

Testing the Validity of Literacy Tests Across Native and Nonnative English Speakers

What was the goal of the study?

The researchers wanted to examine whether four different literacy tests (WJ Word Attack subtest, the WJ Passage Comprehension subtest, the CTOPP Blending subtest, and the CTOPP Elision subtest) have valid constructs (i.e., measuring what they are meant to measure) for adult learners who are native and nonnative English speakers.

Why was the study conducted?

To determine whether these four literacy tests are measuring what they are meant to measure for both native and nonnative English speakers.

What did the study find?

The results show that these four tests are mostly measuring the same construct and have the same meaning across the two groups of participants, and across native and nonnative English speakers in each group. However, there was some evidence of item bias in WJ Passage Comprehension that warrants further investigation. Finally, nonnative English speakers seemed to be better at nonsense word decoding (WJ Word Attack) and phonological processing (CTOPP subtests) than native speakers.

Who participated in the study?

The participants in this study belonged to two groups. One group consisted of adult learners whose word recognition skills were between the 3rd and 5th grade levels. The other group consisted of adults recruited from classes that target the 3rd to 8th grade reading levels. Both groups included native and nonnative English speakers.

How was the study conducted?

The researchers used a confirmatory factor analysis, which is a statistical technique that examines the relationship between a set of variables and their underlying construct.

How can people use the results?

While more research is needed, for now it appears that these tests can be administered to adult learners, whether they are native or nonnative speakers of English.