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

of

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MA (University of Victoria, 2011)
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"English-as-an-Additional-Language Job Interviews: Pragmatics Training for Candidates and Analyzing Performance on Both Sides of the Table"

Department of Linguistics

Thursday, June 29, 2017
3:30 P.M.
David Turpin Building
Room A144

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Li-Shih Huang, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Hossein Nassaji, Department of Linguistics, UVic (Member)
Dr. Hiroko Noro, Department of Pacific and Asian Studies, UVic (Outside Member)

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Dr. Lynda Yates, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Annalee Lepp, Department of History, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Previous job interview studies have found that evaluations of English-as-an-additional language (L+) candidates related less to demonstrated qualifications and more to matches or mismatches in communicative expectations. Candidates' pragmatic skillfulness can affect interviewers' perceptions of their competence, and by extension, their hireability.

Despite the importance of pragmatics to interview success, few studies have looked at the efficacy of pragmatics training. To address this gap, a mixed-methods study was carried out with L+ English university students and professional interviewers. Two training types were assessed: pragmatics-focused feedback and feedback plus a pragmatics lesson. A second focus was to understand the factors that influenced the nine interviewers' evaluations. To this end, the interviewers engaged in a video-stimulated recall session. The resulting data were coded thematically. Finally, the interviewers' communication was analyzed using an *Interviewer Actions* instrument and qualitative analysis.

Results showed that both experimental groups significantly outperformed the control group, which provides an endorsement of pragmatics training for L+ candidates. A second finding was that linguistic themes were most prevalent in interviewer comments. This reveals a self-referential emphasis on the candidates' talk as the primary source of competency judgments, which disadvantages L+ speakers. The *Interviewer Action* scores, supported by candidate evaluations and comments, indicated that engaged and supportive interviewer communication was most favourably received by the candidates. However, the qualitative analysis highlighted the challenge for interviewers in engaging with candidates while maintaining neutrality vis-à-vis responses. With increasingly diverse candidate pools, interviewers must upgrade their communication skills to make confident judgments about all interviewees.