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

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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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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