

## Investigating and Validating Spoken Interactional Competence:

### Rater Perspectives on a Swedish National Test of English

This thesis investigates the assessment of a paired speaking test, part of a high-stakes national test of English in the Swedish upper secondary school. Testing students' oral proficiency in pairs has many advantages, not least as the test format offers the possibility of assessing a wide range of students' communicative and interactional competence. However, the complexity involved in rating co-constructed speech, and the variability inherent in peer-to-peer interaction, pose challenges for assessment. Thus, further research is needed to evaluate the use of this test format in different contexts. In this thesis, three complementary studies were undertaken to highlight different validity aspects in relation to the assessment of the English national speaking test.

The first study investigates inter-rater agreement and raters' decision-making processes. In addition, a small-scale, tentative comparison between the English performance standards in the Swedish school context and the reference levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was made. The second study explores features of interactional competence that raters attended to as they evaluated paired performances. The third study focuses on teachers' implementation practices and views of practicality. In the integrated discussion, the different aspects of validity evidence resulting from the empirical data are discussed in relation to a socio-cognitive framework for validating language tests (O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011; Weir, 2005), highlighting positive features as well as challenges to be addressed.



**Linda Borger** has previously worked as a teacher of English and Swedish in upper secondary school. Her main research interests concern language test development and validation, especially with regard to speaking assessment. She is involved in teacher education and in the research group Learning and Assessment of Languages at the Department of Education and Special Education, University of Gothenburg.

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