How classroom discussion promotes vocabulary learning and reading comprehension

Professor Catherine Snow
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November 24, 2017 (Friday)
5:15 – 6:30pm
Room 802, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
(Chair: Dr Shelley Tong)

Abstract:
Authentic vocabulary learning requires opportunities and motivation to use newly learned words and linguistic forms. Word Generation is an instructional program designed to improve academic language skills of 4th-8th grade students (10-14 year olds), by engaging them in discussions about controversial civic and moral issues. Participation in the program improves language skills, perspective-taking, and reading comprehension, for all students but in particular for those who speak English as a second language.

About the speaker:
Catherine Snow is an expert on language and literacy development in children, focusing on how oral language skills are acquired and how they relate to literacy outcomes. Snow has chaired two national panels: the National Academy of Sciences committee that prepared the report “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children,” and the Rand Reading Study Group that prepared “Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension.” Her research activities include a longitudinal study of language and literacy skills among low-income children who have been followed for 15 years since age three; following the language development of young children participating in the Early Head Start intervention; studying the vocabulary development of first- and second-language learners; and considering aspects of transfer from first to second language in the domains of language and literacy. Her book, Preparing Our Teachers: Opportunities for Better Reading Instruction, is one of several efforts she is involved in to develop consensus among teacher-educators about what pre- and in-service elementary teachers need to know about language and literacy. Snow has also written about bilingualism and its relation to language policy issues such as bilingual education in the United States and in developing nations, and about testing policy. She is currently involved in efforts to improve middle-school literacy outcomes, in partnership with other Boston area researchers and the Boston Public Schools.

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