

Co-assessment among language teachers: A master–apprentice relationship

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This paper reports on a case study of online co-assessment practices among teachers of minoritized languages in the so-called Mother Tongue (MT) subject in Sweden. These co-assessments, involving both qualified and unqualified teachers, have not previously been investigated, despite the strong emphasis on co-assessment practices in the Swedish school. The data was collected both for a master’s thesis project (see unpublished thesis, Caliolo, 2021) and for the sake of this paper. On the basis of interactional analyses of three co-assessments and four teacher interviews, our aim was to contribute new knowledge on co-assessment within this institutional frame regarding how the two teacher roles in a master-apprentice relationship were produced through interaction. The scripted frame included a collaborative act of matching assessment criteria to student performance, through the authorized teacher’s controlling moves (Linell, 1990, p. 161). The authorized teachers used their roles as experts to ask clarifying questions and to orient the dialogue toward the stated standards (cf. directive moves, Linell, 1990), but also to provide space for teacher reflections through an interactional balancing act. A challenge was identified in terms of better integrating teacher experience and of providing better opportunities to co-assess with teachers who teach the same language, which allows for a closer focus on aspects of teaching. The study points to a need for further critical inquiry into these assessment practices, which undergird increasing equal educational opportunities for multilingual students, and how interpretations of current standards are linked to student performance in similar language learning contexts.

Keywords: assessment practices, co-assessment, dialogue, language assessment, language teaching, mother tongue instruction

1 Introduction

Collaborative assessment procedures among teachers, henceforth referred to as *co-assessment*, have been found to develop important aspects of teachers’ professional practice. Co-assessment may, for instance, develop teachers’ assessment skills, contribute greater coherence in the interpretation of student performance, and result in a deeper understanding of what constitutes knowledge and qualities in the assessment process (Adie et al., 2012; Black et al., 2011; Connolly et al., 2012; Falk & Ort, 1998).

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In Sweden, a lack of equivalence with regard to assessment and grading has been found in the Swedish school (Lundahl, 2011; Thornberg & Jönsson, 2015), why a proposed measure has been to increase the use of co-assessment (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013). Today, co-assessment may take place, for example, in high-stakes testing, such as the national tests, to improve the quality of the assessment (see also Tengberg et al., 2017, on the role of assessment training). Less known is, however, the co-assessment practices in the Mother Tongue (MT) subject, a non-mandatory subject aimed at the teaching of minoritized languages within the Swedish curriculum (see below).

Considering the strong emphasis on co-assessment as a strategy for increased equality (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013), the aim of this paper is to contribute new knowledge of co-assessment in the MT context from a teacher perspective. Hitherto, there has been no previous research on co-assessment in the MT subject. In this paper, we build on data collected within the frame of a master's thesis project conducted by the first author, including new and extended analyses compared to the unpublished master's thesis (Caliolo, 2021). We find these co-assessment practices to be of particular interest since they comprise both qualified (formally authorized) teachers and non-qualified (not formally authorized) MT teachers in line with a master-apprentice relationship (Lave & Wenger, 1991). We are interested in possible affordances and shortcomings with these asymmetrical, yet intra-professional, institutional talks (see Drew & Heritage 1992; Linell, 2011, p. 102). This case will also provide insight into how such talks may unfold online, as both teaching and assessment in the MT subject was conducted online during this period due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

More specifically, we present and discuss data from three co-assessments, each including an authorized and an unauthorized teacher. The aim is to contribute new knowledge of co-assessment regarding how the two teacher roles are produced through interaction within this institutional frame. Our research questions are (1): what type of scripted frame (Edwards, 1994, 1995, see below) guides the discussions that allow teachers to reach an agreement despite the asymmetrical design of the co-assessments (cf. Sundberg, 2004)?, and (2) what challenges can be identified from the viewpoint of the teachers? In our analyses, we draw on tools from Conversation Analysis as well as knowledge on asymmetries in dialogue and co-assessment. The latter question is also based on interviews from four other (both authorized and unauthorized) teachers regarding their perceptions of the assessment procedures.

1.1 The Mother Tongue subject

In Sweden, students with a parent/caregiver who speaks a language other than Swedish are entitled to MT instruction, a non-mandatory subject within the curriculum, if the language is the student's daily language of communication at home, and the student has basic knowledge of the language¹ (Swedish Education Act, 2010). The MT subject has its own syllabus and assessment criteria (although specific rights apply to the national minority languages, and the Sámi language has a separate syllabus [Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011]).

Based on the national curriculum, students in MT should, among other things, be able to:

develop their ability to express themselves and communicate in speech and writing . . . adapt language to different purposes, recipients and contexts, identify

language structures and follow language norms . . . read and analyze literature and other texts for different purposes (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011, p. 87).

Notwithstanding the legal support for MT instruction, it is still “a peripheral subject in the Swedish curriculum” (Ganuza & Hedman, 2015, p. 126). For instance, MT teachers are usually employed by a special unit in the municipality, meaning that MT teachers often teach after regular school hours in different schools, where they have limited possibilities to participate in the school’s planning. The marginalized status of MT instruction is evident also in the fact the subject is non-mandatory and lacks guaranteed teaching time (SOU, 2019; see also Ganuza & Hedman, 2015).

To become eligible for permanent employment, a MT teacher needs a teacher license (issued by the Swedish National Agency for Education), and teachers with a foreign language teaching degree receive a Swedish license to practice after supplementary university studies in Sweden (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2016). In this paper, teachers with this type of license are referred to as *authorized teachers*. *Unauthorized teachers* thus tend not to have permanent employment.

1.2 Assessment regulations and co-assessment in the MT subject

According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (2020), only authorized teachers are allowed to grade students, which means that they also grade students taught by unauthorized teachers (who are responsible for the teaching). If the authorized and the unauthorized teachers cannot agree, the grade must be decided by the teacher who is authorized to teach the subject, or, if that is not possible, by the school principal. The principal is also responsible for the development of effective routines, regarding co-assessment and documentation (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2020; see also Swedish Education Act, 2010).

The so-called *Queensland’s model* (Adie et al., 2012) is the recommended model for co-assessment in the Swedish school. The model—even described as “the world’s most developed system for co-assessment” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013, p. 12)—is based on student portfolios. This “conferencing model” requires teachers to assess their students’ performance based on a selection of student work, which is discussed jointly in order to reach a common understanding of requirement levels (cf. Queensland Studies Authority, 2010, 2012). The authorized teacher is not responsible for the unauthorized colleague’s work but certifies that the grade can be justified with regard to the documentation of the student’s knowledge that has been discussed during the joint assessment (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2021).

1.3 The role of co-assessment

Co-assessment procedures have been found to be favorable when they spur the participants to collaboratively explain and justify their assessments (Adie et al., 2012), which may lead to a deeper understanding of requirement levels and qualities in students’ performance (Black et al., 2011). Co-assessment may also improve the teaching practice (Falk & Ort, 1998).

How joint assessment is organized is of great importance for the assessment to succeed. Little et al. (2003) emphasize the significance of well-planned assessments

based in good leadership in order to keep the joint discussions constructive, critical and open to change.

Black et al. (2011) foreground the significance of assessing tasks that allow students to display their knowledge in relation to set goals, and several studies emphasize that students' performance should involve a broad and open basis in the co-assessment process (Adie, 2013; Klenowski & Adie, 2009). Teachers may, however, evaluate different aspects of the same work in different ways (Adie et al., 2012; Thornberg & Jönsson, 2015). Here, the teachers' personal characteristics and experiences may influence the assessment process, as well as the teachers' knowledge of the subject and the governing documents (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010). It is, however, expected that teachers collaboratively will develop a deeper understanding of stated standards in the long run (Clarke & Gipps, 2000; Falk & Ort, 1998). In this process, teachers with less experience or knowledge of the subject's requirements will be supported by more experienced teachers (in line with a master-apprentice format, see Lave & Wenger, 1991). Klenowski and Adie (2009) found, however, that inexperienced teachers may also find it difficult to express their views in relation to more experienced colleagues, which is why inexperienced teachers sometimes withdraw from co-assessment procedures (see also Adie et al., 2012).

2 Theoretical points of departure

2.1 Co-assessment as a master-apprentice relationship

According to Wenger's theory of situated learning (1998), learning takes place collectively, and through apprenticeships, where beginners are incorporated into a *community of practice*, such as a workplace. A community of practice, where decision-making is shared, may render its members a sense of shared ownership of knowledge (Wenger, 1998). Here, we focus on the role of master-apprentice relationships (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within a MT unit's co-assessing practices, as an apprenticeship "that focuses more on the thinking skills and heuristics" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 348). Such a master-apprentice relationship aims to render the apprentice legitimacy (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and may, in addition, maximize everyone's participation when building on a high level of trust (Klenowski & Adie, 2009; Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013).

2.2 Theories on assessment practices

The notion of *social moderation* refers to "a practice that promotes professional dialogue between teachers and involves sharing their knowledge about assessment" (Adie, 2012, p. 5; see also Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010). In such a practice, Sadler (1985, 2013) emphasizes that assessment criteria should not be viewed as absolute truths independent of context, values and power (cf. *the representative perspective*, Ajjawi & Bearman, 2018). Instead, assessment criteria should be based on a social, active and context-dependent learning process in which the criteria are open to interpretations and negotiations (Sadler, 1985; see also Ajjawi & Bearman, 2018; Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013; cf. Shohamy, 2000).

In debates on assessment, an emphasis is often on specifying criteria (Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013, p. 35), based on the assumption that official criteria will

result in improved accountability and transparency. Explicit and detailed criteria are, however, not always possible to use or define in advance (Crisp, 2013), since many context-dependent criteria involve complex areas that require multifaceted thinking (Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013), leading to varying interpretations (Sadler, 1985). It is important to note that the co-assessments in this paper involve multiple forms of assessment, but mainly summative assessment, which has been described “as a recording, on a numerical scale, of the students’ academic achievement to one point, to look back and take stock of how students have accomplished their goals” (Ishaq et al., 2020, p. 25; see Ahmed et al., 2019).

2.3 Role symmetries in conversations

According to Linell (2011), conversations are sequences of communicative expressions between individuals, based on several turns, which may be characterized by role symmetries, collaboration or competition (see also Linell, 2009). Co-assessment, as it appears in this paper, is a form of conversation where one may expect collaboration to dominate, as it is in the interest of all parties to reach a consensus based on relevant information and to build a trusting relationship. Even if this social practice concerns a mutual exchange of information, the conversations can still take on an asymmetrical form (Linell, 1990). The manifestation of dominance in conversation may be multifaceted, involving, for example, a quantitative dimension (although quantitative dominance may also indicate less influence, see Linell, 1990, 2011), as well as *directive moves* (e.g., via questions, Linell, 1990, p. 159), *controlling moves* (when *evaluating, ratifying or disqualifying*, p. 161) or *regulative metacommunicative moves* (e.g., regulating others’ talk time, p. 163). Most often, individuals with a leading role dominate the conversations, which may negatively impact participants who perceive that they are not allowed to talk, nor being listened to (Linell, 2011, p. 358).

3 Methodology

This paper builds on a case study of co-assessment procedures in a municipal MT unit (which employs MT teachers) during one semester, to better understand their implementation (cf. Stake, 1995, p. xi). We draw from a set of six assessment talks and six teacher interviews with authorized and unauthorized teachers. The first author, who is an MT teacher, collected the data for both her master’s project and for this paper. In the current project, data build on audio-recordings, and we analyze, specifically, three co-assessments with authorized and unauthorized teachers (ranging from c. 20–30 minutes) and interviews with four teachers (ranging from c. 20–30 minutes). The first author conducted the interviews, which centered around the teachers’ experiences with and perceptions of the co-assessments (see Caliolo, 2021; also Table 1).² All interviews were conducted after the co-assessments. Due to practical reasons, it was not possible to conduct interviews with the same teachers as in the co-assessments analyzed in this paper. Both the assessment talks and the interviews took place online due to the covid-19 pandemic. The first author did not participate in the co-assessments.

The study follows the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Swedish Research Council, 2017); see the participating teachers in Table 1 (all

names are unique pseudonyms for this paper). The language of instruction is not included, for reasons of confidentiality. These languages are minoritized in the Swedish context, but are widespread globally to various degrees.

Table 1. The participants.

The co-assessments
Ava (authorized); Bonnie (unauthorized)
Camille (authorized); Dani (unauthorized)
Emery (authorized); Robin (unauthorized)
<i>The interviews</i>
Gabriele (authorized)
Hollis (unauthorized)
Indy (unauthorized)
Joan (unauthorized)

The co-assessments, which had been conducted at this unit during the last years, were arranged on the principal's directive and lasted for a week at the end of the semester. The teachers used the national assessment criteria (also called "the matrices" or "knowledge requirements") from the Swedish National Agency for Education. The goal was to discuss and decide on which grades should be set based on student texts and other information from the teachers. Some, but not all, co-assessments involved teachers of the same language.

3.1 Analytical procedure

For the purpose of this paper, data was transcribed and re-transcribed, mainly by the first author, with a higher level of detail compared to the unpublished master's thesis (see transcript conventions below). This paper also builds on new and extended analyses, and mostly on new data, compared to Caliolo (2021). Apart from the co-assessment in English (excerpt 5), all three assessments and interviews were conducted in Swedish; hence, the excerpts in Swedish were later translated into English (see Appendix for original transcripts).

In the interactional analyses, we focus on some core aspects of CA, such as *adjacency pairs* (Sacks, 1979/1992; Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), explained by Heritage (1984, p. 245f) as follows:

[A] pair linkage, varying from the relatively 'ritualized' exchanges of 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' to more complicatedly paired actions such as question-answer, request-grant/ rejection, invitation-acceptance/refusal, and so on.

We also focus on the sequence of two utterances (uttered by the different teachers) in terms of *conditional relevance* between the ordered first and second part. Silence, for example, would not be considered a relevant response to a first uttered request, but could have important interactional and social functions, such as temporarily decreasing power asymmetries in conversations (Kalin, 1995). Hence, we attend to what type of alternative responses first ordered utterances create, as some categories of response are more preferred than others (Heritage 1984; Levinson, 1983; also Hofvendahl, 2006), and how response alternatives may be restricted, for example, through specified questions or meta-commentaries (Sheikhi, 2013, p.

33). A restriction of response alternatives may also support the respondent (Sundberg, 2004; cf. the notion of face-saving in conversations, Goffman, 1972). Bremer et al. (1996) refers to *meta-discursive comments* as a means of supporting the interlocutor in asymmetric or intercultural dialogue (also with respect to second language speakers).

Furthermore, we attend to “script formulations” (Edwards, 1994, 1995), which Hofvendahl (2006, p. 83) describes as “an utterance with which the speaker points out that a certain activity . . . or a communicative project (a specific question) is in line with a typical, common procedure” (*our transl.*), for example, the use of grading criteria. Such an activity, among others, forms part of a scripted frame of the co-assessment.

These analytical tools, together with the overview on co-assessment and asymmetries in dialogue, are helpful for characterizing co-assessment procedures, thus, for answering the first research question. In the Findings section, data presented under *Authorized MT teachers as strategic managers of a scripted frame*, address research question 1, whereas data presented under the subsequent two headings *Communicative and implementational problems* and *The role of teacher experience* address the second research question.

The selection of data in Findings exemplifies and highlights the teacher roles in these assessment practices in line with our research aim, based on the two research questions, which are discussed in a concluding discussion.

4 Findings

4.1 *Authorized MT teachers as strategic managers of a scripted frame*

In the first co-assessment, Ava, the authorized teacher, carries out the online session with the unauthorized teacher Bonnie, although they do not teach the same language. It is clear that Ava, as assessment manager, leads the conversation in strategic ways (excerpts 1–3). In excerpt 1, Ava starts the session by emphasizing the importance of knowing the grading criteria.

Excerpt 1. Talk 1: Framing the conversation.

- 01 Ava: It's very important to check the knowledge requirements in the mother tongue before we get started so to speak
- 02 Bonnie: yes?
- 03 Ava: ehm (.) if you can open the matrix for oral communicative ability [-] we see different value words as basic knowledge and that is like E-level (.) good knowledge is C-level (.) and very good knowledge is A-level. [-] under these tables there are different assessment aspects that we should take into account (.) for example if a student expresses themselves in a simple way or well (.) developed then it means if you formulate (.) simple words or phrase or [-] how they are structured [-]
- 04 Ava: now if I would ask you to (.) to (.) talk a little about how you have thought while assessing (.) the work of the (.) student
- 05 Bonnie: yes. (.) eh (.) um (2.0) um (3.0)
- 06 Ava: you know we're working towards four (.) four abilities and that's reading writing speaking and then (.) learning about the country where the target language speaks
- 07 Ava: how have you assessed?

- 08 Bonnie: I have assessed whether he can read with (.) eh (.) relatively good (.) fluency by using reading strategies [reading] by making developed summaries (.) of various ((inaudible)) content
- 09 Ava: mmm

Via the initial meta-commentary in turn 01, Ava frames the talk in “scripted” terms (Edwards, 1994, 1995), as she strategically orients Bonnie to the grading criteria. Since reference to stated standards could be viewed as a doxa in any summative assessment, Ava’s initial remark implies an obligation to align with this basic premise, which Bonnie does (turn 02). Moreover, Ava’s formal (and strategic) opening clearly frames the interaction as institutional talk (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Linell, 2011). The shift into the more informal “so to speak” (01) may, however, serve to “cool out” (Goffman, 1952) the previous remark, implying that Bonnie needs to be reminded of this doxa. This is also in line with how institutional talk tends to shift between formal and informal registers (Svennevig, 2001).

After Ava’s reading of the grading criteria (turn 03), she discursively moves into a new phase in the talk, focusing on Bonnie’s assessment process, through an initial (strategic) meta-commentary (04, “now, if I would ask you”), leading to an open question about Bonnie’s mental processing “while assessing” (04). This question may have several preferred answers. As the response (05) is silence, signaling a breach in the conditional relevance between 04 and 05 (see also Sheikhi, 2013, on participants’ intolerance of silence between turns), involving filled pauses/disfluencies (“ehm”, 05; see Tottie, 2014), Ava changes strategy. In turn 06, she restricts the preferred answers by an implicit request of “the four skills”, here, acknowledging these skills as shared knowledge. This strategic move is followed by a more directly framed question (07), leading to the most elaborate response, where Bonnie refers to reading, one of the four skills (08).

Excerpt 2 focuses on the next phase in the talk, when the assessment criteria are related to the teaching.

Excerpt 2. Talk 1 (cont.): The instructional basis for the assessment.

- 10 Ava: mmm (.) and when you think about (.) like (.) conversations or texts that he has written what themes (.) if these are the student’s familiar topics (.) what topics have you talked about?
- 11 Bonnie: we’ve talked about culture and society in our country and the student can talk about familiar topics in a developed way
- 12 Ava: ok (.) so you mean in a developed way with good vocabulary?
- 13 Bonnie: very developed
- 14 Ava: so with a well-developed vocabulary (2.0) and regarding written work (.) what themes did you (.) mmh (.)
- 15 Bonnie: what themes did we work on?
- 16 Ava: yes what themes have you been working on?
- 17 Bonnie: yes (sighing) I have worked according to my syllabus
- 18 Ava: mmm
- 19 Bonnie: so (.) different themes (.) about class about school about (2.0) abo::ut (.) animals (.) di::fferent themes

In this phase, the range of alternative responses broadens when Ava asks about the instructional basis for the oral and written assessment, which creates the opportunity for a collaborative dialogue, albeit an asymmetrical one, as Ava leads

the dialogue through her questions. In turn 14, Ava confirms Bonnie's assessment when reinterpreting "very" to "well-developed" (vocabulary) in order to match Bonnie's statement to the assessment criteria. Subsequently the dialogue shifts into the grading phase (excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3. Talk 1 (cont.): Grading oral and written language skills.

- 20 Bonnie: I can't say (.) eh (.) the student fills the requirements for (.) grade A but he fills the requirements for grade C
- 21 Ava: mmm
- 22 Bonnie: and part of the grade A
- 23 Ava: ok in the oral one, right?
- 24 Bonnie: [yes]
- 25 Ava: [and] in the written ability?
- 26 Bonnie: he: (.) he: (.) eh: (.) he meets the requirements for grade B: and (.) part of grade A (.) not everything

The dialogue in excerpt 3 is characterized by *controlling moves* (Linell, 1990, p. 161) through which Ava assures that the grading aligns with the assessment criteria and that all areas are covered. Considering that Ava does not speak the language that they are assessing, she is highly dependent on Bonnie's input. In excerpt 4, they move into the concluding phase, where they are expected to agree on a final grade.

Excerpt 4. Talk 1 (cont.): The final grading.

- 27 Ava: ok and what did you say now that you will give the student (.) when you look at the matrices? [-] In total, what grade will you give to the student?
- 28 Bonnie: um (.) um (2.0) what will I give to the student? (.) as the student filled the requirements for (.) fo:r level C hm
- 29 Ava: mmm
- 30 Bonnie: and a part of ((inaudible)) so I'll give him grade B
- 31 Ava: B?
- 32 Bonnie: Grade B
- 33 Ava: yes mmh (.) because it's part of the knowledge requirements for grade A
- 34 Bonnie: I (.) the student filled a part of the knowledge requirements for level A

Ava's initial question (27) includes an implicit request for an assurance that Bonnie's decision is based on the grading criteria ("the matrices"). The subsequent filled and long pause (28) suggests that this question is not easy to answer. A few turns later, Ava seems to question the final grading by repeating (emphatically) Bonnie's proposed grade as a question (31). As Bonnie confirms the grade emphatically (32), Ava again reassures that this assessment is based on the "knowledge requirements" (33), which Bonnie confirms (34).

In excerpt 5, Emery (authorized) and Robin (unauthorized) conduct their co-assessment mainly in English. Also in this talk, Emery strategically orients Robin to the grading criteria (knowledge requirements) relatively early (03).

Excerpt 5. Talk 2: Matching grading criteria and the final grading.

- 01 Emery: so can I just share with you all the documents I've got (.) eh (.) they are open (.) so let's start with (student's name)

- 02 Robin: yes (.) she does not speak English at home [-] when I try to explain to her because I need to explain to her she looks like worried like she is thinking 'oh I'm not going to understand this' (.) but when she is pushed she can write a bit [-] and I suggest to give her an E
- 03 Emery: yeah I'm thinking that too
- 04 Emery: can she read a little text?
- 05 Robin: yeah she can read short texts aloud (.) they are quite easy
- 06 Emery: so, she can maybe read (reading) *eleonära och åldersanpassande texter* (.) *med visst flyt* (.) (student-centered age appropriate with some fluency) what about speaking?
- 07 Robin: she is good with words but she does not speak with flow [-] she can tell me what she did on the weekend she can tell me what she did on her holidays with a few sentences in Swedish but (.) I think she is quite shy in (the language)
- 08 Emery: so then she is probably with [-] with some flow [-] she probably expresses herself with simple variation [-] mainly functioning vocabulary and concepts ok so you are going to go with an E (.) let's see here where is (.) speaking (.) ehm (.) here so (reading) the student *kan med ett i [huvudsak fungerade]* (the student is able to talk mainly functionally)
- 09 Robin: [if she (.) if she::]
- 10 Emery: *ändamålsenligt* (appropriate) [-] *ord- och begreppsförråd samtala* (set of words and concepts talk) and (.) is that anything she might get a C for? for example (.) ehm (.)
- 11 Emery: how was she with spelling? the spelling was not great or?
- 12 Robin: the spelling is good she knows them and she knows how to spell them
- 13 Emery: I think an E is fair I think it's good as well because when she goes up in year seven and the grade-criteria are different I think she is in danger of (.) failing
- 14 Robin: ok we'll see (2.0) let's say E for that then.

From 04, Emery and Robin continue with a similar collaborative “matching task” as in co-assessment 1, in which Robin provides descriptions of the student’s accomplishments (05, 07), which Emery reinterprets as skills that can be matched with certain criteria (06, 08, 10). Also the opening of this talk signals its institutional characteristics, as Emery jumps right into the task by sharing relevant documents (01) accompanied by meta-discursive comments. These formal openings may also be influenced by the online format.

In addition, this talk moves rapidly to the grading phase, which may be due to the fact that—already in turn 02—Robin provides a small narrative about his perceptions of the student’s accomplishments, ending with a suggested grade (E). Emery addresses this suggested grade in 10, when she poses the question of whether a higher grade (C) could be valid for certain skills (words, concepts, oral communication). This question is followed by short pauses and Emery’s filled pause, where Robin’s expected response is absent. Emery then asks the next question (11), hence closing a possible discussion on a higher grade. In 13, Emery confirms that “E is fair”, which is reinforced by her expressed concern regarding the student’s transition to secondary school. Robin’s response (14) is confirmative.

Compared to co-assessment/talk 1 (excerpts 1-4), their final agreement builds on more input from the unauthorized teacher, who seems spurred to explain and justify his assessment (cf. Adie et al., 2012). Also in this co-assessment (excerpt 5), the authorized teacher aligns with the decision of the unauthorized teacher. In both co-assessments, however, the final decision is reached on the basis of the authorized teacher’s strategic management of a scripted frame centering around the assessment criteria.

4.2 Communicative and implementational problems

The co-assessment in excerpt 6 differs from the other assessments, since the dialogue between Camille (authorized) and Dani (unauthorized), who teach the same language, centered more around the instruction. In excerpt 6, Camille explicitly addresses the purpose of the teaching through an open question (01), which builds on previous turns on what texts they use for different age groups.

Excerpt 6. Talk 3: Talk about literacy instruction and strategies.

- 01 Camille: what is the purpose of the teaching we'll start with [-]
 02 Dani: I have adapted by teaching to their level of knowledge in any case [-] I have to follow knowledge requirements and central content as a language teacher
 03 Camille: yes that was also my problem (.) that's why I said before I usually don't use the same text even though they are in the same grade (.) so I don't use the same text when it comes to reading comprehension [-]
 04 Dani: yes you have to adapt [-] I have reading (.) that they understand the text and then they can give the content of the text (.) you can write a short summary by writing a mind map [-]
 05 Camille: eh great [-] in primary school eh you read to them yourself?
 06 Dani: yes in primary school in primary school you have to check if the student can read (.) so it's good if they can read (.) but maybe not the whole (.) I have done this alternately (.) he reads I read and this part we discuss [-]
 07 Camille: our way of presenting to the students is for example those who can't read so you read (.) it's you who reads
 08 Dani: yes [-]
 09 Camille: eh central content this that they should be able to read write read understand and eh eh eh orally [say]
 10 Dani: [talk talk] [-]
 11 Dani: yes yes (.) yes and then it's not easy because you sometimes need (laughs) so that they will understand (.) and words will come in (the language) sometimes you have to interpret it also in Swedish which sometimes (.) because it helps them to 'aha the question means something like this' (.) and then I can think that because they understand the text (.) so then I can think about how they answer in Swedish (.) although they have to find words in (the language)

Dani's stated accommodation of his teaching to the students' "knowledge level" (02) is followed by a reference to the doxa: that he also needs "to follow the knowledge requirements" (02). Camille's response (03) foregrounds, however, adaptations of the instruction to the grading criteria as a potential problem, thus introducing a shared *communicative problem* (cf. the use of the notion in Hofvendahl, 2006). The following turns also center around necessary adaptations of the literacy instruction to the students' varied language proficiency levels and ages. Camille's inclusive marker "our way" (07) reinforces a shared view on the instruction. In 09, Camille shifts the frame to the stated standards in terms of central content. Dani, however, shifts back to a focus on how the teaching could be adapted to the students (11), by emphasizing that some students may need to draw on their language resources in the majority language Swedish. This is said with light laughter, indicating that this type of scaffolding could be perceived as problematic. To bring up various teaching strategies in the assessment talk, however, also requires some level of trust (cf. the important role of trust for teachers' participation in Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013).

In sum, Camille's and Dani's dialogue reflects a need to discuss teaching challenges in relation to assessment, and that co-assessment can provide opportunities for discussing and negotiating both teaching and assessment practices.

As stated, these practices are not independent of context, values and power (Sadler, 1985; see also Ajjawi & Bearman, 2018). Critical dialogue did, however, not characterize the co-assessments, although critique towards the implementation of the assessments appeared in the follow-up interviews. For example, Indy, an unauthorized teacher, emphasized the difficulty with co-assessment when the participating teachers teach different student ages and languages (excerpt 7).

Excerpt 7. Interview with Indy, unauthorized teacher.

- 01 Indy: when you work with different (2.0) levels it is difficult to (.) compare what you do
 02 Interviewer: what do you mean? can you clarify this?
 03 Indy: when you talk to colleagues about different levels (2.0) well groups it does not help completely (.) if I can compare with a colleague who is in year 6 it would be better to talk with a colleague who is in the same grade (.) yes
 04 Interviewer: yes, it's hard actually
 05 Indy: and then (2.0) we had in our group different languages (.) and it was difficult (.) we couldn't understand the linguistic characteristics of other languages so we couldn't go into depth with assessment

According to Indy, it is not possible to go into linguistic depths when the teachers speak and teach different languages (05). In such a situation the authorized teacher has to rely heavily on the unauthorized teacher's orally presented reasons for their grading. As Joan, another unauthorized teacher, put it: "If I say that a student is good at speaking or writing, how can the teacher who does not know the language check it?". As evident from excerpt 7, it may also be easier for teachers who share the language of instruction to be able to go more into depth regarding specific teaching challenges.

Furthermore, previous research shows that co-assessment procedures require careful planning to keep the discussion constructive, critical and open to change (e.g., Little et al., 2003). Joan emphasizes the importance of such careful planning (excerpt 8).

Excerpt 8. Interview with Joan, unauthorized teacher.

- Joan: you have to plan ahead (.) in my co-assessment we have included student work as a summative test (.) but we make a formative assessment (.) it's a bit confusing it's a matter formative assessment during the semester and then a test and then a final grade (.) if we plan together in advance at the beginning of the semester (.) eh (.) this will facilitate co-assessment

To Joan, careful planning should start already in the beginning of the semester, which would allow the process to take more time (cf. Little et al., 2003). This may be of particular importance when co-assessments involve teachers of diverse linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds (Clarke & Gipps, 2000).

4.3 *The role of teacher experience*

A final problem with the co-assessment procedures was pointed out by, for example, Gabriele (authorized), who claimed that, despite several benefits, it was not fair that teacher experience was subordinated (excerpt 9).

Excerpt 9. Interview with Gabriele, authorized teacher.

Interviewer: what do you think about co-assessment?

Gabriele: generally (.) I can say that there are only advantages with co-assessment but (2.0) as it's designed right now I don't think it's something (.) good (.) or rewarding for anyone today co-assessment focuses on ineligibility (.) but there are so:: ma::ny un:authorized teachers who have worked as teachers for many years (2.0) I think experience is [-] most important

Gabriele's point is that teacher experience, rather than formal qualifications only, would be more highly valued. This view could be related to the fact that many MT teachers have a foreign teacher education, which does not automatically render them eligible in Sweden, despite professional experience.

Hollis (unauthorized) emphasized, however, the participatory frame in the co-assessment process, regardless of qualifications, rendering all participants a collaborative arena for learning (excerpt 10).

Excerpt 10. Interview with Hollis, unauthorized teacher.

Interviewer: how did you experience co-assessment when you met your colleagues in your group?

Hollis: you may say that (2.0) you exchange (.) experiences and raise (.) the issues that you wonder about and you get good support we can say right? ((inaudible)) (.) what the others think how they do it what are the cases right? It's always good I think isn't it? (2.0) [-] you have different views and you exchange your thoughts on how I have perceived 'was that right?' (1.0) we learn from each other all the time co-assessment is about that [-] you listen to other's views

According to Hollis, co-assessing is about "listening to others' views", based on the premise that all teachers bring different perspectives (cf. Adie et al., 2012; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010), which also implies that consensus may not necessarily prevail. Although our presented analyses of co-assessments did not show explicit disagreements, different views may still be involved. This is in line with Adelswärd et al. (1997), who highlight that institutional talk often centers around solutions to problems, which is why problems and disagreements form part of the process.

5 **Concluding discussion**

5.1 *The scripted frame of the co-assessments as a balancing act*

From our findings, it is clear that the authorized teachers' appointed expert role creates a formal hierarchy in the co-assessments (cf. Linell, 1990), as evident in our analyses of the scripted frame. In the analyzed talks, the authorized teachers

used their designated expert role to ask clarifying questions and to orient the dialogue towards the stated standards (cf. *directive moves*, Linell, 1990). At the same time, the authorized teachers also afforded the unauthorized teachers space by asking about their thoughts and reflections (in contrast to findings in Klenowski & Adie, 2009), indicating a balancing act on behalf of the authorized teachers.

Hence, the observed co-assessments did not involve “strong initiatives” (Linell, 1990, p. 159) from the authorized teachers in terms of *regulative metacommunicative moves* (p. 161), such as limiting the unauthorized teachers’ talk time. The “matching” procedure reported above included, however, elements of *controlling moves* (Linell, 1990, p. 161), that is, when the authorized teacher *evaluated* or reinterpreted the information given by the unauthorized teachers to match stated standards, as well as *ratifications* or confirmations of suggestions or decisions from the unauthorized teacher. This matching procedure formed a crucial part of the co-assessment when the authorized teacher displayed epistemic authority.

5.2 Identified challenges

An identified challenge was that social moderation among teachers of different languages could become more instrumental, and go into less depth, notwithstanding a clear focus on assessment criteria. Although stated standards play a crucial role in the assessment process, there is still a need to better understand how teachers attribute values to their students’ work (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010). It is thus a challenge, also in this context, to reach a deeper understanding of what constitutes knowledge and qualities in co-assessment (Wyatt-Smith et al., 2010). Thornberg and Jönsson (2015) point out that “even if teachers agree on the assessment of a student’s performance or on the interpretation of the governing documents, it is not obvious that such an interpretation is correct or in line with how other teachers make similar interpretations” (p. 196, *our transl.*). Our analyses further indicate that the MT teachers more strongly related to other MT teachers who taught the same language. In one of the co-assessments (see excerpt 7), the dialogue oriented toward the establishment of the teachers as “members of the same team” (Adie, 2012, p. 96; cf. Wenger, 1998), building on shared experiences with teaching and assessing students of various language proficiency levels.

Furthermore, as co-assessment takes time (Clarke & Gipps, 2000; Falk & Ort, 1998) and requires careful planning (Little et al., 2003), a deeper understanding of the central content and knowledge requirements may evolve over time, particularly if combined with assessment training (Tengberg et al., 2017). In this case, co-assessment was a relatively new phenomenon and the unit worked continuously to improve the practice. One question seems to be how the value of teacher experience can be better integrated into the assessments, as suggested by one participant, considering the vital role of teacher experience when assessing complex knowledge areas (Wyatt-Smith & Klenowski, 2013). Shohamy (2000) also reminds us of how justice in assessment in multicultural societies is a socio-cultural rather than a technical issue and that equal assessment cannot be considered in isolation from the curriculum and students’ educational opportunities. Teaching and assessment are also closely intertwined, as evident from our data. The marginalized status of the MT subject, for example, in terms of the lack of guaranteed hours of teaching – in practice, often no more than one lesson per week – will thus inevitably affect the assessment process.

We find, however, that this co-assessment procedure is one way of addressing marginalizing policies, given the difficulties finding authorized MT teachers in all languages (SOU, 2019). This assessment practice is thus important for increasing equal educational opportunities, which also spurred the MT unit to develop this co-assessment practice. In such a process, the viewpoints of both unauthorized and authorized teachers need to be carefully considered.

Critical research is welcome to further explore how interpretations of current standards are linked to student performance. Such explorations are also welcome in other educational settings with teachers of minoritized languages. Given the scant research on co-assessment in the MT subject, it is the hope that these findings will contribute new insights into co-assessment practices among teachers of minoritized languages, where the teachers may or may not share language repertoires.

Endnotes

¹ These restrictions do not apply to *the national minority languages*.

² The second author was responsible for the data analyses and the writing of the text.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Transcription conventions.

(.)	a short pause of less than one second
(2.0)	a longer pause
(sighing)	comments on context, explanations
:	lengthened sound
::	more lengthened sound
<u>not</u>	said with stress
?	marks question intonation
'was that right'	quotation marks the speakers' reference to someone else's voice or reported speech
[–]	removed part of speech
((inaudible))	inaudible speech
[yes]	overlapping talk

Appendix 2. Original transcripts in Swedish.

Excerpt 1. Talk 1: Framing the conversation: the role of the grading criteria.

- 01 Ava: det är väldigt viktigt att kolla kunskapskraven i modersmål innan vi sätter igång så att säga
- 02 Bonnie: ja?
- 03 Ava: ehm (.) om du kan öppna matrisen för muntlig kommunikativ förmåga [–] så ser vi olika värdeorden som grundläggande kunskaper och det är typ för E-nivå (.) goda kunskaper för C-nivå (.) och mycket goda kunskaper för A-nivå [–] Under dessa tabeller så finns det olika bedömningsaspekter som vi borde ta hänsyn till (.) till exempel om en elev uttrycker sig på ett enkelt sätt eller väl (.) utvecklat då betyder det om man formulerar (.) enkla ord eller fraser eller [–] hur de är uppbyggda [–]
- 04 Ava: nu om jag skulle be dig om att (.) att (.) prata lite om hur du har tänkt medan du bedömde (.) eh (.) elevens arbete
- 05 Bonnie: ja (.) eh (.) ehm (2.0) ehm (3.0)
- 06 Ava: du vet att vi jobbar mot fyra (.) fyra förmågor och det är att läsa skriva tala och sen (.) eh (.) lära om landet där målspråket pratar
- 07 Ava: hur har du bedömt?
- 08 Bonnie: jag har bedömt om han kan läsa (.) eh (.) relativt gott (.) flyt genom att använda lässtrategier [läser] genom att göra utvecklade sammanfattningar (.) av olika ((ohörbart)) innehåll
- 09 Ava: mmm

Excerpt 2. Talk 1 (cont.): The instructional basis for the assessment.

- 10 Ava: mmm (.) och när du tänker på (.) liksom (.) samtalen eller texter som han har skrivit vilka teman (.) om det är elevens bekanta ämnen (.) vilka ämnen har ni pratat om?
- 11 Bonnie: vi har pratat om kultur och samhälle i våra land och eleven kan samtala om bekanta ämnen på ett utvecklat sätt.
- 12 Ava: ok (.) så du menar på ett utvecklat sätt med gott ordförråd?
- 13 Bonnie: mycket utvecklat
- 14 Ava: så med ett välutvecklat ordförråd (2.0) och när det gäller det skriftliga arbete (.) vilka teman har ni (.) mmh (.)

- 15 Bonnie: vilka teman har vi arbetat?
 16 Ava: ja vilka teman har ni arbetat med
 17 Bonnie: ja (suckar) jag har arbetat enligt min kursplan
 18 Ava: mmm
 19 Bonnie: så (.) olika teman (.) om klassen om skolan om (2.0) o::m (.) djuren (.) o:lika teman

Excerpt 3. Talk 1 (cont.): Grading oral and written language skills.

- 20 Bonnie: jag kan inte säga (.) eh (.) eleven fyller kraven för (.) betyget A men han fyller kraven för betyget C
 21 Ava: mmm
 22 Bonnie: och en del av betyget A
 23 Ava: ok i den muntliga va?
 24 Bonnie: [ja)
 25 Ava: [och) i den skriftliga förmågan?
 26 Bonnie: han (.) han (.) eh (.) han uppfyller kraven för betyget B: och (.) en del i betyget A (.) inte allting

Excerpt 4. Talk 1 (cont.): The final grading.

- 27 Ava: ok och vad sa du nu att du kommer att ge eleven (.) när du tittar på matriserna? [-] sammanlagt vilket betyg kommer du att ge till eleven?
 28 Bonnie: ehm (.) hm (2.0). vad jag kommer att ge till eleven? (.) Eftersom eleven har fyllt kraven för (.) fö::r nivå C hm
 29 Ava: mmm (nickar)
 30 Bonnie: och en del ((ohörbart)) så jag kommer att ge betyg B
 31 Ava: B?
 32 Bonnie: betyg B
 33 Ava: ja mmh (.) för att det är en del av kunskapskrav för A-betyg
 34 Bonnie: jag (.) eleven har fyllt en del av kunskapskrav för nivå A

Excerpt 6. Talk 3: Talk about literacy instruction and strategies.

- 01 Camille: vad är syftet med undervisningen ska vi börja med [-]
 02 Dani: jag har anpassat min undervisning till deras kunskapsnivå i alla fall [-] jag måste följa kunskapskrav och centralt innehåll som språklärare
 03 Camille: ja det var ju också mitt problem (.) det var därför jag sa förut jag brukar inte använda samma text fast dom är i samma årskurs (.) så använder jag inte samma text när det gäller läsförståelse [-]
 04 Dani: ja man måste anpassa [-] jag har läsning (.) att dom förstår texten och sen dom kan ge innehållet i texten (.) man kan skriva kort sammanfattning genom att skriva *mind map* [-]
 05 Camilla: eh jättebra [-] på lågstadiet eh du läser själv till dom?
 06 Dani: ja på lågstadiet på lågstadiet man måste kolla om eleven kan läsa (.) så det är bra om dom kan läsa (.) men kanske inte hela (.) jag har gjort den här växelvis (.) han läser jag läser och den här delen diskuterar vi [-]
 07 Camille: vårt sätt att eh presentera till eleverna är till exempel dom som kan inte läsa så du läser (.) det är du som läser
 08 Dani: ja
 09 Camille: eh centralt innehåll det här att dom ska kunna läsa skriva läsa förstå och eh eh muntligt [säga]
 10 Dani: [samtala samtala] [-]

11 Dani: ja ja (.) ja och sen det är inte lätt eftersom du behöver ibland (skratt) så att dom kommer ju förstå (.) och kommer ju komma ord på (språk) ibland man måste ju tolka det också på svenska vilket som ibland (.) för det hjälper dom att 'aha frågan menar såhär' (.) och då kan jag tänka att eftersom dom förstår texten (.) så då kan jag tänka att hur dom svarar på svenska (.) fast dom måste hitta ord på (språket)

Excerpt 7. Interview with Indy, unauthorized teacher.

01 Indy: när man jobbar med olika (2.0) nivåer är det svårt att (.) jämföra vad man gör
02 Intervjuare: vad menar du? kan du förtydliga det?
03 Indy: när man pratar inför kollegorna om olika nivåer (2.0) alltså grupper det hjälper inte totalt (.) om jag kan jämföra med en kollega som har årskurs 6 det vore bättre att prata med en kollega som har samma årskurs (.) ja
04 Intervjuare: ja det är svårt faktiskt
05 Indy: och sen (2.0) vi hade i våran grupp olika språk (.) och det var svårt (.) vi kunde inte förstå dom språkliga egenskaper i andra språk så vi kunde inte gå i djupt med bedömning

Excerpt 8. Interview with Joan, unauthorized teacher.

Joan: man måste planera i förväg (.) i min sambedömning har vi tagit med oss elevarbete som summativa prov (.) men vi gör en formativ bedömning (.) det är lite förvirrande det gäller att formativt bedöma under terminen och sen ett prov och sen ett slutbetyg (.) om vi planerar tillsammans i förväg i början av terminen (.) eh (.) detta ska underlätta sambedömning

Excerpt 9. Interview with Gabriele, authorized teacher.

Intervjuare: vad tänker du om sambedömning?
Gabriele: generellt (.) kan jag påstå att det finns bara fördelar med sambedömning men (2.0) den är utformat just nu tycker jag att den inte är nånting (.) bra (.) eller givande för någon idag fokuserar sambedömning på obehörighet (.) men det finns må::nga o::behöriga lärare som har arbetat som lärare i många år (2.0) Jag tycker att erfarenhet är [-] viktigast

Excerpt 10. Interview with Hollis, unauthorized teacher.

Intervjuare: Hur upplevde du sambedömning när du träffade dina kollegor i er grupp?
Hollis: det kan man säga (2.0) man utbyter (.) erfarenheter och tar upp (.) frågorna som man undrar över och man får ett bra stö::d kan man säga va? ((ohörbart)) (.) vad de andra tycker hur de gör det vilka är de fall va? det är alltid bra tycker jag va? [-] man har olika uppfattningar och man utbyter sina tankar om hur jag uppfattat 'var det rätt?' (1.0) vi lär av varandra hela tiden sambedömning handlar om det [-] man lyssnar på andras åsikter

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