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INNOVATION AND IDENTITY IN WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS:

PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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INNOVATION AND IDENTITY IN WEB 2.0 ENVIRONMENTS: PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AND LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This study explores perspectives and experiences of four Vietnamese university teachers of English and their students as they participated in innovation projects in Web 2.0 environments. Specifically, it investigated the relationship between the participants' creation and implementation of the projects and how that induced on-going negotiation and construction of roles and identities as university teachers, learners, and users of English across three phases. Phase One concerned an initial experience of innovation in which three focal participants online collaboratively wrote and published entries on Wikipedia; Phase Two extended the initial experience of innovation by following the participants' own trajectories in switched roles using wikis and blogging; Phase Three was a classroom-based innovation in wiki writing in three tertiary academic English writing classes. The research questions focused on participants' identity negotiations in both initial and extended phases of innovation and in classroom-based settings for innovation. The main instruments for data gathering included observation of Web 2.0 and classroom environments, interviews, pre- and post-task online group discussions, participant reflective writings, questionnaires, and journals completed by the participants and the researcher. The Web 2.0 spaces themselves were important sites for data gathering as introduced and developed by the participants in the course of the enquiry.

Results across the three phases reveal the participants' construction and negotiation of roles and identities as they evolved in the innovation projects in different contexts, and in different roles, as learners, teachers/mentors, and users of English. Evident points of conflict in identity negotiations emerged as the participants switched from the role of peer learner to that of teacher or mentor, and as the participant teachers entered new environments while also being required to fulfil fixed teacher responsibilities within an institutionally-constrained context of classroom-based innovation. Key conclusions relate to the mutually constitutive relationship between innovation and identity prior to and during processes of innovation, the role of small-scale open-ended contexts in the initiation of innovations, and the importance of critically adaptive learning and ongoing mentoring in extending innovation.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

CHAPTER ONE 1

INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 A Personal Perspective 1

1.2 An Overview of Innovation at the Tertiary Level in Vietnam 3

1.3 The Research Problem 4

1.4 Significance of the Study 6

1.5 Purpose and Research Questions 8

1.6 Overview of Chapters 9

CHAPTER TWO 11

LITERATURE REVIEW 11

2.1 Innovation 11

2.1.1 Definitions, characteristics, and theoretical frameworks of innovation 11

2.1.2 Major innovations in English language education and the current trends of innovation in Web 2.0 17

2.2 Innovation and Identity 18

2.2.1 Teacher behaviour 18

2.2.2 Teacher belief 20

2.2.3 Teacher identity 20

2.3 Web 2.0 in Learning and Teaching 25

2.3.1 An overview of networked language pedagogy 25

2.3.2 Definition of Web 2.0 and Web 2.0 applications 28

2.3.3 Web 2.0 in learning and teaching 28

2.4 Summary of the Chapter 32

CHAPTER THREE 34

METHODOLOGY 34

3.1 The Three Phases 34

3.2 Research Settings and Participants 35

3.2.1 The university and the department of English 35

3.2.2 Settings and participants of Phase One 36

3.2.3 Settings and participants of Phase Two 37

3.2.4 Settings and participants of Phase Three 39

3.2.5 The selection of the focal participants 40
3.2.6 My roles in the three phases 41
3.3 Research Design 42
3.4 Data Collection Procedures 43
3.4.1 Phase One procedure 43
3.4.2 Phase Two procedure 45
3.4.3 Phase Three procedure 46
3.5 Instruments 47
3.5.1 Instruments for Phase One 48
3.5.2 Instruments for Phase Two 58
3.5.3 Instruments for Phase Three 67
3.6 Ethical Considerations 74
3.7 Summary of the Chapter 76
CHAPTER FOUR 77
PHASE ONE: AN INITIAL EXPERIENCE OF INNOVATION IN WEB 2.0 77
4.1 The Story 77
4.2 Phase One Innovation 79
4.2.1 Initial stage 79
4.2.2 Task One: Initial attempt, *Hue People* 81
4.2.3 Task Two: Complexities emerge 92
4.3 Phase One Innovation and Identity 96
4.3.1 Emily 97
4.3.2 Faith 99
4.3.3 Katie 101
4.3.4 The researcher as a participatory mentor 104
4.4 A Brief Summary of Phase One Results 107
4.5 Phase One Discussion 108
4.5.1 Building the environment, engaging the participants 108
4.5.2 Collective activity 111
4.5.3 The context of innovation 113
4.6 Summary of Chapter Four 114
CHAPTER FIVE 115
PHASE TWO: A LONGITUDINAL EXPERIENCE OF INNOVATION IN WEB 2.0 115
5.1 The Story 115

5.2 Emily's Switch-Role 117
5.2.1 Innovation 117
5.2.2 Identity 127
5.3 Faith's Trajectory Follow-up 130
5.3.1 A Masters student: The second time around 130
5.3.2 Endeavour for professional recognition 131
5.4 Katie's Switch-Role 131
5.4.1 Innovation 131
5.4.2 Identity 136
5.5 A Brief Summary of Phase Two Results 140
5.6 Phase Two Discussion 140
5.6.1 Critical adaptive learning 141
5.6.2 Learner-centredness 143
5.6.3 Construction of and negotiation for professional teacher identity in implementing an innovation 145
5.7 Summary of Chapter Five 147
CHAPTER SIX 149
PHASE THREE: A CLASSROOM-BASED EXPERIENCE OF INNOVATION IN WIKI WRITING 149
6.1 The Story 149
6.2 Phase Three Innovation 151
6.2.1 Initial set up by the teacher 152
6.2.2 Initiating the new environment 153
6.2.3 Class tutorials of wiki and writing 155
6.2.4 The students' interactions on Pbworks: Emerging challenges 156
6.2.5 An external factor of novelty: The real audience 158
6.3 Classroom Identities 158
6.3.1 The students 159
6.3.2 Victor – a class teacher 164
6.4 A Brief Summary of Phase Three Results 168
6.5 Phase Three Discussion 168
6.5.1 A community of practice 168
6.5.2 Second language (L2) learner identity from the relational view 171
6.5.3 Teacher identity 172
6.6 Summary of Chapter Six 174

CHAPTER SEVEN 175
CONCLUSION 175
7.1 Revisiting the Research Questions 175
7.1.1 Research question 1 175
7.1.2 Research question 2 176
7.1.3 Research question 3 178
7.2 Implications of the Study 179
7.2.1 Theoretical implications 179
7.2.2 Methodological implications 181
7.2.3 Implications for innovation practices 182
7.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study 185
7.4 A Final Word from the Researcher 187
REFERENCES 189
APPENDIX A 198
Information Sheet to Participants of Phase One 198
Participant Consent Form 201
Interview Round One Prompt 202
Interview Round Two Prompt 205
Emily's Written Reflection and Interview Round Three Prompt 208
Guideline for Wikipedia First Writers 210
Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval 213
APPENDIX B 214
Emily's Interview Round Four Prompt 214
Information Sheet for Emily's Switch-Role 215
Emily's Switch-Role Guidelines 217
Emily's Interview Round Five Prompt 219
Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval 220
Katie's Interview Three Prompt 221
Katie's Interview Four Prompt 223
Teacher-As-Learner Questionnaire 224
Massey University Human Ethics Committee Approval 227
University authority's confirmation letter 228
APPENDIX C 229
Information sheet for the teacher 229

Participant Consent Form 231
Victor's Interview One Prompt 232
Victor's Interview Two Prompt 233
Teacher-As-Learner Questionnaire 234
Student Interview Protocol 237

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Wikipedia entry about Hue People 1
Figure 1.2: A Wikipedia editor's message 2
Figure 2.1: A simplified overview of the change process 14
Figure 2.2: A simplified overview of the change process 14
Figure 2.3: The hierarchy of interrelating subsystems in which an innovation has to operate 15
Figure 2.4: The Teacher Iceberg 17
Figure 2.5: The skills pyramid 19
Figure 2.6: Five-stage wiki activities model 31
Figure 3.1: The three phases of the study 34
Figure 3.2: A photograph from a classroom observation 64
Figure 3.3: A screenshot of student interactions on Pbworks 72
Figure 4.1: The mentor's initial attempt on Wikipedia 80
Figure 4.2: "A new me" 82
Figure 4.3: Story of "My PhD confirmation" 83
Figure 4.4: "Our personal present" 83
Figure 4.5: Katie's Hue People and its comment 84
Figure 4.6: *Hue People* 90
Figure 4.7: Wikipedia editors' messages for *Hue People* 91
Figure 4.8: Wikipedia editors' messages for *Good Language Learners* 95
Figure 5.1: The blog 119
Figure 5.2: Topics assigned by Emily 120
Figure 5.3: Topics of the student 120

Figure 5.4: A new category 121
Figure 5.5: Comment from an outsider reader 121
Figure 5.6: Emily's comment 122
Figure 5.7: Emily's comment 122
Figure 5.8: Emily's comment and Anh's comment 125
Figure 5.9: Anh's comment 125
Figure 5.10: Anh's comment and Candee's response.....126
Figure 5.11: *Argumentativeessaywriting* workspace 132
Figure 5.12: The FrontPage 133
Figure 5.13: A photograph of a class tutorial 134
Figure 5.14: Katie's comment as an encouragement 135
Figure 5.15: Katie's comment as an instruction 135
Figure 6.1: The students' initiating conversation 153
Figure 6.2: The students' initial attempts to post papers 154
Figure 6.3: The students' wrongly placed posts on FrontPage 154
Figure 6.4: The students' wrongly placed posts outside their folders 154
Figure 6.5: The students' requests for help 155
Figure 6.6: A peer comment 157
Figure 6.7: The students' one-to-one peer interactions 162
Figure 6.8: The students' commenting as peer teaching 163

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Summary of instruments for Phase One 50
Table 3.2: Summary of instruments for Phase Two 59
Table 3.3: Example of questionnaire items 61
Table 3.4: Summary of instruments for Phase Three 68