

## CHALLENGING READING: ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION WITH CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS

### STRAND 1: THE CHALLENGE OF LANGUAGE PLAY AND LANGUAGE CREATIVITY

#### Lexis and literacy in children with English as an Additional Language: The power of the word

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International studies of student achievement have consistently identified that children from ethnic minorities tend to underperform on core academic outcomes relative to majority language speakers (OECD-PISA, 2003). The academic achievement of minority language learners varies considerably (Strand, Malmberg & Hall, 2015), with the widest gaps between minority language learners and native-speaking children in primary school, and with children who are a) newly arrived, b) have not had continuous education through the majority language, and c) who have weaker fluency in the majority language (often English). In this talk I will first explore some of these findings to identify those sub-groups of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) who are most at risk of academic difficulty followed by a discussion of research on EAL children's

vocabulary and literacy development. Research across a range of international contexts has illustrated that minority language learners tend to have under-developed vocabulary relative to native speakers. I will discuss two particular aspects of vocabulary that are problematic for children with EAL – collocations and idioms – and discuss research which illustrates that these lexical forms make their own unique contribution to EAL children's reading comprehension performance. This work will be contextualized within a usage-based framework highlighting the predictive influence of variables such as frequency, saliency and contextual diversity of words, in helping learners develop rich, high quality lexical representations to promote more advanced and complex reading and writing skills in English.

#### References

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2003). *Where immigrant students succeed - A comparative review of performance and engagement in PISA 2003*. Report published by the OECD.

Strand, S., Malmberg, L. & Hall, J. (2015). English as an Additional Language (EAL) and educational achievement in England: An analysis of the National Pupil Database. Report prepared for the Education Endowment Foundation.

**Victoria Murphy** is Professor of Applied Linguistics in the Department of Education, University of Oxford. She is the course coordinator for the MSc in Applied Linguistics/Second Language Acquisition and carries out research in the area of child L2/FL development, EAL children's language and literacy development and early years EAL and FL learning. She is the convenor of the Research in English as an Additional Language (REAL) group at Oxford and has been published in a wide range of Applied Linguistics Journals. She is the author of *Second Language Learning in the Early School Years: Trends and Contexts* published by Oxford University Press in 2014, and co-editor of *Early Childhood Education in English for speakers of Other Languages* published by the British Council.