

# The Validity of Fluency Assessments for Adult Learners

## What was the goal of the study?

The researchers wanted to evaluate five different reading fluency assessments that were administered to adult learners. These five assessments included: (1) Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency; (2) Test of Silent Contextual Reading Fluency; (3) Reading Fluency subtest of the Woodcock-Johnson; (4) Sight Word Efficiency subtest of the Test of Word Reading Efficiency II; and (5) the TOWRE Phonemic Decoding Efficiency subtest.

## Why was the study conducted?

To determine to what extent these five fluency assessments are measuring the same thing and to determine whether they are unrelated to assessments that measure different skills.

## How was the study conducted?

The researchers examined each assessment in terms of two properties: (1) convergent validity and (2) discriminant validity. Convergent validity is the extent to which an assessment is related to another assessment that measures the same thing. Discriminant validity is the extent to which an assessment is unrelated to another assessment that measures a different skill.

## What did the study find?

The researchers found that there was a range in the strength of the relationships among these five fluency assessments. This trend suggests that though these assessments tap into similar skills, not all of them showed convergent validity with one another as expected. It is possible that some of these assessments involve different structures and tasks, thus requiring different demands on the participant across assessments. To evaluate discriminant validity, the researchers examined the correlations between the fluency assessments and the assessments of other reading skills. The results did not show any clear evidence of discriminant validity. While some of the fluency measures had weak relationships with other measures, others showed strong relationships. Again, these results may be rooted in the underlying tasks involved in each assessment.

## Who participated in the study?

The participants in this study were 116 adult learners.

## How can people use the results?

Practitioners should carefully consider reading fluency assessments before they are administered to adult learners.

## Reference

Nightingale, E., Greenberg, D., Branum-Martin, L., & Bakhtiari, D. (2016). Selecting fluency assessments for adult learners. *Journal of Research and Practice for Adult Literacy, Secondary, and Basic Education*, 5(3), 18-29.