University of Victoria | Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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"Exploring a teacher's facilitation of a collaborative story writing unit using Google Docs in a culturally and linguistically diverse high school English class"

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Monday August 19, 2019
3:00 pm
Clearihue Building
Room B017

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Ruthanne Tobin, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic (Member)
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Dr. Patti-Jean Naylor, School of Exercise Science and Physical Health, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

This dissertation shares findings from a descriptive case study that examined an experienced teacher's facilitation of a collaborative story writing project using Google Docs in a culturally and linguistically diverse Grade 11 English class. An expanding body of research supports the use of web-based writing tools and peer collaboration for promoting writing skills development, yet there is little research examining how these practices are integrated within the broader teaching and learning process. In the present study, sociocultural theory provided a guiding framework for exploring the complexities inherent in the teaching and learning process as students worked in pairs (and one triad) to write a story about "the future" to be shared with an audience of upper level elementary students. Data sources included field notes taken during 16 class observations, pre- and post- project interviews with the teacher, on-going reflections written by the teacher, focus group interviews with the students, and the students' collaborative projects stored in Google Docs. The findings cohered around five key themes that describe the teacher's facilitation of the project: (1) incorporating procedural facilitators, including mentor texts and web-based writing applications; (2) adopting a socio-cognitive apprenticeship model to guide students toward higher levels of proficiency with narrative writing; (3) building a community of practice through peer collaboration, peer sharing, and peer editing; (4) enabling a positive and productive learning environment; and (5) transitioning to a new curriculum. The findings from this study also shed light on the affordances and constraints associated with the pedagogical supports, the collaborative context, and the use of Google Docs as integral components of the project. The dissertation concludes with recommendations for educators who are interested in integrating collaborative story writing projects or web-based writing tools within their classroom contexts.