

Who are English Language Learners?

Across the United Kingdom and beyond, the number of children growing up in linguistically diverse homes is on the rise. This trend holds enormous potential for these pupils, as the ability to speak more than one language is a significant asset in today's global economy.

In the UK, this population of pupils is often referred to as English Language Learners (ELL) or Pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Although ELL pupils may share common characteristics, it is important to remember that no two are the same. Within the population of ELL learners, there lies vast diversity regarding language background and experience, as well as their own academic ability. To best support these pupils, educators must have a clear understanding of their backgrounds and focus on providing high-quality literacy teaching, with varying levels of support.

What do we know about reading development among ELL pupils?

English Language Learners come to each and every classroom with enormous potential, but they also face an ambitious challenge. These pupils must develop English language proficiency alongside other academic skills and knowledge. In terms of reading development, the process for all readers, including ELL pupils, happens over time and involves the acquisition of several different skills. These reading skills can be broken down into at least two main categories: skills related to decoding (e.g., sound-symbol knowledge, spelling rules), and skills related to deriving meaning from texts (e.g., vocabulary, conceptual knowledge).

Research indicates that when English Language Learners are provided with systematic and explicit instruction in phonics-focused skills, in the absence of specific learning difficulties, they reach similar levels of word-reading accuracy and efficiency to their English-only peers. Importantly, if emergent bilinguals do not also receive robust, comprehensive, and sustained instruction focused on the meaning-based side of reading, they are more likely to demonstrate reading comprehension difficulties when compared to those same English-only peers.



How does Lexia® Core5® Reading promote reading development for English Language Learners?

The goal of Lexia Core5 Reading is to support educators as they provide differentiated literacy teaching for pupils of all abilities from Reception to Year 6, including pupils from linguistically diverse backgrounds. Therefore, the central design principles of Core5 integrate effective practices for educating ELL pupils.

Here are the key ways in which Core5 supports reading development among this pupil population:

Teach key components of reading using a systematic and structured approach.

For all developing readers, including English Language Learners, systematic and explicit teaching focused on the key components of reading is crucial: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Lexia Core5 Reading provides sequenced and structured support in each of these key areas. An essential feature of this instructional experience for ELL pupils is the way in which the program creates personalised learning paths for each learner through an adaptive placement and scaffolded, differentiated instruction all along the way.

Target academic language development in the context of meaningful content

ELL pupils have often had fewer opportunities to develop academic language and concepts in English. Therefore, teaching must be comprehensive and intentional on the “meaning” side of reading development. Lexia Core5 Reading works to meet this challenge with a focus on comprehension and vocabulary from the earliest to the most advanced levels. Additionally, content-based reading comprehension activities and an explicit focus on academic vocabulary, grammar structures, and word-learning strategies provide the kind of explicit and deep academic language support currently shown to be important for these pupils. Importantly, this teaching is contextualised in themes, texts, and visuals that aim to portray complex topics and various cultural identities. This content aspires to affirm the diverse experiences of our pupils while also providing windows into worlds and ideas beyond the familiar.

Offer real-time, embedded progress monitoring

Using data to guide teaching is the bedrock of quality teaching and learning. For English Language Learners, it is particularly important that educators monitor development across the components of reading, responding in a timely and efficient way when difficulties arise. When it comes to all the key components of reading development, these pupils should be supported as readily as their English-only peers. Lexia’s Assessment Without Testing® technology provides teachers with real-time progress-monitoring data across these skills and competencies. This information is collected without a formal assessment event, saving time for what matters most: instruction that is guided by data.

Capitalise on technology to represent content in multiple ways and languages

As English Language Learners develop their English proficiency and reading skills simultaneously, it is crucial that instructional approaches represent content in multiple ways—through language, text, graphics, and multimedia presentations. Lexia Core5 Reading offers a platform for learning that strategically uses technology to enhance the learning experience. For example, learners have the option to access audio support that plays directions in one of six native languages. At the same time, “clickable” vocabulary terms in online texts offer embedded English-language support through pupil-friendly definitions, provided via text and audio, and paired with illustrative photographs. Additional visual supports are woven throughout the program, including images to depict terms and concepts, graphic organisers, visually engaging previews of content, and dynamic highlighting of grammar and word structures.

Provide resources for targeted support and extension of skills

While collecting data is the first step to reaching data-driven teaching for ELL pupils, it is how the data is used that makes a difference for learning outcomes. Lexia Core5 Reading uses pupils’ individual data to recommend specific resources for face-to-face support as well as materials for practice and extension of skills learned online.

For example, Lexia Lessons® are scripted resources for targeted, small-group teaching—a key strategy for supporting these pupils’ reading development. To further promote their reading and language development, lessons include specific strategies for oral language support that can be further adapted to connect key concepts with pupils’ unique prior knowledge and experiences.

Just as important as targeted support are opportunities for extended and enriching the application of skills. Lexia Skill Builders® offer paper-and-pencil tasks that extend online learning. Every Lexia Skill Builder includes a key feature that links to best practices when working with ELL pupils. These materials feature “starred” suggested activities that lend themselves to building listening, speaking, and writing skills, often in the form of peer-to-peer collaboration.



The research-proven power of Lexia Core5 Reading for English Language Learners

Lexia Core5 Reading provides an invaluable tool for supporting English Language Learners that meets the challenge of developing strong reading skills by integrating teaching strategies known to be effective with this group of learners. The application of these principles translates into improved outcomes and the data specifically confirms the program's instructional power in classrooms serving these pupils. Multiple research studies have shown that this specific blended-learning program, in the context of high-quality and language-rich classroom environments, contributes to significant reading-development gains among ELL pupils* As these learners engage with the rich content in this structured and data-driven program, they build the foundation critical for reading development and, ultimately, academic success.

[Click here to learn more about Lexia® Core5® Reading](#)



*Research demonstrating Lexia Core5 Reading's effectiveness with English learners:

Kazakoff, E. R., Macaruso, P., & Hook, P. (2017). Efficacy of a blended learning approach to elementary school reading instruction for students who are English learners. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 66(2), 429-449.

Macaruso, P., & Rodman, A. (2011). Benefits of computer-assisted instruction to support reading acquisition in English language learners. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 34(3), 301-315.

Prescott, J. E., Bundschuh, K., Kazakoff, E., & Macaruso, P. (2017). Elementary school-wide implementation of a blended learning program for reading intervention. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 111. doi: 10.1080/00220671.2017.1302914.

Schechter, R., Macaruso, P., Kazakoff, E. R., & Brooke, E. (2015). Exploration of a blended learning approach to reading instruction for low SES students in early elementary grades. *Computers in the Schools*, 32(3-4), 183-200. doi:10.1080/07380569.2015.1100652.