Irish L2 pronunciation and the effects of orthography.

Evan D. Bradley, Hope E. Schmid, & Jacqueline Brown

The Pennsylvania State University, Brandywine | Media, PA, USA

Introduction

- Visual information (like orthography) can facilitate L2 pronunciation.
- This is particularly true for languages with transparent orthographies, more than those with opaque ones (Erdener & Burnham, 2005).
- Non-local orthographic information is less useful to learners, and can lead learners to make perceptual and pronunciation errors, even when the orthography of their L1 is opaque (Darcy, 2016).
- We examined these issues in Irish, which includes many opaque orthographic conventions, among native and non-native speakers.
  - Do L2 Irish speakers make more spelling-based errors?
  - Do L1 Irish speakers show interference from English orthography?

Irish Orthography

(Doyle, 2001)

- Notable deep orthographic conventions include consonant mutations and multiple vowel functions.
- Considerable geographic variation.

Consonant Mutations & *-h*

(1) a. **c**at [kɑt] 'cat'
b. **ch**at [xɑt] 'cat'
c. **gc**at [gɑt] 'cat'

(2) a. cai**th**eann [kɑhən] 'must'
b. do**mh**an [daØun] 'world'

Broad vs. Slender

(3) a. bó [bˠoː] 'cow'
b. b**e**ó [bʲoː] 'alive'
c. c**e**oil [kʲoːlʲ] 'music'

Vowel Length & Diphthongs

(4) a. s**ao**r [siːr] 'free'
b. r**ua** [ruə] 'red'
c. b**ái**d [bɑdʲ] 'boat'
d. b**aoi** [biː] 'buoy'

(5) a. c**oi**<u>**ll**</u> [kailʲ] 'wood'
b. f**oi**<u>**nn**</u> [fiːnʲ] 'tune'

Data Collection & Processing

- 9 speakers read "The North Wind and The Sun" (Ní Chasaide, 1999).
- 4 L1, 4 L2 (3 high-proficiency, 1 low), 1 proficient heritage.[a]
- 20 words selected to sample various opaque conventions.
- Transcribed by two authors.

Bhí an **gaoth** aduidh 's an ghrian ag aragáil le **chéile** le fáil amach ce acu den **bheirt** a ba **threise** nuair a **tháinig taistealaí** an bealach agus **clóca** te á chaitheamh aige. D'aontaigh **siad** gur an duine 'ba **threise** an duine 'ba luaithe a **thabhairfeadh** ar an **taistealaí** a **chlóca** a **bhaint** dó. Ansin **shéid** an **gaoth** aduidh comh tréan is a **thiocfadh léith**, ach dá mheid a **shéid** sí 'sea ba **dhlúite** a theann an **taistealaí** a **chlóca** thart fá **dtaobh** dó, agus sa **deireadh** d'éirigh an **ghaoth** aduaidh as an iarracht. Ansin lonnraigh an ghrian go te agus bhain an **taistealaí** dó a chlóca **láithreach** bonn. Agus ar a' dóigh sin b'éigean don **ghaoth** aduidh a **admháil gurbh** i 'n ghrian a ba láidre den **bheirt**.

- Irregular pronunciations flagged via comparison to published sources, a multi-dialect synthesizer (`abair.ie`), and internal comparison (*e.g.*, self-corrections).
- Errors classified as orthographic vs. others (*e.g.*, slips of the tongue)

[a] Not simplistic, given interpretation of 'native/first' and (over)representation of fluency!

Results

m(sd)	% Error (type)	% Orthog.
L1	15.0% (8%)	42.9% (40%)
L2[a]	42.5% (25%)	64.0% (23%)

- L2 > L1 errors, and more errors consistent with English spelling.
- L1 are bilingual in English, so some interference is not surprising.
- Stronger orthography–phonology mappings, or cognitive control?

Typical errors

(6) **sh**éid 'blew'
a. [heɪdʲ] (Joseph, Moycullen, L1)
b. [ʃʲeɪd] (Emily, Bray, L2)

(7) **dt**aobh 'about'
a. [div] (Jimmy, Moycullen, L1)
b. [teɪv] (Emma, Maynooth, L2)

(8) thr**éi**se 'stronger'
a. [hɹɛːʃə] (Joe, Omagh, L2)
b. [hɹiːʃə] (Paul, Kanturk, L2)

[a] Includes heritage; excludes low-proficiency L2 (did not complete task)

References

Darcy, I. (2016). *Sound To Word In Bilingual And Second Language Speech Perception.* Iowa City, IA.
Doyle, A. (2001). *Irish.* Munich: Lincom Europa.
Erdener, V. D., & Burnham, D. K. (2005). *Language Learning*, *55*(2), 191–228.
Ní Chasaide, A. (1999). Irish. *Handbook of the International Phonetic Association* (pp. 111–116). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Go raibh céad míle maith agat | Diolch yn fawr iawn

- Meguire Wieger assisted with the data collection.
- Special thanks to Conradh na Gaeilge/Club Áras na nGael, Galway and Prof. Ailbhe Ní Chasaide, Trinity College Dublin for assistance.
- This project was financially supported by an undergraduate research grant to J.B. from Penn State Brandywine.
- Brandywine Global Programs provided travel and logistical support.