Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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“Preliminary Study of the Role of Eye Contact, Gestures, and Smiles Produced by Chinese-as-a-First-Language Test-Takers on Ratings Assigned by English-as-a-First-Language Examiners During IELTS Speaking Tests”

Department of Linguistics

Tuesday, December 20, 2016
1:30 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room C316

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Li-Shih Huang, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Martha McGinnis-Archibald, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Tsung-Cheng Lin, Department of Pacific and Asian Studies, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Nikitas Dimopoulos, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract
This study investigated the role of gestures, smiles, and eye contact on scores assigned to English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) speakers during standardized face-to-face speaking tests. Four English-as-a-first-language examiners and four EAL test-takers participated in simulated IELTS Speaking Tests. Qualitatively, an inductive thematic analysis was conducted. Quantitatively, scores were holistically (overall scores assigned) and analytically (by criterion). Nonverbal cues were examined by the total number of cues produced by all test-takers, the frequency of production by test-taker, the frequency of production of subcategories of nonverbal cues by test-taker, and by production alongside speech or in isolation. Mimicry of nonverbal cues generated by test-takers was investigated. Test-takers’ lexical range was also analyzed vis-à-vis the scores assigned to the criterion lexical resource. Conclusions drawn from the triangulation of data sources indicate that nonverbal cues may have played a role in the assessment of the criteria fluency and coherence and pronunciation. This study adds to the current body of literature on second language assessment, which has suggested that variables other than language proficiency may play a role in scores assigned to test-takers during face-to-face speaking tests.