

# Beyond vocabulary: The multi-faceted nature of English Learners' reading comprehension

**Dr. Ana Taboada Barber**

**Monday, November 21, 2016**

**1:30-2:30 p.m.**

**3211, Art & Sociology Building**



Traditionally, literacy researchers have emphasized the key role that vocabulary plays in the comprehension of all learners, especially English Learners (ELs). There is no doubt of the influence that knowing word meanings has for making meaning out of text. However, research from different perspectives is providing evidence that despite its importance, the reading comprehension of ELs is more complex than a view limited to vocabulary instruction.

In this presentation, I will share findings from a four-year project with middle-school students (Grades 6 and 7) and incipient ideas about our current work in the elementary grades (Grades 1 through 5) that explores ELs' reading comprehension as a multifaceted construct that requires a multi-pronged instructional approach. Considerations of whether ELs' reading comprehension is rooted in standard language-related skills like vocabulary and inference-making, or other factors such as executive function skills (EF; higher thinking skills) and reading engagement or motivation will be discussed.

Ana Taboada Barber is Associate Professor in the Department of Counseling, Higher Education and Special Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. Dr. Taboada Barber's research focuses on the examination of classroom contexts that support reading engagement for monolingual and English Learners (ELs). She is interested in the psychology of literacy from a cognitive and motivational perspective. She currently leads Project LEARN, a longitudinal study funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) which aims to explore whether ELs' reading comprehension is rooted in standard language-related skills like vocabulary and inference making or other factors such as motivation and executive skills.

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