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Broadly, my research is concerned with the language processing, especially reading development. I am interested in how children learn to read words and comprehend text, and more generally, the relationship between spoken language and written language. A key aim at present is to specify some of the mechanisms involved in the transition from novice to expert. We also study language processing in skilled adults, addressing the issue of how skilled behaviour emerges via language learning experience.

The scientific study of reading has taught us a good deal about how children learn to read. There is much though still to understand. We know relatively little about how children develop from novice to expert: how do children move from the laborious reading of individual words to the sense of effortlessness we, as skilled readers, experience as we read and understand text? And why do some children find this so difficult?

This talk will reflect on how language shapes the development of a child's reading system, with particular emphasis on what is clearly the ultimate goal of reading – to understand what it is that has been read.