

# English as an Additional Language: Proficiency in English, educational achievement and rate of progression in English language learning

Prof. Steve Strand & Dr Ariel Lindorff (Feb 2020) University of Oxford Dept. of Education

## Underlying research questions:



- How long does it take for pupils New to English to acquire Proficiency in English and how long do pupils need special language support?
- Do children who learn English more quickly have higher levels of achievement later on in school than children whose English is acquired more slowly?
- Do children who start acquiring English in Reception do better at school than children who enter school in higher year groups?

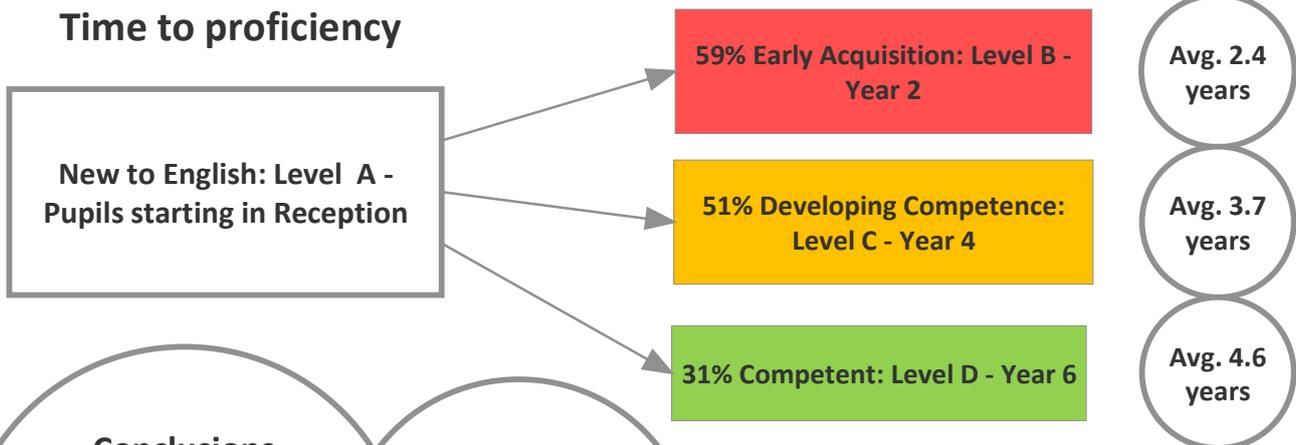
### Data used for analysis

PLASC data from Wales for children from reception to Year 11 (English data not released by the government)  
Data recorded each January from 2009 to 2017  
3,528,064 children's language levels available over a period of nine years.

### Children's language levels graded:

A = New to English  
B = Early Acquisition  
C = Developing competence  
D = Competent  
E = Fluent

## Time to proficiency



### Conclusions

Pupils starting school in higher year groups (at Level A) should make the same progress in learning English and at the same rate as pupils starting in reception (at Level A)

Pupils who progress more quickly from Levels A to C tend to achieve more highly in KS2 English SATs.

Children in schools with larger numbers of EAL learners working at Levels A-C tend to take longer to progress.

Children who progressed through the language levels at primary school achieved more highly in English at KS2 than those who had not made the same transitions.

Unexpected. Q: Wouldn't these schools have greater expertise and resources to facilitate English acquisition?

## Implications for schools:

Two thirds of pupils learning EAL are potentially not gaining academic linguistic competence by Year 6 - suggesting greater support required in schools to sustain progress.

Pupils starting with low levels of proficiency may struggle to access the curriculum and be disadvantaged if their progress remains slow.