Learning to write: A developmental trajectory

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Abstract
Learning to write is one of the major developmental tasks for all children and the school has a principal responsibility in teaching writing. The written language is very different from speech and across the years of schooling the differences become more marked, while the nature of the learning tasks necessarily changes. Where young children typically write grammatically simple texts, in many ways close to the grammar of speech, however, by the last years of schooling students need to write grammatically dense, abstract language, and the evidence, in many of the English-speaking world at least, is that many students experience difficulty in mastering written English. Their school performance tends to drop behind by the mid to upper primary years, while the gap in performance widens as students go on into secondary education. In this paper I shall outline the nature of the developmental trajectory in learning literate language that students must deal with in order to achieve successful control of writing for the purposes of schooling and of later adult life.

References

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(Chair: Dr Mark Shum)

About the speaker:
Frances Christie is Emeritus Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Melbourne. Her major research and teaching interests are in English language and literacy education, pedagogic grammar and classroom discourse analysis. Her books have included:
Christie, F. (2005), Language Education in the Primary Years. Sydney: University of NSW Press.

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