

### **Relating ratings of fluency to temporal and lexical aspects of speech**

In second language testing practice, speaking fluency is often assessed by human raters, in recent years likely using the CEFR descriptors of fluency. These descriptors take temporal aspects of speech into account, but at the same time qualify fluency with respect to complexity. For instance, the descriptor at level B2+ reads: "*Can communicate spontaneously, often showing remarkable fluency and ease of expression in even longer complex stretches of speech.*" But which variables of speech do raters consider when rating on fluency? In two large scale studies, we investigate the relations between temporal and lexical variables of speech with ratings of fluency.

In the first study, 355 speaking performances of Dutch L2 speakers were rated on the CEF-scale of fluency. Temporal aspects of speech were calculated using scripts written in PRAAT. Additionally, a measure of lexical diversity was computed. Regression analyses revealed that temporal aspects of speech and lexical diversity were related to perceived fluency: faster speech rate, fewer and shorter pausing and lexically rich speech each related independently to higher fluency ratings.

In the second study, with 1007 speaking performances of English L2 speakers, we related ratings of fluency to temporal measures of the speaking performances. The results showed that both speech rate and pausing were related to fluency ratings. Interestingly, both studies showed that the relations between aspects of speech and fluency ratings are different for high versus low proficient speakers. Implications for rating instructions and use of fluency descriptors in testing practice will be discussed.