University of Victoria | Graduate Studies

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

of

PATRICK MURPHY

BA (Bishop's University, 2013)

"Improving Facial Expression Recognition in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Effectiveness of a Computer Assisted Intervention"

School of Child and Youth Care

September 6, 2017
10:00 A.M.
Clearihue Building
Room C118

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Jennifer H. White, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. James Tanaka, Department of Psychology, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Sarah Macoun, Department of Psychology, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Brian Thom, Department of Anthropology, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

Abstract

Evidence suggests that computer assisted interventions (CAI) have advantages over other types of instruction when teaching children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A growing number of technology based tools for use in educational settings have been developed to address specific deficits associated with ASD; namely poor facial expression recognition. Given the proliferation of CAIs, there is an urgent need to test their application in real world and clinical settings. Based on previous research on the success of CAIs to support children with ASD in this area, this research was developed as a small scale pilot study to explore the feasibility and potential educational benefits of the relatively new CAI; *Let's Face It! Scrapbook* (*LFI!*). This study examined the viability of the *LFI!* program in a clinical setting in which two groups children with ASD worked one-on-one with behavioural interventionists to develop necessary life skills. The experimental condition (n=3) which received natural environment teaching (NET) of emotions plus *LFI!* exercises preformed better on tasks of facial expressions recognition in post-tests than the control condition (n=3) which received only natural environment teaching. Participating behavioural interventionists reporting on their experiences using the app. preferred this method of teaching citing the greater available teaching material, the enriched level of engagement required between client and interventionist, and the fun nature of the program. Though small in nature, the results of this pilot study would suggest that the *LFI!* program is a viable tool for use when training facial expression recognition with clients with ASD in clinical settings.