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Tools for Thought: Situating Language within a Multiliteracies Theoretical Framework

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University of Windsor
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Research Result Summaries
Fall 31-12-2017

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Tools for Thought: Situating Language within a Multiliteracies Theoretical Framework

Summary

Using a multiliteracies theoretical framework, the purpose of this study was to investigate education students' experiences in creating multimodal pedagogical tools for a multimedia web platform available to the public for educators to use as resources in a wide array of content areas at the high school level. The overarching research questions addressed to education students (B.Ed. teacher candidates and M.Ed. students) for this University of Windsor Women's Grant study were: (1) What were some of the pros and cons of creating these multimodal projects? (2) How do the participants interpret the theory of multiliteracies and content area literacy? (3) What are some of the barriers or supports in participants' previous experiences in their specific content areas that affected their attitudes, philosophical orientation, or capabilities in participating in this project? Participants had options around how they might want to participate in the study: (a) individual face-to-face interviews; (b) focus groups with other participants; (c) email responses to the three over-arching questions of the research study. There were 36 participants in total. The Findings indicate 6 major themes arising from the data: (1) multimodality augments content area literacy; (2) social justice issues are addressed through a multiliteracies pedagogy in all content areas; (3) English as an Additional Language Learners benefit at the secondary level from multiliteracies; (4) a creative mindset is

central to a multiliteracies curricular design; (5) technology needs to be strategically deployed to enrich literacy demands. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the international body of literature on multiliteracies.

Key words: multiliteracies; literacy; content area literacy; second language acquisition theory; multilingualism; teacher education; graduate education; secondary school education