

## Series Editor's Foreword

Education faces daunting new challenges around the world today. Complex contexts of literacy use in adult life require that students develop advanced competencies in all school subjects. At the same time, global migration has increased the diversity of classrooms around the world, where many children now learn in a language not their mother tongue. Teachers are expected to support all children in reaching the high standards needed for participation in society, and in this context, it is timely that education is offered a turn toward linguistics and what a focus on language can offer. In this *Language Learning* monograph, Frances Christie offers a welcome new linguistic perspective on how language develops as children and adolescents engage in learning across school subjects and shows how this perspective suggests better ways to support them in that learning.

Two aspects of this work are particularly noteworthy. One is the conception of language development as extending beyond the years of early childhood and primary education. Christie argues and provides evidence for the position that language learning is a central aspect of learning school subjects throughout schooling. She describes developments in the grammar that children and adolescents need to take up if they are to meet the challenges and expectations of the tasks set them in speaking and writing at each new phase of learning. In careful detail she lays out the linguistic features of many of the genres students engage with, illustrating how these linguistic features are intrinsic to making the meanings that the tasks and disciplines call for.

The second major contribution of this monograph is the use of a functional grammar that offers new ways of describing and assessing these challenges and expectations. Drawing on systemic functional linguistics (e.g., Halliday, 1994), Christie illustrates the power of a meaning-focused grammar in connecting content knowledge, enactment of interpersonal relationships, and the various organizational approaches that characterize the texts children and adolescents are asked to read and expected to produce in their speech and writing. Halliday has suggested that students encounter language in three ways throughout their schooling: they *learn language*, *learn through language*, and *learn about language* (Halliday, 1980/2004). It is the last of these, learning about language, to which Christie's work here makes another innovative

contribution. She has been a major figure for decades in developing pedagogical innovations based in functional grammar. Her early work (e.g., Christie, 1985) identified language as the *hidden curriculum* of schooling, and her subsequent research on pedagogic discourse (e.g., Christie, 1999) and classroom discourse analysis (Christie, 2002) informed both theory and research methods for exploring how knowledge in different subject areas is constructed and reflected in the discursive choices made by speakers and writers. Through her work on register and genre and an extensive set of pedagogical and teacher education materials too numerous to mention here (but see references at the end of this volume), she has offered teachers and teacher educators concrete tools and approaches for supporting students as they engage with language in new ways at school. Her pioneering descriptions of trajectories of writing development (Christie & Derewianka, 2008) demonstrate how particular language choices are functional for achieving the goals for learning in different subjects, and yet draw on grammatical features that are often far removed from the everyday experiences of children with language outside of school. Her most recent work continues to break new ground in illuminating discipline-specific features of the language used to teach and learn (e.g., Christie & Maton, 2011).

In this volume, Christie shows how functional grammar can be a tool for describing, assessing, and supporting language development across the school years and across subject areas. The focus on disciplinarity is especially timely, given recent interest in content-based instruction in North America (Stoller, 2004) and Content and Language Integrated Learning in Europe (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). Language educators are increasingly recognizing the need to situate language learning in subject area classrooms, and in this work Christie offers guidance for supporting content-specific language learning that will undoubtedly inspire new curricular innovations.

The monograph begins with an introduction to systemic functional grammar that provides the basis for the analyses Christie develops in subsequent chapters, each of which describes challenges that schooling presents at different stages of development: in early childhood (Chapter 2), late childhood to early adolescence (Chapter 3), midadolescence (Chapter 4), and late adolescence to adulthood (Chapter 5). Throughout, Christie instantiates the theory through analysis of students' oral and written language drawn from her research in Australia and Indonesia. The final chapter then offers recommendations for pedagogical practices that enable students of all ages to become more aware of the multifunctionality of language and more conscious about the choices available to them in making meaning.

Christie clearly demonstrates how the language of schooling in English develops across the years as students move from using language that serves them well in talking about their everyday experiences into using the increasingly challenging and dense formulations needed to construe abstract disciplinary knowledge in the humanities and sciences. As the data illustrate, successful students draw on increasingly abstract and technical lexis and nominalization as well as sophisticated use of modality to present judgment and attitude. Control of these language resources depends on development of systems of reference, thematic structuring, and a range of clause types that enable information to be densely presented. Throughout the book, Christie summarizes key features of language development at each stage, offering recommendations for supporting literacy in history, science, and language arts across 13 years of schooling.

In this volume, Frances Christie has written a monograph that will undoubtedly stimulate interdisciplinary research on language development, literacy, and assessment, as educators, applied linguists, and others interested in the relationship between language and learning find inspiration for thinking in new ways about the challenges of schooling. By outlining developmental pathways into the valued genres of schooling, this monograph provides teachers, teacher educators, and literacy researchers with theoretical and pedagogical tools for supporting all students in participating in those genres. In the challenging educational contexts in which young people participate today, the volume promises to offer new ways forward in providing all students with more explicit guidance in developing the language resources they need for success.

With this issue I assume the editorship of the *Language Learning* monograph series. I want to extend my deep appreciation to Lourdes Ortega, former editor, for her generosity of time and advice in helping me get started in this role. She has again and again responded to questions large and small, providing information and guidance to smooth the transition. I also want to thank Catherine O'Hallaron for her careful editorial work, as well as the anonymous reviewers who provided insightful comments and suggestions on an earlier version of the manuscript.

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