Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts
of
MATTHEW RICHARDS
BSc (University of Victoria, 2009)
“Prosodic Structure of the Foxtrot”
Department of Linguistics

Thursday, April 26, 2018
1:00 P.M.
Clearihue Building
Room B019

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Suzanne Urbanczyk, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Alexandra D’Arcy, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)
Dr. Allana Lindgren, Theatre Department, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Marcia Ostashewski, Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Cape Breton University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Hao Zhang, School of Business, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Dance as a language is a common metaphor used to describe dance and how people understand, observe, dance and relate to dances. This metaphor implies that dance has a communicative aspect between people and there is a structure to the patterns found in the dance. The pattern of interest in language is the pattern of articulation of sounds in language. The dance investigated in this thesis is the Foxtrot, a partner dance. This thesis investigates the structure of how the Foxtrot is articulated using theories from phonology and sign language phonology. In particular, it looks at sonority and prosodic units in sign language and how they apply to dance. The research questions addressed are:

1. Can sonority be defined for dance and used in the analysis of dance steps?

2. Can dance steps be organized into prosodic units?

Dance has a sonority based on the articulators used to articulate the dance step. The steps are structured around the sonority of the articulators used in the step. In the Foxtrot sonority is defined by the proximity of the articulators to the centre of mass of the dancer. The closer to the centre of mass the more sonorous the movement. The most sonorous movements start the step and following movements are less sonorous. This pattern is repeated with the other prosodic unit of the foot, where the most prominent step starts the foot. The conclusion is that theories from phonology can be applied to the Foxtrot and may be able to be extended to other types of dance.