# Reading comprehension: What is it and what can we do to foster success?

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# Overview

## A bit about me

- What inspired me?

What I have learned about reading comprehension

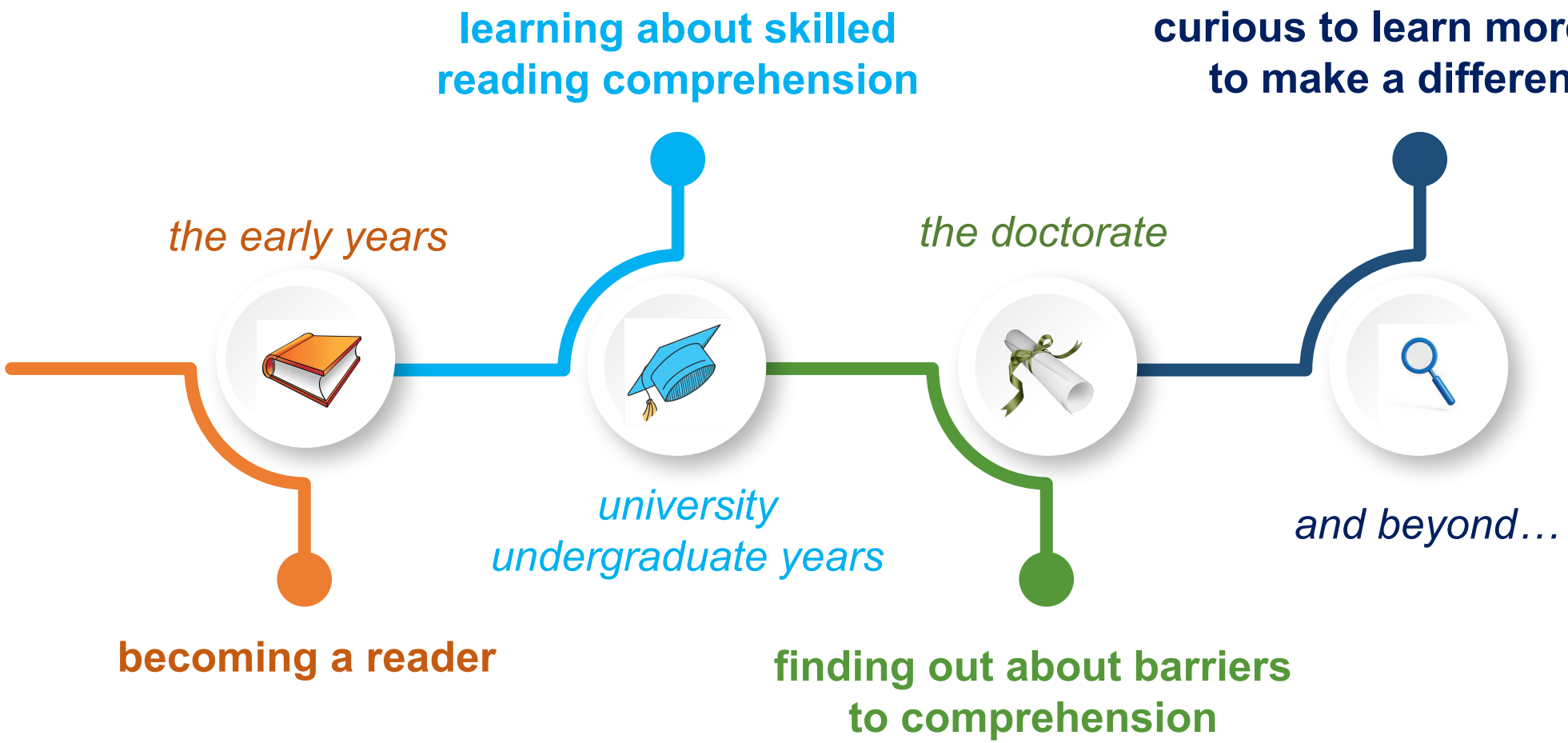
- The foundation and 3 key findings from my work

How can these research findings inform practice to make a difference?

- My 3 takeaway messages

What next?

# What inspired me to research reading comprehension and how best to foster success?



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# The foundation - constructing a mental model of a text

Molly was carrying the tumbler of juice. She tripped on the step. Her eyes filled with tears. *“Don’t worry"* said her brother, and he went to fetch the mop.

# Constructing a mental model: word reading

Molly was carrying the tumbler of juice. She tripped on the step. Her eyes filled with tears. *“Don’t worry"* said her brother, and he went to fetch the mop.

often early acquired but challenging: ‘ui’ a single vowel, i regarded as silent, long vowel –juice vs guide

# Constructing a mental model: vocabulary

Molly was carrying the tumbler of juice. She tripped on the step. Her eyes filled with tears. *“Don’t worry"* said her brother, and he went to fetch the mop.

tumbler = container for liquid

# Constructing a mental model: grammar

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# Constructing a mental model: grammar

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# Constructing a mental model: higher-level language skills (inference, comprehension monitoring, knowledge and use of text structure) and background knowledge

Molly was carrying the tumbler of juice. She tripped on the step. Her eyes filled with tears. *“Don’t worry"* said her brother, and he went to fetch the mop.

# Constructing a mental model: The product of successful reading comprehension

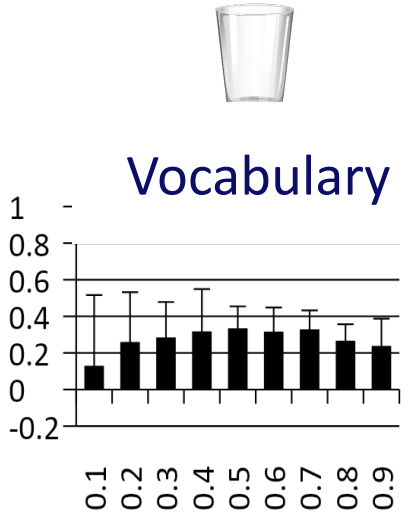
The product of successful reading comprehension is an accurate, coherent and integrated memory-based representation of the situation or the state of affairs described in the text – a Mental Model or a Situation Model.

(Johnson-Laird, 1983; Kintsch, 1998)

# Key finding 1: multiple skills and knowledge bases each play a role in successful reading comprehension

Grade 3 children:
Do language skills – vocabulary, grammar, higher-level language skills (inference, comprehension monitoring, knowledge and use of text structure) and word reading predict unique variance in reading comprehension for all readers?

# Key finding 1: multiple skills and knowledge bases each play a role in successful reading comprehension




**prediction strength**

Grade 3 children:
Do language skills – vocabulary, grammar, higher-level language skills (inference, comprehension monitoring, knowledge and use of text structure) and word reading predict unique variance in reading comprehension for all readers?

**reading comprehension ability: low to high**

LARRC & Logan (2017) *Journal of Educational Psychology*

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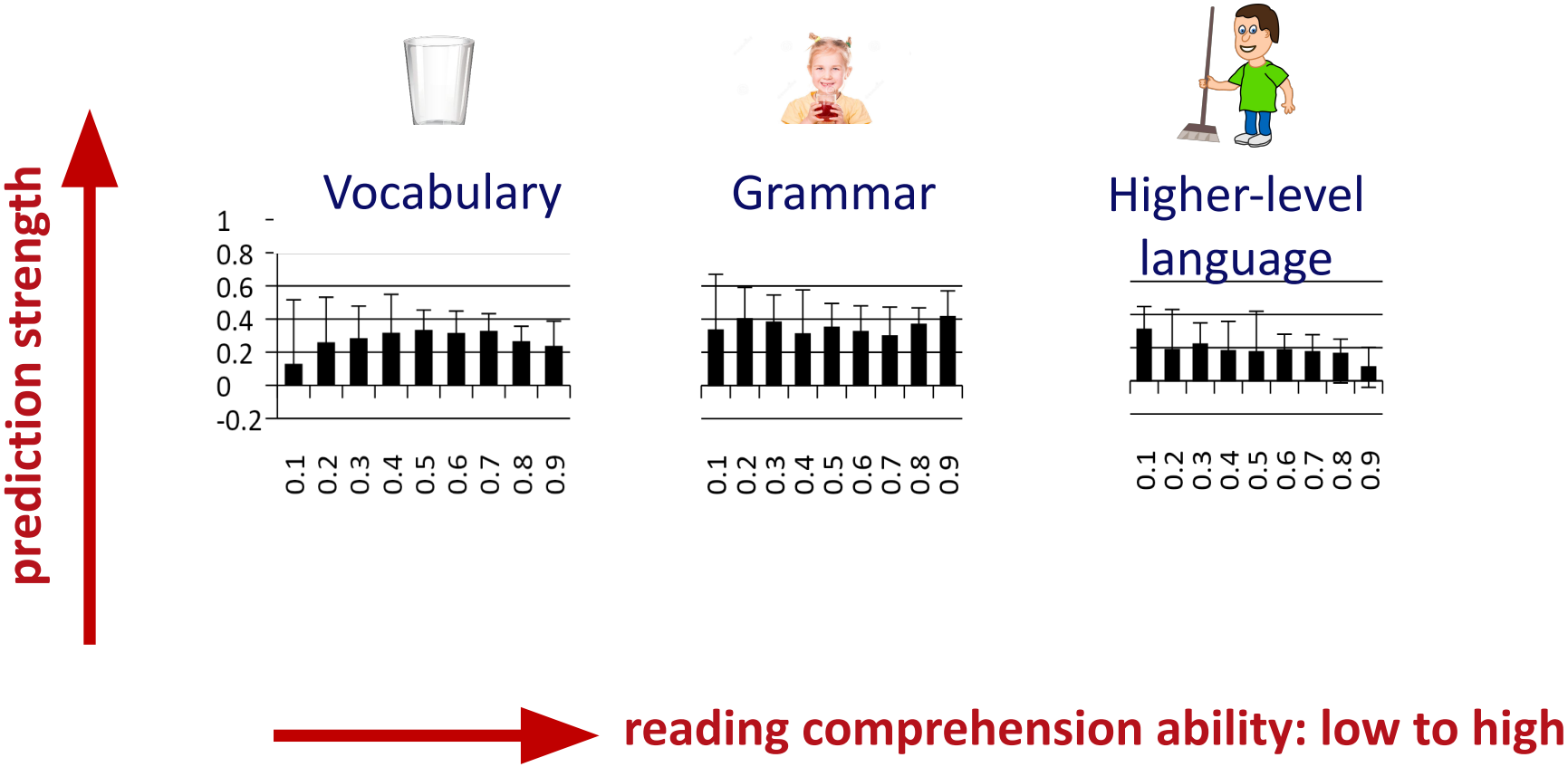


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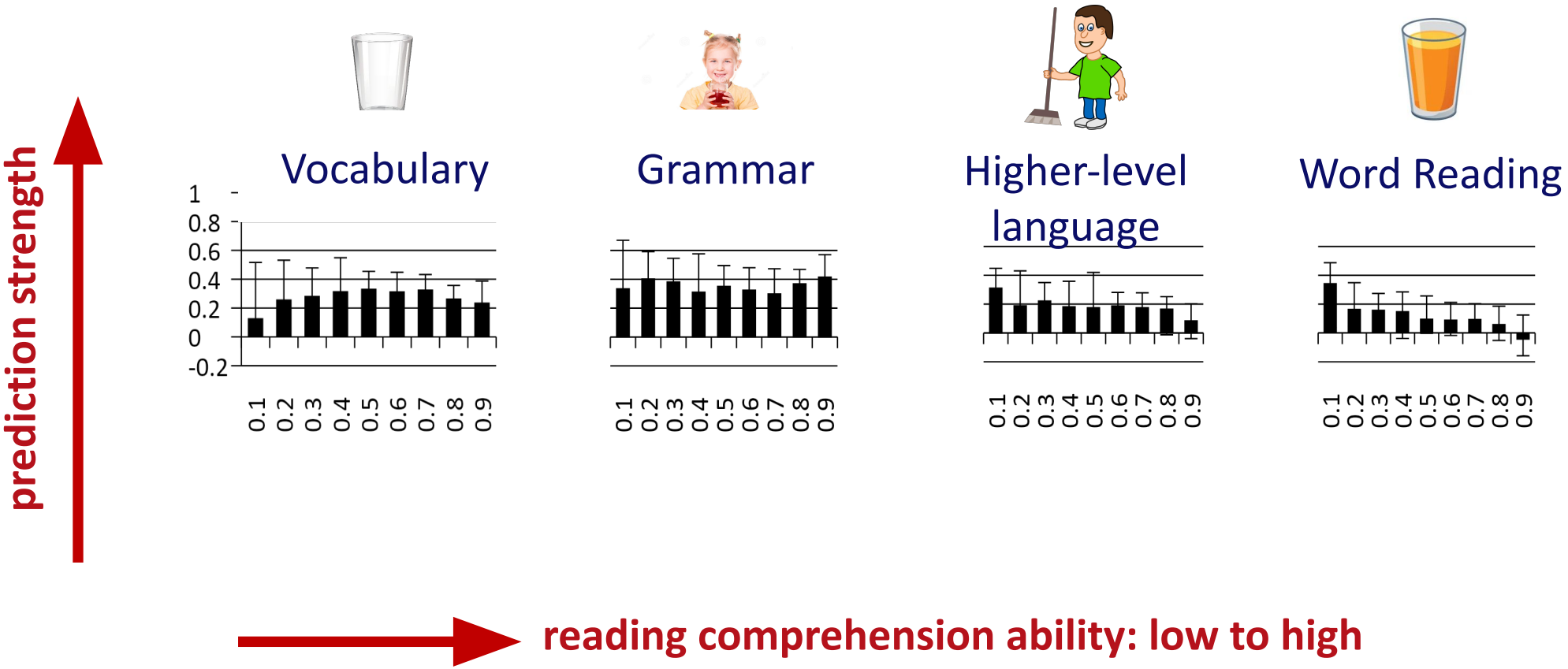


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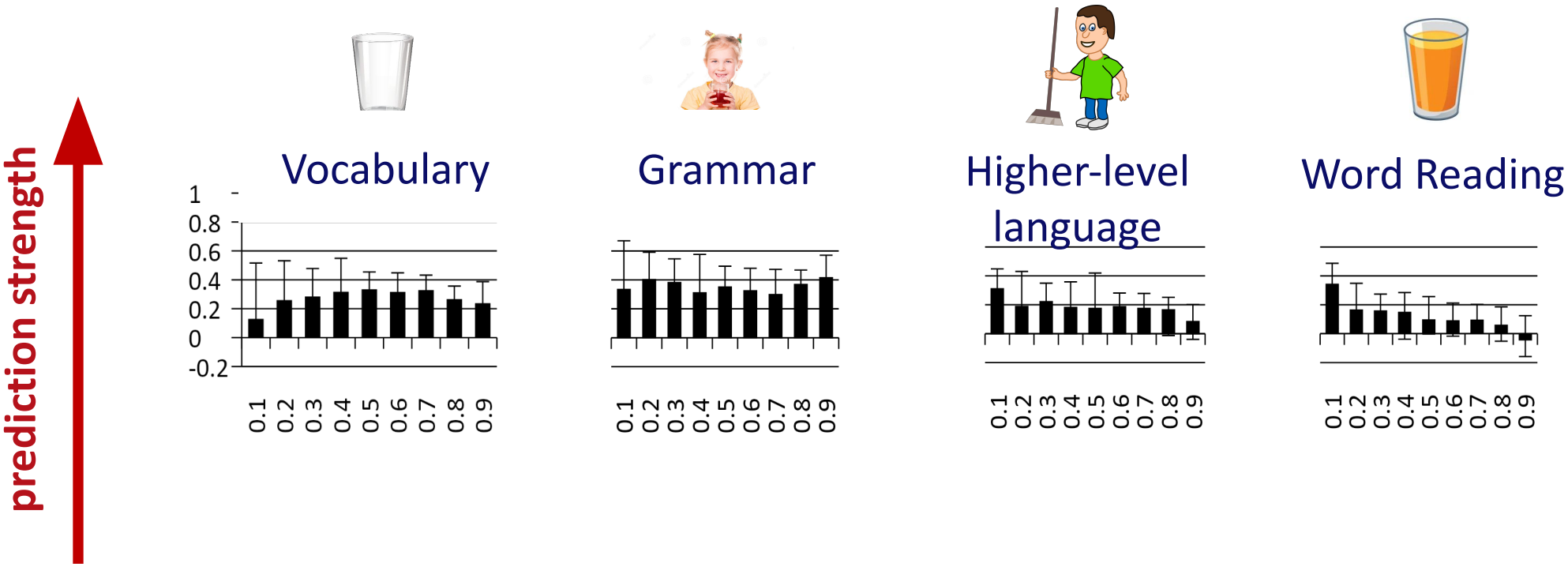


Vocabulary, grammar, and higher-level language skills each predict unique variance in reading comprehension across the range of reading comprehension ability.

LARRC & Logan (2017) *Journal of Educational Psychology*

# Key finding 2: these skills and knowledge bases predict reading comprehension outcomes over time

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PK code-related skills

G3 word recognition

G3 reading comprehension

PK language

G3 listening comp.

explained sizeable variance in G3 reading comprehension: $R^2 > .94$)

LARRC & Chiu (2018) *Remedial and Special Education*

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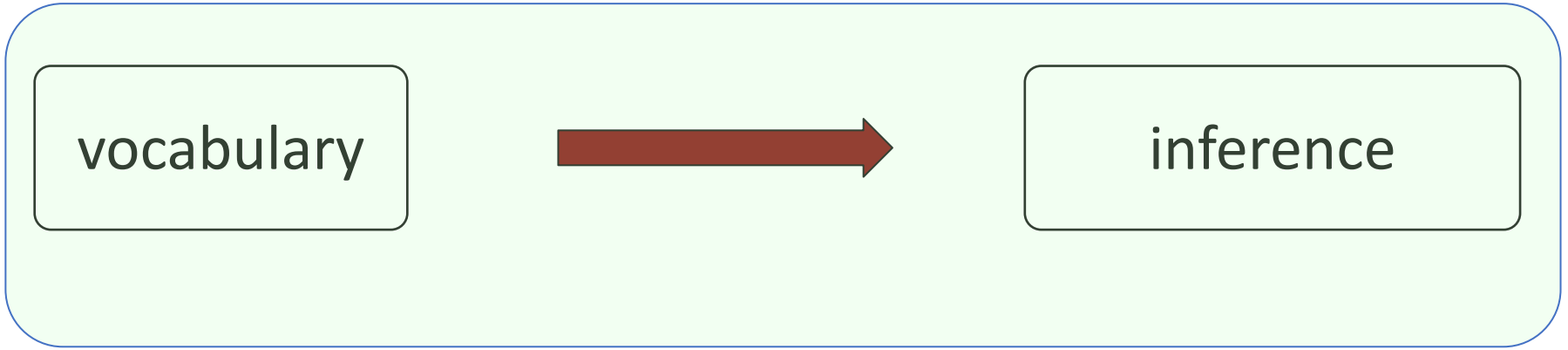

# Vocabulary and background knowledge support inference making

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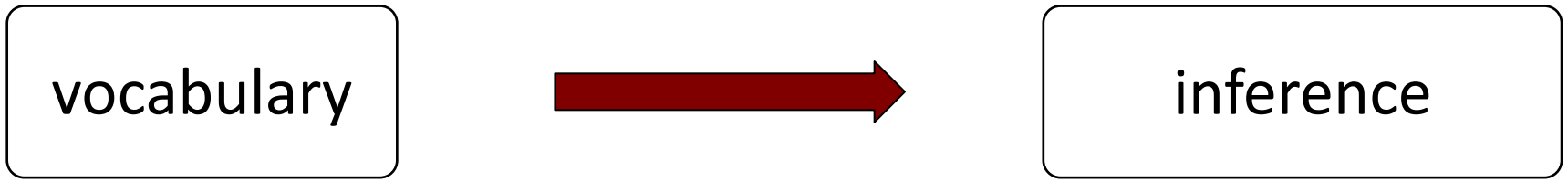


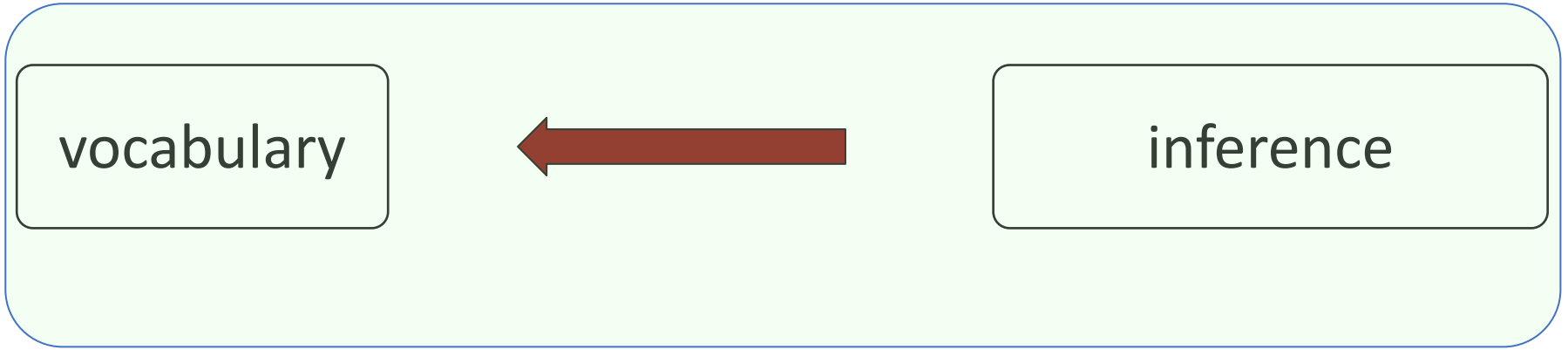

# Inference making supports vocabulary learning

Molly was carrying the tumbler of juice. She tripped on the step. Her eyes filled with tears. *“Don’t worry"* said her brother, and he went to fetch the mop.

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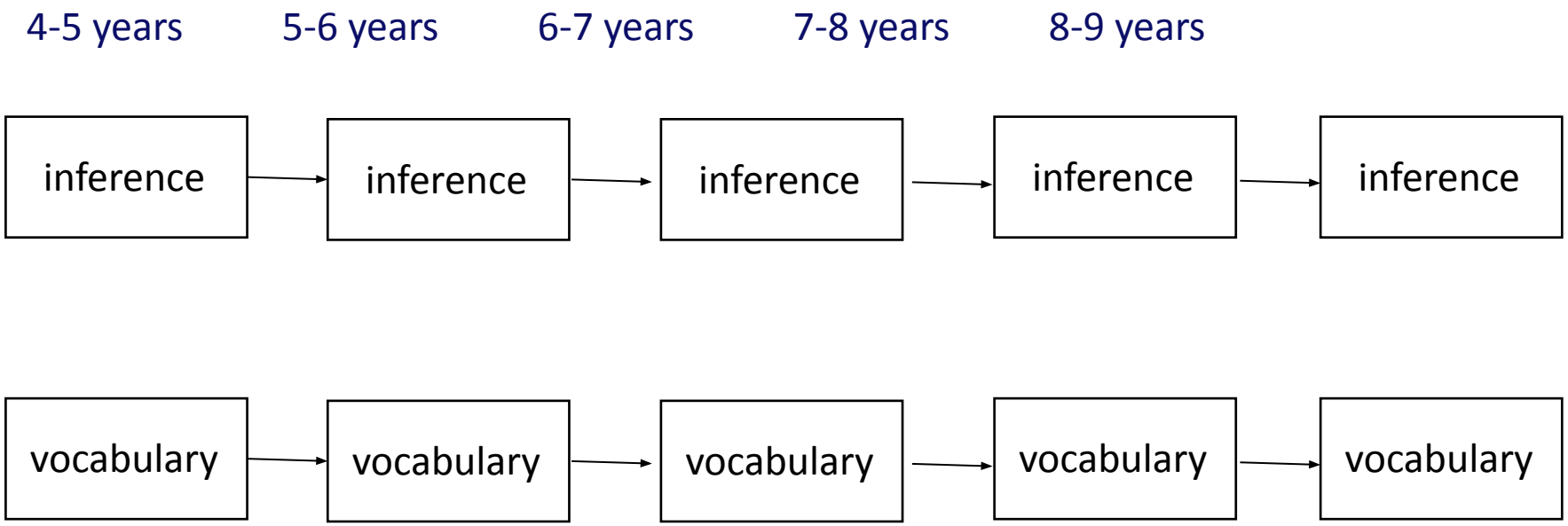


LARRC et al (2019) *Journal of Educational Psychology*

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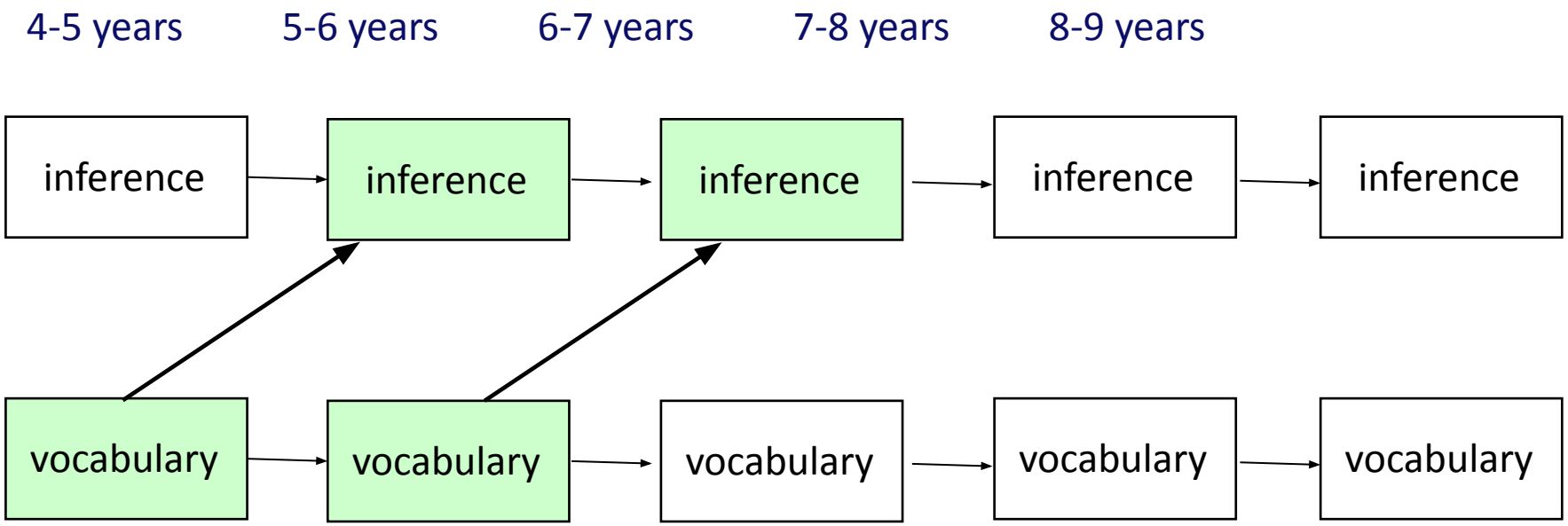


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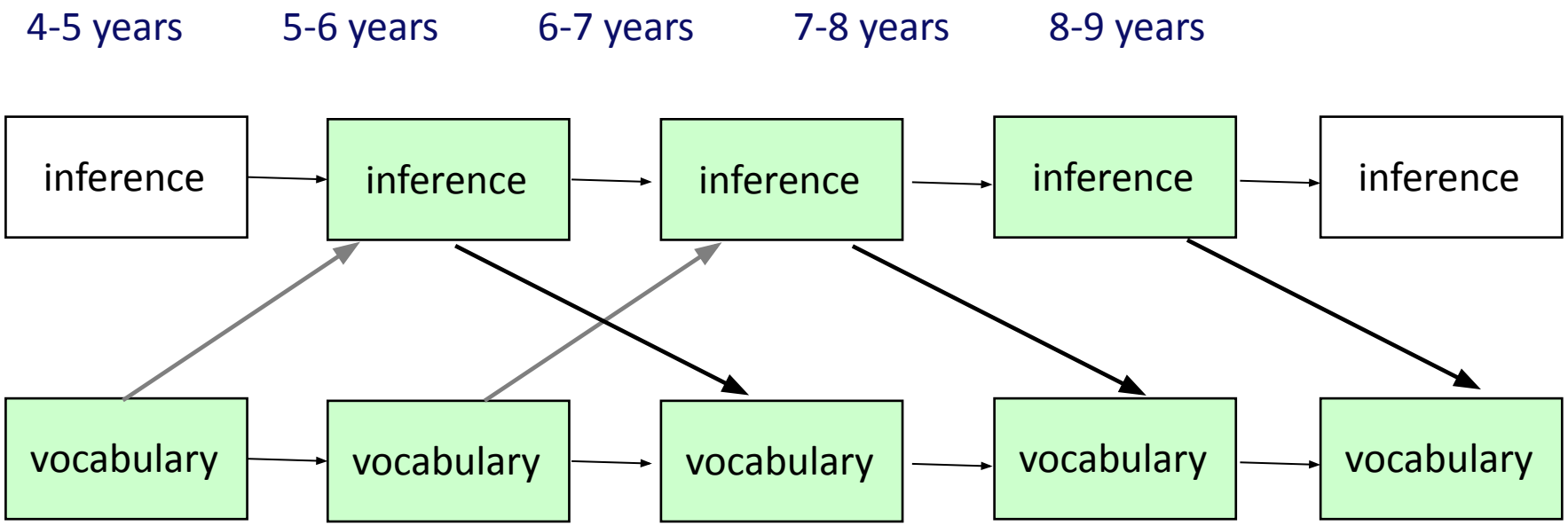


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# What I have learned: the foundation and 3 key findings

Successful reading comprehension involves constructing a mental model that represents the situation(s) described in the text.

Beyond decoding, a range of language skills, knowledge, and processes support reading for meaning.

Each predicts reading comprehension over time.

These skills support each other to construct meaning from a text, and also reciprocally across development.

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# Takeaway 1: don't focus on a single 'skill' – embrace the complexity

Vocabulary

Grammar

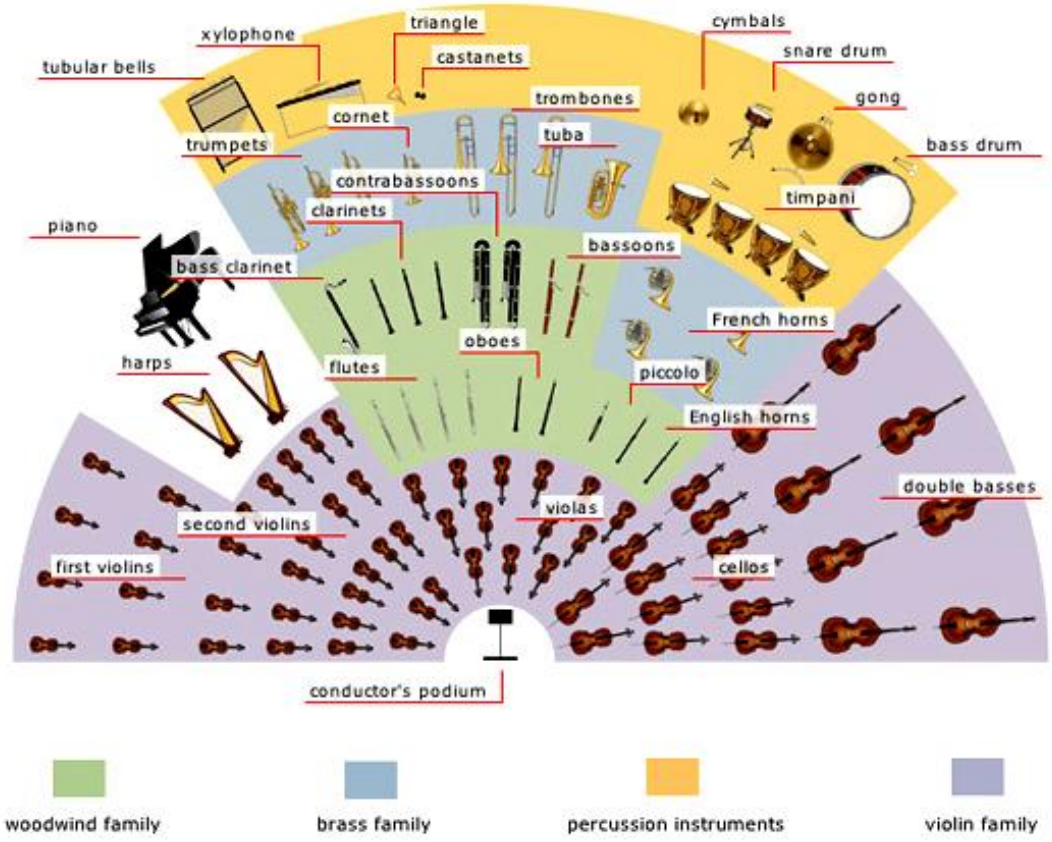
Higher-level language

- inference
- monitoring
- text structure

Successful interventions for poor comprehenders and curricula typically provide instruction in a range of skills:

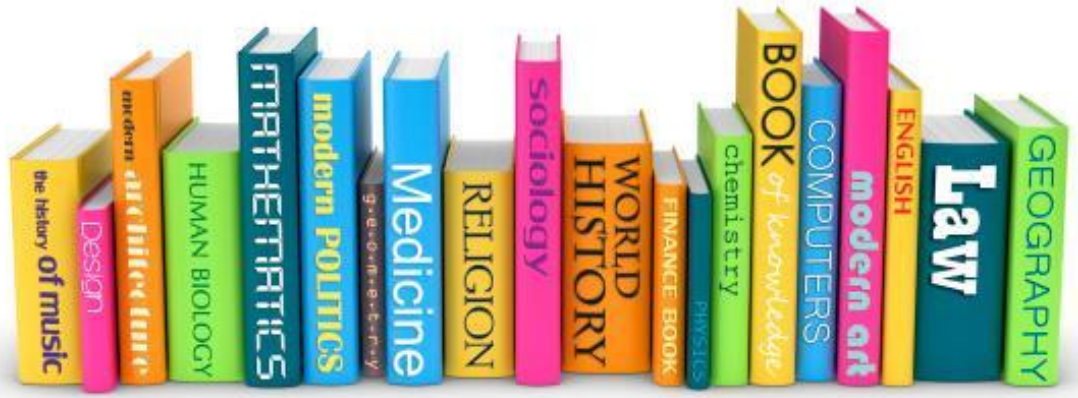
- Vocabulary, narrative, comprehension monitoring (Clarke et al., 2010)
- Comprehension monitoring, integration, text structure (Carretti et al., 2014)
- Vocabulary, grammar, comprehension monitoring, text structure (LARRC et al., 2019).

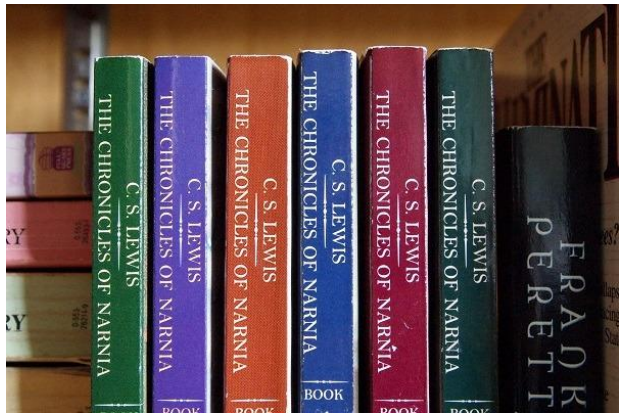
# Takeaway 1: don’t focus on a single ‘skill’ – embrace the complexity and support the process of reading for meaning



# Takeaway 2: start early - don’t wait for secure word recognition

# Takeaway 3: think beyond reading instruction - support comprehension for learning



# Three key takeaways

Successful reading comprehension draws on a range of language skills, knowledge, and processes; so successful instruction and intervention should include multiple skills and model the construction of meaning.

Comprehension can be fostered through a range of activities; support should start early and can be designed to include poor word readers.

Comprehension needs change through schooling; support should extend beyond the reading classroom to ensure successful learning.

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# New challenges and opportunities

***Opportunity***

*Digital technology enables timely and targeted support for learners and feedback for educators*

**Challenge - the digital age.**

Screen inferiority effect, navigating varied formats, drowning in (mis) information…

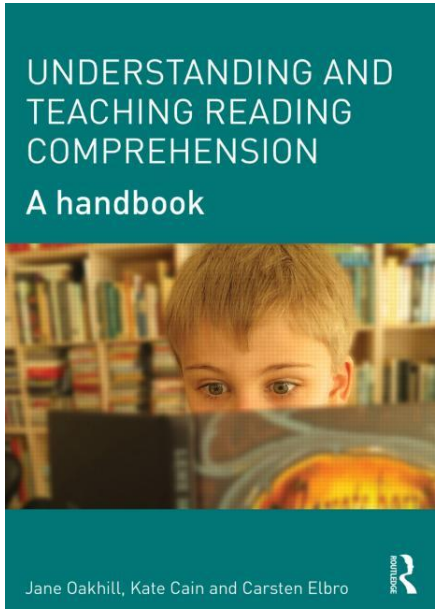
**Opportunity**

Accessibility and adaptivity of digital provides new opportunities to engage young learners

# Comprehension Matters!

Lancaster University

# Comprehension Matters!

Thank you for your attention

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