

2. The Emergent Reader of Irish: Promoting Real Recognition of The Most Useful Words¹

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Fluency and efficient word recognition have been identified as critical components of reading, and research shows a significant positive correlation between oral reading fluency and comprehension. There is a need to strive for fluency from the child's earliest experiences with print through the fostering of effective decoding skills and fast, accurate word recognition. Ehri's theory of word recognition development is considered here with regard to some of the miscues of young second language readers of Irish. A brief outline of Irish orthography presents some of the difficulties children encounter when learning Irish reading. The presentation of the most frequent Irish words in a special corpus of books aimed at early independent readers of Irish allows a consideration of ways of promoting deeper analysis of these words. This is what facilitates automatic and accurate word recognition and underpins the decoding skills which make independent reading in the L2 less laborious and more effective.

Introduction

Research on ways of supporting first language reading has been explored in recent years with regard to helping second language reading. An issue receiving increasing attention is reading fluency, identified by the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) as one of the five critical components of reading. Harris and Hodges (1995:85) defined reading fluency as 'freedom

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from word identification problems that might hinder comprehension', and Pikulski and Chard (2005: 510) emphasize the need to strive for fluency from the child's earliest experiences with print through developing effective decoding skills. Skilful readers have highly automatic and effortless word recognition which frees up their cognitive resources for text comprehension (Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass and Gorsuch, 2004), and research supports this both in first language (L1) reading (e.g., Adams, 1994; Stanovich, 1992), and in second language (L2) reading (e.g., Fraser 2004; Anderson, 1999; Day and Bamford, 1998). Automatic word recognition is essential because 'it is highly unlikely that excellent reading comprehension will be observed in the face of deficient word recognition skills' (Stanovich, 1992: 4). However, reading in a second language has been found to be significantly slower than mother-tongue reading. Hickey (1991) in a study of young L2 readers of Irish in Grade 3 (aged 8-9 years) found their reading rate in Irish was only 75 words per minute compared to their average rate of 115 words per minute in English, their L1. Such deficient word recognition skills are commonly noted in L2 readers (Anderson, 1999). Even bilinguals with advanced L2 skills read about 30% slower in their second language than in their first (e.g. Segalowitz and Hébert 1990) and their less automatic L2 word recognition skills impede their ability to extract meaning from texts.

Since reading fluency and reading practice are mutually reinforcing, disfluent readers are likely to have low motivation to practise reading in the L2 (Stanovich, 1986). Pikulski and Chard (2005) argue that explicit fluency instruction needs to be built into early literacy instruction. They proposed a nine-step programme for improving fluency, and two of these initial steps, *building the graphophonic foundations for fluency* and *providing instruction in recognizing high frequency words* are considered here as aspects of the teaching of Irish reading which deserve further consideration. They link also with other steps such as building and extending vocabulary, teaching common word parts and spelling patterns and the facilitation of repeated reading and independent reading. Ways of promoting the latter are discussed in Hickey (2001), arguing the need for an integrated approach targeting both lower-level reading skills and the promotion of repeated reading and extensive reading, with more effective

use of existing materials, the development of new materials, and the facilitation of parental support for Irish reading. This paper will focus on lower-level reading skills and the promotion of effective recognition of high frequency words in the teaching of Irish reading. The challenges facing young readers of Irish are briefly discussed, and some of their most common problems, before an analysis of the words whose automatic recognition will prove most effective in improving their Irish reading skills.

Teaching Irish reading and Irish orthography

The Revised Curriculum for Irish (Department of Education and Science, 1999) expects children who are learning Irish as a subject to generalise their developing English reading skills to Irish. However, despite this reliance on transfer of skills, there tends to be little discussion with children of the orthographic differences between the languages, and teachers complain of a dearth of materials with which to present the grapheme-phoneme rules of Irish to beginners. The teaching of Irish reading in English-medium schools has tended to be oriented mainly towards reinforcing language items learned orally, with little systematic identification of regular grapheme-phoneme correspondences during Irish reading classes, little use of phonics for L2 readers in particular, and an absence of discussion about the orthographical differences between the two languages. The next section briefly outlines the Irish orthographical system (see Hickey, 2005 for a fuller examination) and discusses the challenges it poses to young readers.

The challenges of Irish orthography: Miscues in young readers

The Irish alphabet comprises five vowels and thirteen consonants:

a b c d e f g h i l m n o p r s t u

and represents approximately fifty basic sounds in the language (the letters *j, q, v, x, y, z* are also used in loan words). The five spoken vowels of Irish can be either short or long, and a length mark (*síneadh fada*) is placed above the vowel (*á, é, í, ó, ú*) to indicate its lengthening, e.g. *bá* /ba:/ 'understanding' versus *ba* /ba/ 'cows'. While the script now used for written

Irish is familiar to readers of English, the orthographical system differs significantly from English, and has been described as 'bewildering' (Ó Murchú, 1977:26). Standardisation of spelling in 1922, while simplifying to represent modern pronunciation, also introduced inconsistencies and a number of other difficulties (Ó Sé, 1990). One of the more 'exotic features' (Ó Murchú, 1977: 269) of Irish phonology that is expressed in its orthography is the contrast between slender (palatalised) and broad (non-palatalised or velarised) consonant forms. Orthographically, the quality of the consonant is indicated by preceding or succeeding it with a slender or broad vowel. Another feature of Irish is its initial mutations, whereby the start of words, including verbs, nouns and adjectives, are either lenited (made more lenis in articulation) or eclipsed (whereby a voiced segment becomes nasalised and a voiceless segment becomes voiced). Lenition is marked by inserting a *h* after the initial consonant, eclipsis by prefixing certain consonants.

Thus, while Irish uses an alphabet that is familiar to English readers, and shares some sounds and segments with English, it also has a different set of rules to represent different sounds and morphosyntactic processes. While it is not as deep an orthography as English, it nevertheless presents the child embarking on Irish reading with considerable challenges. Those challenges are evident in the errors they make in reading some of the most frequent words and clusters they encounter. Miscue analysis of data collected in a study of Irish reading (see Hickey, 2005) among L2 readers aged 7-8 years in Grade 2 in English-medium schools showed that many children in the lower half of the ability range had difficulty decoding even some of the most frequent Irish words. For example, the high-frequency word *sí* 'she' was frequently read aloud first as /s'e:/ 'he' and *í* 'her' was decoded often as /e:/ 'him' by these children. Other high frequency words which challenged these children are *na* (read as *an*) and *síos* /s'i:s/ 'down' misread as *suas* 'up'.

These errors indicate a strategy of relying on salient letters, whereas other miscues of less frequent forms such as *lámh* /la:v/ 'hand' misread as /le:m/ 'lame'; *crann* /krann/ or /kraun/ 'tree' misread as /cre:n/ 'crane'; or *lón* /lo:n/ 'lunch' misread as /le:n/ 'lane', show that these young readers of

Irish were unsure of some of the most regular grapheme-phoneme relationships in the language, such as the long vowel sounds represented by *á, í, ó, ú, é*. New words with the vowel *é* /e:/ were mispronounced as /i:/ by a number of children (e.g. *péist* ‘worm’ was read as /pi:st/ ‘peest’) and new words with *á* /a:/ were frequently mispronounced /e:/. Instruction explicitly promoting analysis of the most regular sound-symbol correspondences and the most frequent words in early readers is a critical step in addressing problems with reading fluency in Irish. Children who are still laboriously decoding and mis-identifying high frequency words can be helped to increase their level of reading fluency through early intervention. First, research on how children acquire automatic sight word recognition is outlined briefly.

High frequency words and automaticity: Acquiring sight words

Gardner (2004:5) noted that there is now ‘general consensus that high-frequency words must be mastered in order to achieve minimum levels of reading proficiency in both L1 and L2.’ Such mastery requires that these words are recognised accurately and automatically, that is, on sight. Early research (e.g. Bridge, Winograd, and Haley, 1983) had claimed that sight words are developed through exposure to predictable text. However, Johnston (2000) showed that even proficient first grade readers learn only a very limited number of words from predictable texts. Menon and Hiebert (2005: 16) concluded that over-reliance on predictable syntax may lead beginning readers to develop poor graphophonic strategies. Such poor strategies include a reliance on initial or salient letters to identify words (as is evident in some of the miscues discussed above). Harrison, Zollner and Magill (1996) found that about 80% of their 8 year-old sample showed inaccurate word-guessing based on initial, or initial and final letters when asked to read phonetically regular words, and about 60% continued to make similar errors four years later, indicating the difficulty in replacing poor strategies, once established. Ehri (1992, 1995, 1998, 1999) developed an influential theory of how emergent readers learn sight words. The phases in this development, according to Ehri, are summarised below:

1. *Pre-alphabetic phase* when children have no awareness that sounds and letters are systematically related. At this time they acquire sight words by using visual clues in the printed representation of the word.
2. *Partial alphabetic phase* when children have learned some limited knowledge of the relations between letters and sounds and know some letter sounds and names. However, they read words by focusing on the initial letters, or on the letters which correspond to the most salient sounds in a word, described as phonetic-cue reading. Later they may include final letters as decoding clues.
3. *Full alphabetic phase* when children are able to match up all the letters they see with the sounds they hear in a word. They can segment the sounds of a word into units, match them to the letters in the word and blend the sounds in order to pronounce the word.
4. *Consolidated alphabetic stage* when children can recognise whole words instantly as units as a result of analysis and practice. Arising from further practice with their sight words, pupils start to notice patterns in similar words, and extract out letter patterns across different words, which they then store as letter units. These consolidated units allow readers to operate with chunks of letters rather than individual letters, and that helps them to read and remember multisyllabic words as sight words.

Pikulski and Chard (2005: 514) noted that because so many high frequency words are function words with irregular grapheme-phoneme relationships in English, there has been a tendency to teach them as whole-words, using flashcards to train children to read them as wholes. Yet Ehri argues that this initial focus on a whole-word route to sight word learning is less effective in developing sight word recognition to the most efficient level required for fluent reading. Ehri (2003) summarised this issue:

People used to think that readers learned to read sight words by memorizing their visual shapes. However, research has led us to reject this idea. Now we know that sight word learning depends upon the application of grapheme-phoneme correspondences. These provide the glue that holds the words in memory for quick reading Becoming a skilled reader of sight words requires knowledge of phonemic segmentation, letter-sound correspondences, and spelling

patterns to bond the complete spellings of specific words to their pronunciations and meanings in memoryA skilled reader is able to read familiar words accurately and quickly because all of the letters have been secured in memory.

Ehri, 2003:2

Gaskins *et al.* (1996) noted that, while many of their first-grade readers could read some words by sight, they had remained at the first two stages of sight word learning, and therefore made many errors and were also hampered by not being able to recognise patterns to transfer to reading new words. Perfetti (1991) argued that it is the quality of the word's representation in memory that determines the level of automaticity. Shallow analysis based on overall word shape, or on one or two salient letters, as in the first two word recognition stages, results in frequent errors and lower levels of automaticity. Stanovich (1991) showed that teachers who help pupils to analyze words promote automaticity, as does frequent practice with texts containing high-frequency words. Ní Bhaoill and Ó Duibhir (2004) called for analysis of high frequency words in Irish in order to enable teachers to assist emergent readers of Irish in developing more efficient recognition of these words.

High frequency words in children's books in Irish

Identification of high-frequency words in books aimed at young readers of Irish has become more feasible and accurate with the development of a corpus specifically devoted to the language that is aimed at children in early readers and in children's leisure reading books in general. Analysis of such a corpus is presented here, including consideration of the most frequently occurring words in Early Reader texts as well as in the total corpus. *Corpas na Leabhar Gaeilge do Phaistí* (CLGP 'Corpus of Irish Children's Books') comprises books aimed at preschoolers and children in primary school (up to about age 13), and includes fiction and factual books, but excludes text books. The total CLGP includes books to be read aloud to young children, early readers and stories, and longer books aimed at older independent readers. In all, this corpus comprises over 200,000 word tokens, which includes about 13,000 word types and over 250 books. Data from that part of the corpus which comprises books aimed at early readers

30 *The Emergent Reader of Irish*

(over 150 books from a number of series, with 18,000 word tokens and almost 2,000 word types) were for some purposes analysed separately in order to examine more closely the type of language which is presented to children in the very early stages of reading in Irish. It is at the point where children are beginning to read such books independently that they are developing sight words, and thus it was considered that it would be most useful to orient specifically towards the words used in those books.

Table 1 presents the most frequent words from the Early Readers' corpus. The list comprises 102 words because on reaching 100, all of the words at the same frequency level were included. Those words which figure in the most frequent 100 in the Early Reader corpus and in the larger corpus (CLGP) of children's books in Irish are marked with an asterisk.

Young readers' ability to make word family connections varies significantly between children depending on whether they are reading in their L1 or L2, their general reading skills, the size of their existing vocabulary, as well as on the instructional methods used with them (see for example Gardner, 2004; Carlisle, 2000; Mahony, Singson, and Mann, 2000). It was considered more conservative to assume that very young children learning to read in what is, for the majority, their second language are likely to treat words as separate entities initially, rather than linking them to word families. This is particularly relevant in Irish where words are fairly unstable, with initial mutations frequently altering initial consonants, and genitive and plural inflections changing the base form of nouns etc. For this reason it was decided to examine which version of a word is used most frequently in early reader texts for children, rather than making assumptions about whether children link that word to related words, or variants on that word.

Table 1 also presents information on the number of books in which each word appears, allowing some comparison between a word such as *sicín* ('chicken') which occurs frequently in a small number of texts (5) or *am* (time) which has about the same frequency, but is spread across a larger number of texts (13). Repeated exposure to a word is necessary before it can be recognised at sight: Reitsma (1983) found that children needed to meet the same word (and decode it successfully) at least four times before they could treat it as a sight word, and repeated reinforcement of particular

words is more easily achieved within the same story. For ease of consultation, the words are also presented alphabetically in Table 2 with their rank order of frequency.

Table 1. The most frequent words in the Early Reader Corpus (by rank)

Rank	Word	Freq.	Texts	Rank	Word	Freq.	Texts	Rank	Word	Freq.	Texts
1	an*	830	121	35	mise*	62	22	69	rua	33	10
2	a*	559	92	36	beag*	59	18	70	anseo	32	12
3	tá*	384	87	37	ach*	58	35	71	breá	32	14
4	ar*	321	89	38	ina*	55	30	72	féidir	32	8
5	ag*	269	75	39	anois*	54	32	73	air*	31	15
6	sé*	269	60	40	teach	54	14	74	as*	31	16
7	agus*	224	83	41	cad	51	19	75	Bhrain	31	9
8	mé*	216	47	42	leis*	51	27	76	orm	31	18
9	na*	213	66	43	Liam	51	16	77	raibh*	31	21
10	is*	209	63	44	cá	50	28	78	bionn	30	14
11	arsa*	197	40	45	ó*	50	25	79	chuir*	30	12
12	sa*	197	67	46	deas	48	24	80	dearg	30	14
13	mo*	164	46	47	siad	48	21	81	faoin*	30	12
14	atá*	159	48	48	dul*	47	25	82	mhála	30	10
15	go*	148	60	49	féin*	47	25	83	Mhamaí	30	14
16	é*	135	49	50	agam*	46	14	84	súgradh	30	15
17	sí*	133	24	51	leat*	46	21	85	cén	29	12
18	seo*	123	48	52	Béar	44	8	86	chodladh	29	14
19	bhí*	120	37	53	Mamaí	44	20	87	linn	29	18
20	maith*	112	44	54	sin*	44	23	88	san*	29	20
21	bhfuiil*	106	41	55	Daidí	43	18	89	duit	28	16
22	le*	105	40	56	fear*	43	11	90	gorm	28	12
23	níl*	104	29	57	trí	43	20	91	agat*	27	16
24	liom*	101	32	58	chuaigh*	40	14	92	dtí*	27	11
25	ní*	98	35	59	mór*	40	21	93	léim	27	19
26	j*	88	28	60	féach	39	12	94	sicín	27	5
27	do*	79	29	61	nach*	39	21	95	amharc	26	8
28	tú*	79	31	62	rith	39	21	96	eile*	26	12
29	cé	77	27	63	Sciob	39	10	97	liomsa	26	14
30	deir*	75	10	64	buí	36	16	98	sneachta	26	8
31	ann*	69	28	65	leaba	36	8	99	am	25	13
32	isteach*	68	33	66	in*	34	21	100	Daideo	25	6
33	amach*	65	38	67	Bran	33	12	101	mhaith	25	13
34	chonaic*	62	19	68	cat	33	10	102	tar*	25	11

* Indicates word types also in most frequent 100 of total corpus of children's books in Irish (CLGP).

32 The Emergent Reader of Irish

Table 2. Alphabetic list of the most frequent words in the Early Reader Corpus

Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word
2	a*	58	chuaigh*	20	maith*
37	ach*	79	chuir*	53	Mamaí
5	ag*	100	Daideo	8	mé*
50	agam	55	Daidí	101	mhaithe
91	agat*	80	dearg	82	mhála
7	agus*	46	deas	83	Mhamaí
73	air*	30	deir*	35	mise*
99	am	27	do*	13	mo*
33	amach*	92	dtí*	59	mór*
95	amharc	89	duit	9	na*
1	an*	48	dul*	61	nach*
31	ann*	16	é*	25	ní*
39	anois*	96	eile*	23	níl*
70	anseo	81	faoin*	45	ó*
4	ar*	60	féach	76	orm
11	arsa*	56	fear*	77	raibh*
74	as*	72	féidir	62	rith
14	atá*	49	féin*	69	rua
36	beag*	15	go*	88	san*
52	Béar	90	gorm	63	Sciob
21	bhfúil*	26	i*	6	sé*
19	bhí*	66	in*	18	seo*
75	Bhrain	38	ina*	17	sí*
78	bíonn	10	is*	47	siad
67	Bran	32	isteach*	94	sicín
71	breá	22	le*	54	sin*
64	buí	65	leaba	98	sneachta
44	cá	51	leat*	84	súgradh
41	cad	93	léim	3	tá*
68	cat	42	leis*	102	tar*
29	cé	43	Liam	40	teach
85	can	87	linn	57	trí
86	chodladh	24	liom*	28	tú*
34	chonaic*	97	liomsa		

* Indicates word types also in most frequent 100 of total corpus of children's books in Irish (CLGP).

The 102 most frequent words from the Early Readers Corpus of Irish books account for nearly half (47%) of all the words children encounter in these books. The most frequent 214 words give coverage of 70% of this corpus, but 424 words are required to reach 80%. Comparing the most frequent words from the Early Reader corpus to the total corpus of words from children's books in Irish, we find that 60 of the Early Reader words occur in the 100 most frequent words from the larger corpus. The differences centre, to a large extent, on the greater number of content words and character names that occur in the Early Reader corpus. For example, character names (and the Vocative versions of them) such as *Daidí/a Dhaidí*, *Daideo*(Granddad), *Mamáí/a Mhamáí*, *Liam*, *Sciob* (dog's name), *Bran/(a) Bhrain* figure in the Early Readers' most frequent words and not in the most frequent 100 from the larger corpus.

Another notable difference between the Early Reader corpus and the larger one was the greater representation of the question words *cé* and *cén* 'who', *cad* 'what', *cá* 'where' in the Early Reader corpus. The words in common are discussed more fully in Hickey (forthcoming).

Form and function words

As has been documented for other languages, a high proportion of the most frequent words in Irish are function words. These are defined as words which have little meaning on their own, but which serve a syntactic or semantic function in a phrase or sentence, such as articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, and interjections and expletives. Content words, on the other hand, are words which have meaning beyond their grammatical function, such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and main verbs. Some of the most frequent function words in the most frequent Early Reader list are discussed below.

Definite articles

The orthographic form of the singular definite article *an* has several other functions, including interrogative particle, and prefix meaning 'very'. The plural definite article form *na* also functions as the genitive singular article for feminine nouns. On the evidence of the miscue analysis, these two words present significant difficulties for young L2 readers, with children

34 The Emergent Reader of Irish

frequently reading *na* as *an*. This may be due to both conceptual issues (since English speakers are unfamiliar with the concept of the definite article being marked for case or number), and decoding problems, with the similarity of the letters and the similarity of the contexts in which they occur leading children not to attend to them closely enough to distinguish them. Concordance on *an* showed that it mostly occurred before nouns (605 occurrences). Only a small proportion of occurrences were as question particles e.g. *an bhfaca* ‘did [you] see’ (17) and *an bhfuil* (question form of present tense verb to be) (35) or as prefixes *an-mhór* ‘very-big’ (6). Concordance on *na* showed the following patterns: *Na* + Noun (188 occurrences) e.g. *na bláthanna* ‘the flowers’. *Na* + Genitive singular feminine Noun: (25 occurrences): e.g., *i lár na coille* ‘in the middle of the wood’ *teas na gréine* ‘heat of the sun’.

Pronouns and Prepositional Pronouns

Irish has a system of prepositions which are marked for person (the prepositional pronouns), and some of these figure in the most frequent words, as is shown in Table 3. The pronouns which appear in the first 100 words of the Early Reader corpus are shown, as well as the most frequent prepositional pronouns.

Table 3. Pronouns and prepositional pronouns in the most frequent words

Pronouns		Prepositional Pronouns	
<i>mé</i>	I	<i>le</i>	with pr.
<i>tú</i>	you	<i>liom</i>	1st per.
<i>sé</i>	he	<i>liomsa</i>	1st per. emphatic
<i>sí</i>	she	<i>leat</i>	2nd per.
<i>siad</i>	they	<i>leis</i>	3rd per. masc.
		<i>linn</i>	1st per. pl
<i>mise</i>	me-emphatic		
<i>é</i>	3rd masc. obj.	<i>ar</i>	on pr.
<i>i</i>	3rd fem. obj.	<i>air</i>	3rd per. masc. on-him
<i>mo</i>	1st per. Poss.	<i>ag</i>	at pr.
<i>a</i>	3rd per. Poss. masc./fem.	<i>agam</i>	1st person at-me
		<i>agat</i>	2nd person at-you
		<i>do</i>	to pr
		<i>duit</i>	to-you

The pronouns are regular, and the miscues already discussed indicate that children need to become proficient at distinguishing the long vowels sounds in particular. In learning the prepositional pronouns, children might be helped by the teacher drawing their attention to different forms from the same pattern, which would help them to realize that they cannot rely on the first letter to distinguish these forms, but need to look at the rest of the word to ascertain who is being referred to. Altogether, these pronouns and prepositional pronouns make up 32 of the 102 most frequent words, a very significant proportion of the most frequent words, and therefore warranting particular emphasis in early exercises.

The verb 'to be'

A limited number of forms of the verb 'to be' together make up 6% of the most frequent words in the Early Reader Corpus:

Present tense forms: *tá, atá, bhfuil, bíonn, níl*

Past tense forms: *bhí, raibh*

Overall, more than 40% of the most frequent words which children will meet in early reader books comprise the articles, personal pronouns, a number of prepositions and prepositional pronouns, and forms of the verb 'to be'.

Language of Narratives

The language of narratives aimed at young independent readers requires some 'book language' to manage indirect speech, and among the most frequent words are *arsa* 'said' and *deir* 'says'. While the books aimed at early independent readers often try to avoid these terms simply by presenting direct speech in speech bubbles, nevertheless, the conventions of reading require readers to control such terms quite early in their development, as is clear from their frequency even in the early reader corpus. In fact, *arsa* 'said' has the same frequency rank in the Early Reader corpus as it has in the Total CLGP corpus, indicating how early it becomes an important feature of narrative texts. Other verbs in the Early Reader corpus show the orientation towards narrative about current activities and past events, as is seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Verbs other than the verb ‘to be’ and copula in Early Readers

Rank	word	translation
11	<i>arsa</i>	‘said’
30	<i>deir</i>	‘says’
34	<i>chonaic</i>	‘saw’
48	<i>dul</i>	‘going’
59	<i>chuaigh</i>	‘went’
61	<i>féach</i>	‘look’ imperative, Standard
63	<i>rith</i>	‘ran/running’
80	<i>chuir</i>	‘put’
85	<i>súgradh</i>	‘playing’
94	<i>léim</i>	‘jumped/jumping’
96	<i>amharc</i>	‘look’ imperative, Ulster dialect

Included also are the imperatives *féach/amharc* ‘look’ which direct the young reader to the pictures accompanying text in some instances

Conclusions

Fluency is now being emphasized as underpinning successful reading both in L1 and L2. Improving fluency is not sufficient to ensure successful reading, but rather it is necessary in order to facilitate processing and comprehension. Ehri’s model of how children develop word recognition shows the phases in their developing decoding skills on the way to recognizing words by sight. Instruction which focuses on analysis of the high-frequency words as part of an integrated approach to teaching reading has been shown to be useful in promoting automatic sight word recognition. Analysis of the most frequent words in the Irish Early Readers’ corpus show a number of features which can be focused on in exercises with emergent readers, in order to facilitate fluent and accurate word recognition. Hickey (forthcoming) looks at practical ways of facilitating sight word recognition in Irish, using these most frequent words in the corpus aimed at this group of readers. Building up faster and more accurate word recognition of the high frequency words of Irish would lay a

firmer foundation for supporting the repeated reading and extensive reading which research shows to be crucial for developing effective L2 reading skills.

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