2000). *Gaeilge Chorca Dhuibhne*, Baile Átha Cliath: Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann.

Ó Siadhail, M. (1973). Abairtí freagartha agus míreanna freagartha sa NuaGhaeilge, *Éiriú*, 24, 134-59.

&  
O' Toole, C. & Hickey, T. (in preparation). Assessing and diagnosing language &  
impairment in bilingual children: a minority language study.

O'Toole, C., & Fletcher, P. (2008). Developing assessment tools for bilingual and  
minority language acquisition, *Journal of Clinical Speech and Language  
Studies*, 16, 12-27.

----- (2010). Validity of a parent report instrument for Irish-speaking toddlers. *First  
Language*, 30 (2), 199-217.

Owens, M. (1992) *The acquisition of Irish: a case study*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Singleton, D., Harrington, S. & Henry, A. (2000). *At the sharp end of language revival:  
English-speaking parents raising Irish-speaking children*. CLCS Occasional  
Paper 57, Trinity College Dublin.

Slobin, D. (2006). Cross-linguistic comparative approaches to language acquisition. In K.  
Brown (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of language and linguistics*, 2nd edn., London:  
Elsevier, 299-301.

Stenson, N. (1976). *Topics in Irish Syntax and Semantics*. Unpublished PhD dissertation,.  
University of California, San Diego.

Stenson, N. (1981). *Studies in Irish syntax*, Tübingen: Narr.

Thomas, E. & Gathercole, V. (2007). Children's productive command of grammatical gender and mutation in Welsh: an alternative to rule-based learning, *First Language*, 27 (3), 251-78.

Ward, A. (1974). The grammatical structure of Munster Irish. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University College Dublin.

ILARSP: a grammatical profile of Irish

Name	Age	Date	No. of analysed units											
A	Unanalysed Unintelligible Deviant	Symbolic  Noise	Problematic Incomplete Stereotypes  Ambiguous											
	Codeswitching Sentence	Clause	Element  Phrasal											
B	Responses		Normal Response  Abnormal											
	Stimulus type	Totals	Major  Ellipical											
	Requests Others		Reduced Full Minor Structural											
C	Spontaneous	Repetition	1	2	3+	Reduced	Full	Minor	Structural	0	Problem s			
D	Reactions Problems	General Structural  0 Other												
	Minor neó	Vocatives	Social  huh? Other											
I	Major	Comm.	Neg.	Quest	Statement [imitations]									
		'V'	'Neg-V'		'N'	'V'	'Adj'	'Adv'	'Dem'	Other				
	Conn				Clause  Phrase Word									
II		VX	No X Neg V Neg-VX	QX	vs SVn SA AX Other	VC/O SC/O CopX DemX Other	DN N Adj Pr N NN(ps) Other	VV V Part NN(-c) PVn	tá beidh is ea Vn an Dependant V	bhí ní hea Vadj na emph.				
		NegVimp-V	(an)V											
III	X+S:NP C-R	X+Q:NP	X+A:AP	X+C:NP	X+V:VGp	Irreg. past Fut. V+person N pl -i Oth. Reg. past Fut. Dim. reflex								
	VXY	NegX NoXY	QVX QXY	VSO VSC VSA VSVn VnOO	VOO CopXY DemXY SVnX Other	DNAdj PrDN NAdjAdj Adv(s/d) Other	IntX PrPn Prons/o Cop							
	NegVimpX	anVX												
		NegQV												
	XY+S:NP XY+V:VGp C-R	XY+Q:NP	XY+A:AP	XY+C:NP	AL II N + N Poss pl + N ND + Npl Other Ní + Adj NNm + Adj									
IV	+s VXY+	NegVX Y	OXY+ an VX+	VSOA CopXY+ VSCA VSVnX Other	AAXY VSOO	NPPrNP PrDNAdj Other	cX XcX							
	NegimpXY													
		NegQVX												

V	agus c s	Coord.  Other	Coord.  Other	Coord.  Other	Coord. 1 Subord. A 1+ S C 0 1+	Post-mod. Cl 1	N + Adjpl Other
	CLAUSE		(NP)	PHRASE (VGp)		WORD	
VI	*W.O. -Element		*AL *Pron -Pron *D -D *Pr -Pr -c		*AL *Tns -Tns -PVn -cop -Dep V	*Pl -Pl *PrPn -PrPn	AL III PrD + N Poss pl + N ND + Npl Other
VII	Discourse			Syntactic comprehension			t- v/s
	A connectivity Comment clause Emphatic Order						empty tá
	Total no. of utterances		Mean no. of utterances per turn			Mean utterance length in words	

©D. Crystal, P. Fletcher, M. Garman, 1981 revision, University of Reading.  
© Tina Hickey, Irish Version.

Figure 1. The ILARSP chart

## Notes

---

1 In Irish, the language is referred to as Gaeilge, and the term ‘Gaelic’ is derived from this. However, the term ‘Irish’ is preferred in Ireland in referring in English to the language, in order to distinguish it from (Scottish) Gaelic.

2 Irish postposes adjectives, so in Irish the name would be *LARSP na Gaeilge* yielding the unpronounceable LARSPG. Since the name LARSP is itself an English acronym, it was decided to use the English term of Irish in the title of the adaptation, ILARSP.