

Introduction to a Special Feature Article for Reader Discussion and Application: Steven Carter’s, Matthew Wilcox’s, and Neil Anderson’s article on Silent Reading Fluency Measurement

Greta Gorsuch
Texas Tech University
United States

Jing Zhou
Zhejiang International Studies University
China

When this manuscript crossed the editorial desk of *Reading in a Foreign Language* it was clear it would be of a unique kind of interest to readers on multiple levels. It is not common to find an article purely on measurement and testing in *Reading in a Foreign Language*. So on that level, “A Unitary Measure of L2 Silent Reading Fluency Accounting for Comprehension” is unique. At the same time, many contributions to this journal focus on reading fluency and comprehension. See for example Daniel Malakowsky’s table summarizing reading fluency articles in our April, 2023 issue, many of which appeared in past issues of *RFL*. Like many scholars working with learners to increase reading fluency, Malakowsky is concerned with whether fluency treatments will concomitantly help learners with reading comprehension (2023, p. 77).

Other contributors to *RFL* bring sharp relief a perennial concern over a tradeoff between fluency, or what will be referred to now as reading rate, and reading comprehension. As Brett Milliner states in his October, 2021 contribution, “The Effects of Combining Timed Reading, Repeated Oral Reading, and Extensive Reading”: “Only after these lower-order processes [word recognition, syntactic parsing] are automatized [fluency] can a reader have enough mental space to engage the higher-order cognitive processes critical for text compression [comprehension] (e.g., inferencing and attending to semantic cues)”(p. 192). So, on yet another level, Carter et al’s article is unique in its appeal to the readership of *RFL* on theoretical grounds.

As Co-editors of *Reading in a Foreign Language* we wanted to experiment with something new for the journal, that of presenting a feature article with the intent of generating interest and discussion among our readership. We invite readers to address questions or comments or even additional contributions along the lines of this article to us at: readfl@hawaii.edu.

We do not intend for this to become a rebuttal, counterpoint, etcetera type of exchange, but rather a sharing of questions and ideas, application of concepts, and a solving of problems. Measurement of reading, whether it be of learners’ fluency, comprehension, skills, attitudes, or whatever, is of perennial interest. Read any contribution in *Reading in a Foreign Language* and

one can find measurement instruments and protocols of many kinds. Collectively, the readership of *RFL* is a rich repository of ideas on reading measurement. Carter et al's article represents a contribution from measurement professionals. Once again, we see that in the mansion of Applied Linguistics, there are many rooms. Thus Carter, Wilcox, and Anderson have additional insights, theories, customs, and procedures to offer.

Jing Zhou and I begin the discussion with our own questions. We hope readers will add their own, and that the authors will comment at some point.

You made reasonable efforts to revise your Timed Reading multiple-choice comprehension questions based on weaknesses you knew you had with your existing materials, yet you were still plagued with lower reliability than you wished to have. How would you revise your tests given what you know now?

Since readers/language teachers/testing practitioners may need to develop, adapt, or adopt reading passages and reading comprehension questions for their own procedures to use with your formula, what specific suggestions might you have for developing test questions based on the results of your study?

For practitioners who wish to use your formula, what practical advice can you offer? For instance, can you offer sample spreadsheets where sample data are input into the formula, and where data are plotted onto Anderson's fluency/comprehension quadrant?

References

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