

Adult Learner's Reading Interests and Reading Engagement

What was the goal of the study?

The researchers wanted to know how much longer adult learners would read if they were given texts that considered their interests.

Why was the study conducted?

An ongoing problem for adult learners is finding texts they can read *and* want to read. Though high interest/low vocabulary books are available, research has not explored the extent to which matching interest improves adult learner reading engagement time.

What did the study find?

To understand how reading interest influenced reading engagement, three kinds of reading packs were created, each of which contained texts that were exact interest matches, close matches, and no matches. The mixture of interest-matching texts in reading packs were either high overall (7 exact match/1 close match/1 no match), medium overall (5 exact match/2 close match/2 no match), or low overall (3 exact match/3 close match/3 no match). Participants were randomly assigned to receive one of these packs. Reading engagement increased 30% for participants who received high matching reading packs when compared to participants who received low matching packs. In addition, participants spent the same amount of time reading exact, close, and no match texts if their pack was of high interest overall.

Who participated in the study?

The participants in this study were 51 adult learners.

How was the study conducted?

The researchers used a randomized control trial, which is the gold standard of evidence in research studies. Participants were given the texts on Kindle Fire tablets, which they were allowed to keep for 4-6 weeks. The tablets were locked down such that adult learners were only able to access the readings through an app, which would track what texts they read and for how long.

How can people use the results?

The results of this study demonstrate to practitioners how important precise interest matching can be for motivating adult learners to spend more time reading.