Faculty of Education
The University of Hong Kong

Modelling the Rich Vocabulary of Picturebooks: How Regular Read-alouds Contribute to Children's Language Environments

Abstract:
This study explored how children's picturebooks enhance early language exposure, focusing on narrative and informational texts. While the language of narrative picturebooks has a rich research history, methodological limitations have hindered large-scale dataset development. Additionally, little is known about informational picturebooks. Using innovative data science methods to develop a larger dataset than previously possible, over 2,000 narrative and informational picturebooks were examined from the transcripts of online read-alouds. The study compared lexical diversity, density, morphology, academic vocabulary, and semantic clusters between the two genres. Models of vocabulary exposure from read-alouds suggest that although picturebooks may contain only a small portion of the words a child hears in day, the number of new words entering a child's language environments from this input is remarkable. Informational books provide significant academic vocabulary, while both narrative and information genres, when used in combination, offer greater lexical complexity than narratives alone, and both should be recommended.

June 11, 2026 (Thursday)
12:45 - 14:00
Room 401-402, Meng Wah Complex, HKU
Chair: Professor Liz Jackson

About the speaker:
Professor Clarence Green is an Assistant Professor of English Language Education in Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong. He has been awarded the Research Output Prize 2024-25 (ROP). The award acknowledges his article, "Vocabulary exposure to children is enhanced by using both informational and narrative picture books for read-alouds: A comparative modelling study using data science methods," co-authored with Dr Kathleen Keogh and published in the *Journal of Research in Reading*. The study examines how exposure to informational and narrative picture books may alter children's language environment in a way that supports reading development.